

## review: **Diamonds 2.0**

by Robert C. Lewis

Type: Arcade

Publisher: Varcon Systems (619/563-6700)

Retail Price: \$49.95

Mail Order: \$37.95

Requires: Any Mac (runs best in color).

Protection: None

One of the oldest video games on computers (next to Pong) has to be Breakout. The simplicity of the game made it highly addictive to play. A plethora of Breakouts became available as shareware for the Mac. Until recently, the only commercial variation of Breakout released on the Mac was Arkanoid. Alas Arkanoid met its death when System 7 was released. This left a void in this genre of games. It took a while but the hole in the dike has been patched with the release of Diamonds 2.0.

Diamonds 2.0 is one of three games recently released games by Varcon Systems. The other two is Jewelbox (reviewed last issue) and Aces with Tens. These games are like gems begging to be dug up.

**Game Play.** Unlike standard Breakout, Diamonds does not use a paddle to control the ball. Horizontal movement of the ball is done with the use of the left and right cursor keys as the ball bounces up and down. The Gravis Gamepad is also perfectly suited for this game. The basic goal of Diamonds is simple. Knock out all the bricks and diamonds so you can move on to the next level. Meeting that goal is another story all together.

The game window is composed of different colored bricks and diamonds. The first step is to clear the bricks. To knock these bricks out, the ball must match the color of the brick. Paintbrushes are supplied on the game field to help you eliminate the bricks. Each time the ball touches a paintbrush, it will change the color (or pattern for B&W Macs) of the ball to the color of the paintbrush. One word of warning, sometimes there may be no paintbrush available to change the ball back to its original appearance.

o add to your peril are traps. They are like bottomless pits. If your ball contacts it, you lose your ball. Luckily each game starts with six balls. Bonus balls are also awarded every 5,000 points. Once you clear the board of the bricks, you can then collect the diamonds. You may also wind up with bonus points if you complete the level fast enough. On the lower levels there's locks and reversers. As you move up in levels, you will contend with keys, locks, and reversers.

Sometimes the only way to collect the diamonds or reach another section of the board is by having to unlock a lock. As with the bricks, the ball must match the color of the key to pick it up. Just make sure you do not change the color of the ball after obtaining the key. The reversers do as their name implies. It reverses the keys you use to control the ball with. Left become right and right becomes left. This can get confusing in crunch-time situations. As you can see, this game has a great deal of strategy built into it.

**Extras.** Since there is a remote chance you may get bored with the number of levels included in the game, Varcon has included a game editor. I found it very easy to use. You can either create new levels or modify the ones included. I see the potential makings of a contest down the road.

If you play it on a color Mac, you will find that the graphics are very sharp and vibrant in colors. You can even select your own Pict file as a backdrop for the game. The music and sounds just further enhance what is already a great game.

**Last Words.** This is a game that does not take much to get hooked on. The only flaw I could

find dealt with the music. It sometimes breaks up when background applications are running. If you have ever played the shareware version of Diamonds, then you are in for a treat with Diamonds 2.0.

**Pros.**

- Great graphics & music
- Game play very smooth
- Game Editor included
- Very intuitive to learn
- No copy protection

**Cons.**

- Background programs affect music