

PSYCHEDELIA

AMSTRAD CPC 464

AN ENTERTAINMENT by Jeff Minter.....

An Explanation of the Concept...PSYCHEDELIA is really the culmination of several months' idle thinking. I love games, but occasionally I'd think 'there must be some OTHER way of enjoying yourself using the computer...' I also love music, and I'd daydream about creating... something... you could do to music, something you could put on the screen at a party and anyone could come up and have a go, something you'd do just because you enjoyed it, something others could enjoy even if they weren't actually doing it themselves. Gradually the idea solidified into the concept of a light-show generator, something interactive, creative but simple enough so that anyone could do it, yet complex enough to produce breathtaking results once learned well. A program to do for light, in fact, what a synthesiser does for sound.

PSYCHEDELIA is the realisation of that dream. Some idle tinkering on a Sunday afternoon produced such startling results that all other work was dropped in order to pursue the development of my Light Synthesiser at last. Many evenings were spent in darkened rooms just freaking out to music and DOING it. Demos were given, minds were blown and a good time had by all. PSYCHEDELIA is a completely new way of enjoying your micro. If you love music, if you love graphics, if you are creative then you'll enjoy PSYCHEDELIA. You'll boot it in when you turn on your hi-fi. You'll find an appeal totally different to that of even the best games. You won't get bored, because the pleasure is as fundamental as that of listening to music, and you'll create different, dynamic light shows each time you use the program.

PSYCHEDELIA is the high point of my designing career so far. The concept is simple, the programming not too complex but the parts combine synergistically to create a whole which has given me the most pleasure to use and the biggest pride in design, of anything I've ever programmed.

Enjoy PSYCHEDELIA. This one comes straight from the heart.

Loading PSYCHEDELIA: Load the program using the auto-load: hold down CTRL and press the ENTER key on the numeric pad. You'll see the title appear as the load progresses, and once loading's over you'll see the basic PSYCHEDELIA screen, black with a single pixel on it. You're now ready to go.

Using PSYCHEDELIA: I'll give various levels of information, you can enjoy even the simplest level but as you continue you'll probably want to learn how to operate the Light Synthesiser's more complex options. The program uses a Joystick plugged into the Joystick port.

First encounter: (a) Turn off the lights. (b) Put on whatever music you like to freak out to. (c) Pick up the joystick and do it with feeling!

Variations: Try pressing any of the keys 1-8. This calls in one of the 8 presets, stored Lightsynth parameters which give different effects. Try them all out to see some of the multitude of effects which you can achieve using the system. Some are fast, some slow, some pulse, others swirl. Play with them all, try them to different music.

Basic Commands: Choose a pattern you like and get ready to experiment. Press **S** to change the Symmetry (The pattern gets reflected in various planes, or not at all according to the setting). Press **SPACE** to alter the pattern element. Press **I** to change the shape of the little pixels on the screen. Press **L** to turn on and off the Line Mode - a bit like drawing with the Aurora Borealis.

More Advanced Commands: I'll divide these into **Variables** and **Others**. Variables, when activated, bring up a little graduated bar at the bottom of the screen representing the current value of that variable. Use the and keys to alter the value to what is required, and press ENTER when you're happy. You can play with the current settings while the bar is still on the screen, and you can alter the parameters whilst pattern generation is actually occurring. (Clever little things - those interrupts!).

Variable Commands

Cursor Speed - H to activate: Just that. Gives you a slow or fast little cursor, according to setting.

Pulse Speed - P to activate: Usually if you hold down the button you get a continuous stream. Setting the Pulse Speed allows you to generate a pulsed stream, as if you were rapidly pressing and releasing the FIRE button.

Pulse Width - O to activate: Sets the length of the pulses in a pulsed stream output. Don't worry about what that means - just get in there and mess with it.

Line Width - K to activate: Sets the width of the lines produced in Line Mode.

Smoothing Delay - D to activate: Because of the time taken to draw larger patterns speed increase/decrease is not linear. You can adjust the 'compensating delay' which often smooths out jerky patterns. Can be used just for special FX, though. Suck it and see.

Buffer Length - N to activate: Larger patterns flow more smoothly with a shorter Buffer Length - not so many positions are retained so less plotting to do. Small patterns with a long Buffer Length are good for 'streamer' effects.

Sequencer Speed - G to activate: Controls the rate at which the sequencer feeds in its data. See the SEQUENCER bit.

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BASE LEVEL - B to activate: Controls how many 'levels' of pattern are plotted.

COLOUR change - J to activate: Allows you to set the colour for each of the seven pattern steps. Set up the colour you want, press ENTER, and the command offers the next colour along, up to no. 7, then ends.

Now some other commands, not variables:

TRACKING on/off-T: Controls whether logic-seeking is used in the buffer or not. The upshot of this for you is a slightly different feel - continuous but fragmented when ON, or together-ish bursts when OFF. Try it.

AUTO DEMO on/off - A: PSYCHEDELIA plays itself if you want.

STORE on PRESET KEY: SHIFT plus any of the preset keys: Stores all the parameters for later, instantaneous, recall by pressing that preset key. Use to store your favourites for recall instantly without fiddling with all the parameters. 8 presets available.

RECORD/PLAYBACK: Shift-V to start recording, V alone to playback or stop: PSYCHEDELIA can record about half-an-hours' worth of joystick input in its memory. Start recording and play as normal - you get a coloured border whilst recording. When you've done enough press R to stop. Pressing R again starts playback. Try playing back under different parameters, different presets etc. Adjust parameters while you're playing back a display to see what happens. PSYCHEDELIA records out of Record automatically if it runs out of memory.

BURST GENERATORS: SHIFT plus keys Q,W,E,R to program, key alone to activate. These allow you to preprogram and recall at will instantaneous flashes on the screen. Set up symmetry and smoothing delay as required, then press SHIFT plus the key (Q,W,E or R) to which you want to assign your FX. Move the cursor to where you want a burst then press FIRE to enter that point. Do this up to 16 times. Press ENTER when done. Pressing the key thus assigned stuffs all the points you defined into the buffer instantaneously. Don't worry about it - try the ones I've defined!

SEQUENCER: CAPS SHIFT-F to program, F to toggle on/off: Preset patterns are played back in a sequence you determine.

Programming is as for the Burst Generators, but you have the freedom of 255 steps allowed played back at varying speeds via the Sequencer Speed control. You can leave the program mode in two ways: press SPACE, and next time you go back in with SHIFT-F the stuff you already defined is not cleared and you add to the end of it, or press ENTER, and the next time you go in the sequencer is cleared. Use the SPACE option to change pattern in mid-sequence, for example, or to 'see how it looks so far'.

SAVING AND LOADING: You can SAVE and LOAD your favourite sequencer contents, pattern shapes and preset settings, or the joystick dynamics data created by the RECORD option. Press SHIFT-S to start the SAVE. Likewise SHIFT-L prepares the computer to read a tape you've previously stored parameters on.

EDITING THE PATTERN ELEMENTS: There are 16 elements you can define for yourself. To get into pattern edit mode press shift-M to edit the current shape. The screen clears and the cursor centres. Each pattern is composed of seven levels. Level One is preset, always just a single white dot. You can determine the positions of the pixels in Level 2-7. Move the cursor to where you want a pixel, then press FIRE to enter it, as in Sequencer and Burst. You can define up to seven pixels per level. Press ENTER when you've done enough pixels on a particular level and the option proceeds to the next level, until level 7 is completed. Remember, the more pixels you have the slower the finished pattern will run. You can place pixels anywhere on the screen, they don't have to be around the centre Level One pixel at all. Don't worry if this sounds complex, just get in there and have a bash, you can't do any damage!

Whew! Quite a lot to digest - but the best way is to just learn by experimentation. Play with the values and see what happens - just like you'd tinker with a synthesiser. Above all, use it as it was intended - along with your favourite music. (At last I've discovered a cure for air-guitarring!). Freak out with it. Have fun. Take it to parties and have LOTS of fun. Come along to the next computer show and give a public performance! Blow minds with it, freak out your granny. Be creative with it. Let me know if you like it! Keep it next to your hi-fi!

PSYCHEDELIA. I hope you enjoy playing with it as much as I do.

The following all in some way inspired this creation: Roger Waters, Dave Gilmour, Nick Mason et al., our Phil with the bald patch, KMEL 106FM, Ronnie James Dio, the Purple, Issa Tomita, Rush, Steve Hillage, Yes, Led Zep, and many more... The Hairy One is pleased with himself this time... perhaps because The Hairy One has played with nothing else on his 64 for 3 weeks... If this blows your mind then you're on the same brainlength as me. See you out by Alpha Centauri.....



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ORIGINAL SOFTWARE DESIGN

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