

review: **BreakThru**

by Don Henson

Type: Puzzle/Strategy

Publisher: Spectrum HoloByte, Inc. (510/522-1164)

Retail Price: \$39.95

Street Price: \$25.00

Requires: Mac SE/30, or better. Works on all PowerBooks other than the PB100. System 6.0.7 and 32-bit QuickDraw or later. 4 MB RAM, hard disk with 8.5 MB free and a 1.4 MB floppy drive.

Protection: One time password

Alexey Pajitnov didn't realize what he was starting when he dreamed up Tetris back in the 80s. It was a non-violent game that couldn't be played on a board or other format than a computer. I doubt if many realized the impact computer games like Tetris would have on office staff production, college grades and the general state of the culture. On the other hand what would we do without such distractions to escape into from the world of "real" life? One can not live on Prozac alone.

The other game that came to mind when I saw the ad and screen shots of BreakThru was the mess of spin-offs from Pong that are generically called "breakout." Well much to my relief BreakThru is certainly not another fancy knockoff of the breakout genre of titles. The closest way to describe it might be sort of an opposite concept of Tetris.

Get in the Game. The object of BreakThru is to clear successive walls of bricks. These come in many colors and starting with full walls of all single square bricks. Squares of the same color can however fill large areas and clicking on just one of the bricks that are connected to others of the same color by at least one side will remove the whole bunch, leaving the other bricks and objects cascading down into new formations. In the most simple levels of the game it is possible to manipulate groups of bricks 30-50 in size which gives one very high scores with a single mouse click. The larger the number of bricks in the groups removed the larger the score in more than the normal multiple of points. It is actually a given number of points for each brick, then multiplied by the number in the contiguous group you have removed. This number is then multiplied again by the number of bricks in the group

removed, so the really large concentrations of one color removed at a time really rack up the high scores.

he interface can be controlled most easily and efficiently with the mouse. There is also a keyboard option, but one can choose to ignore that in single player games. One of the drawbacks of the various dual player modes is that one player would have to use the keyboard and thus be at a decided disadvantage.

The walls at the lowest levels of difficulty start with just a few different colors of bricks and no additional items to worry about. Things soon get more interesting with the addition of pop cans, bombs and rockets. The pop cans can only be removed by destroying them with bombs or rockets. Bombs are one of the items that I find most useful, yet they need some planning ahead to make the most efficient use of them. The bombs don't like being next to one another from up down or sideways, or they explode. When detonating a bomb takes out anything in the eight squares that may surround it in the wall except the indestructible rocks in later walls. A bomb on the bottom row of the wall can be detonated just by clicking on it. Planning ahead is important in removing bricks to position the bombs and rockets so they do the most needed jobs.

The Super Bricks come along after you have scored a certain number of points at the level of play you are currently involved. They are multicolored and when one clicks on them the whole wall is outlined. At this point all of the bricks of the next color you select with a mouse click will be removed from the wall at once.

Spiders and then rocks show up in the walls as one progresses to the harder starting levels, or progress in the games started at lower levels of difficulty. While the spiders can be

removed with a well-planned bomb or rocket, the rocks are not destructible. The slider buttons on each side of the wall move the bricks in the wall and the newly falling items to one side of the wall or another. If there are spiders or rocks in the way they keep the portion of the wall that they are blocking from moving. The newly falling bricks and items from the top fill in whatever area they can or you can control what column a particular piece will fall by clicking the mouse button and holding it down, dragging the new items at the top right and left, when the ones are where you want them to drop you let go of the mouse button.

There are twelve picture size selections for various size monitors and speeds of CPU on your Mac. The manual suggests removing bricks from the top of the wall first. I found that at times one can plan ahead and remove large groups of the same colored bricks from lower in the wall, causing bombs to fall next to one another and otherwise make progress. The main thing is to plan ahead and develop where removing bricks will have the effect you desire.

[He's Back](#). BreakThru has extremely beautiful graphics and backgrounds and the whole concept of the game is as enjoyable as Alexey Pajitnov's Tetris. Overall, BreakThru breaks the mold and provides hours of enjoyment.

Pros

- Nice graphics and Mac interface
- A pleasant, different concept for game play
- Many starting parameters to please many gaming tastes
- Works on nearly all PowerBooks

Cons

- Having another controller such as a Gravis Gamepad or MouseStick is the only way to make head to head games approach equal control methods
- Requires a fair amount of hard drive space