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Subject: Wayne, remember a text based game called "Ferret"?

Posted by [darkstar](#) on Wed, 17 Sep 2003 09:15:28 GMT

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like Adventure, only much much trickier. Only ever saw it on DG, AOS/VS, but it was written in Pascal so you'd think it got ported...Randy! smoke and I drink and each time I blink I have a tiny dream As bad as I am, I'm proud of the fact that I'm worse than I seem - Ani DiFranco

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Subject: Zork perhaps?

Posted by [Wayne Parham](#) on Wed, 17 Sep 2003 11:41:39 GMT

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I don't remember "Ferret" but I sure played a lot of the old original "Zork". I even have source code of the version that pre-dates the Infocom release. I'm sure I must have seen Ferret if it was on AOS/VS, but I don't recall. Are you sure you're not thinking of Zork? It was like you've described - A much larger and more sophisticated form of adventure. Click on the link to Zork and download it - Maybe this is what you're thinking of. The file contains both source and executables ported for the PC.

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Subject: I love those old text games!

Posted by [Adrian Mack](#) on Wed, 17 Sep 2003 12:31:20 GMT

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Hey, I used to play those old text-games too. I've played Zork, also this other one called Planetfall (which was way way better than Zork but both were good), and this other one which I cannot remember. I used to play it on one of those old XT computers with a monochrome monitor chugging away at 4.77MHz :P It was so cool! Imagine if we still used those PCs. There would be no PC internet-bank fraud and no hackers, because there's nothing worth hacking on those old machines :PA shame I don't have those games anymore :( I just downloaded Zork from the link on your post. Have you got any more text games that are on your web server?

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Subject: Re: I love those old text games!

Posted by [Wayne Parham](#) on Wed, 17 Sep 2003 13:30:25 GMT

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I don't have any more games like that on my server, but I do have "The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy" around here somewhere. I'm comfortable distributing the old Zork games that I have on the server, but not really with distributing all the games that Infocom sold. I don't think they're around anymore, so it may be a mute point. You can find most of them available for download if you'll search the internet. But the games were property of Infocom, after all. Another set of games that I thought was really cool was the PC versions of arcade games. There was a vector graphics rendering engine available in the 80's and games like "Tempest" and "Asteroids" ran on it. There were literally dozens if not hundreds of other popular games too, but those are just the ones I remember the best. I probably might have those around here somewhere too, so I think I'll go have look for them. This little walk down "memory lane" has made me want to revisit some of these old fun things.

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Subject: Yup, it was Ferret  
Posted by [darkstar](#) on Wed, 17 Sep 2003 18:07:22 GMT  
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and written by some guys in England. Didn't run on no XT, by gum, it ran on a REAL computer, the floorstanding kind, and it LIKED it that way! Randy l smoke and I drink and each time I blink I have a tiny dream As bad as I am, I'm proud of the fact that I'm worse than I seem - Ani DiFranco

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Subject: Re: Yup, it was Ferret  
Posted by [Wayne Parham](#) on Wed, 17 Sep 2003 21:36:43 GMT  
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Wow, that's pretty cool. I wish we could find it then; Probably written in Cobol, MDL or Fortran and could be ported. I wonder if a search would turn anything up? I think I'll look for it right now. It would be really interesting to find something like that from the old days - Something I've never seen before from that era. I consider those days to be the "wonder years" of the computer industry. Big iron was the only thing in business, education or government, the microprocessor had just been invented, Intel stock could be bought for next to nothing and Microsoft didn't even exist yet.

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Subject: Thanks Wayne!  
Posted by [jlharden](#) on Thu, 18 Sep 2003 12:12:40 GMT  
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You just made me waste an hour of my day! What a frustrating game! The parser understands about as much as my ex. ;^}

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Subject: "You're in a maze of twisty little passages, all alike."  
Posted by [Wayne Parham](#) on Thu, 18 Sep 2003 15:59:36 GMT  
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There are some really fun responses you can get from the parser. I can't recall specific examples right now, but I remember that sometimes the game would reply with the funniest things! I always was impressed with its ability to parse English, particularly for the time it was written. And some specific words besides those required by the game are recognized too - the vocabulary includes some slang and other unrelated words - so the parser can really surprise you with its responses sometimes. But you need to have either a hint file or someone who has played the game with you to really get into it. It's hard to even get underground if you don't know that's the object of the game. Most of the action happens down there, so if you don't know that, you will just wander around in the house or the yard. So if you don't have some familiarity with the game, I want to send you a hint file. I'll have to look around and see if I have it handy, but it's worth it. Once you have that, you'll find that "your sword is glowing with a faint blue glow."

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Subject: Re: "You're in a maze of twisty little passages, all alike."  
Posted by [jlharden](#) on Thu, 18 Sep 2003 17:30:50 GMT  
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Hi Wayne, Yes, I'd like to have a hint book. Your correct on the wandering around above ground part. Still it's a fun game. I enjoy games like this more than the new super duper graphic based games. Let me know if you find that hint guide. Jerrod

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Subject: Re: "You're in a maze of twisty little passages, all alike."  
Posted by [Wayne Parham](#) on Thu, 18 Sep 2003 17:54:45 GMT  
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I'm looking back through my stuff now; It looks like I have all this stuff on diskette, the old floppy kind. I've got it on 5 1/4" and 8", no kidding. So now I'll need to find something to read those. :-)) Is the "Mcleodusa.net" E-Mail address I have for you still current? If so, I'll send to that address. I'll also put the hint files on the Zork page on the Parham Data web site. I don't think the help files

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will "fit" in your Yahoo account, but maybe so.

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Subject: Re: "You're in a maze of twisty little passages, all alike."  
Posted by [jlharden](#) on Thu, 18 Sep 2003 18:04:00 GMT

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Hi Wayne, The yahoo account is the only active account. It's swallowed a few 2 mb files before so it may fit. If not maybe you can just type it all out! Ha! J

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Subject: I played ferret..  
Posted by [Bubbawat](#) on Fri, 19 Sep 2003 10:16:38 GMT

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At the time it was running on a DEC PDP11, so it was at least available there. It was both Zork like and Adventure like. If I remember correctly (and that is difficult at my age) it was darned hard to get out of the initial meadow and underground to have the adventure...Of course I could be wrong - it was quite some time ago..Henry

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Subject: Re: "You're in a maze of twisty little passages, all alike."  
Posted by [mrappe](#) on Thu, 25 Sep 2003 18:40:45 GMT

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When i saw this post. I was taken back to 1978 when I was playing the game on a mainframe. I think I still have the fortran printout of the game code in my attic. I was working on modifying it to make my own game. I spent a year and lots of paper playing that game.Mike Rappe

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Subject: Re: "You're in a maze of twisty little passages, all alike."  
Posted by [Wayne Parham](#) on Thu, 25 Sep 2003 20:29:01 GMT

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It brings back some fond memories, doesn't it? I remember some evenings probably very similarly to what you recall. In the office late at night, with the lights out and the only thing illuminating the room was the frontpanel to a Data General Eclipse C330 and the master console. Type a sentence, and the lights flickered, Zebra drive shaking like a washing machine on spin cycle from the inertia of its massive 90 pound linear motor. Like you, I kept the printouts. They made a sort of a story book, and a good one at that. I actually have a printout on greenbar paper - now yellowed - that has the entire story, start to finish. I completed the game in order to make a complete printout that would form a book. Remember the control room at the dam? How about the coal mine?

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