

BlockOut

Lawrence Owen

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COLLABORATORS

	<i>TITLE :</i> BlockOut		
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WRITTEN BY	Lawrence Owen	August 25, 2022	

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Chapter 1

BlockOut

1.1 BlockOut Guide

BlockOut

Introduction

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1.2 Introduction to BlockOut

Introduction

BlockOut is an Amiga conversion of an Amstrad CPC PD game written by Ben Abbott. It is a simple platform/puzzle game in which you must simply reach the exit to progress to the next level. In order to help you reach the exit you may push blocks around, down slopes or off the side of walls. BlockOut is fully multitasking and plays in a workbench window, it should use very little cpu time and can adapt itself to different resolutions. Also the BlockOut

graphics are replaceable if you think mine are too ugly :) four graphic sets are included by me :

LowresGfx - Standard gfx for normal PAL/NTSC Hires workbenches (or any with an aproximate 2x1 pixel aspect). It uses only four colours so should look ok on most workbenches (unless you have a really strange palette or use two colours :)

AltLowresGfx - An alternative 2x1 aspect gfx set. I did this because the standard set is so ugly but I think these are even uglier ! Anyway the 2x1 are destined to be pretty ugly but at least there is a choice :) (If anyone creates a nice looking set please contact me :)

HiresGfx - This is a MUCH prettier set intended for screens with a 1x1 pixel aspect and four colours.

MWBHiresGfx - For 1x1 screens with the Magic Workbench palette (or a similar one) Uses 8 colours.

Also included is a level editor/designer so anyone can create lots of lovely new, wonderful levels :)

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1.3 System Requirements for BlockOut

System Requirements

The system requirements for BlockOut are quite low. You will need Workbench 2 or better and about 190k free memory. For best use you should have a VGA monitor or better running in a resolution with approximately 1x1 (square) pixels such as DBLPAL:Hires No Flicker (640x512 or higher). On normal PAL/NTSC monitors using Hires the graphics used are MUCH uglier, to use the nicer graphics run your workbench in a resolution with a 1x1 aspect such as Hires Laced or even Lowres (but you will need a larger autoscroll screen to fit the whole window on :) I have plans to make BlockOut run on it's own screen in the future and also in any aspect which would mean it can look pretty on any display :) although really the graphics are not very important to the gameplay anyway.

You will also need to have the reqtools library installed in your libs. BlockOut MAY work on KS 1.3 machines using some of the 1.3 compatible replacement libraries that are around but I'm not sure about this, the editor will also need a 1.3 compatible gadtools.library clone.

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1.4 BlockOut installation

BlockOut Installation

To install BlockOut just drag the draw wherever you want it.

BlockOut requires the reqtools.library to be in your libs: assign. If you don't have reqtools already there is a copy in the BlockOut archive.

Just in case you want to know here is a list of the files blockout needs....

BlockOut - Obviously :) this is the main executable
BlockOut.data - This is the preferences file and MUST be in the save directory as BlockOut.
BlockOut.bog - This is the standard game file. The default setup requires that this is in the same directory as BlockOut.
LowresGfx - The standard graphics file for screens with a 2x1 pixel aspect. The standard setup requires this to be in the same directory if you run in a 2x1 aspect such as 640x256.
HiresGfx - Graphics for 1x1 screens (640x512). Must be in the same directory if you are using the default setup and using a 1x1 screen.
BlockOut.info - If you want to run it from workbench.
libs:reqtools.library

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1.5 Brief Playing Guide

Playing Guide

BlockOut is a simple game although the controls can seem a bit fiddly and take some getting used to because they try to stay true to the original CPC version, once you are used to the controls however you should have no problems. The default controls are the cursor keys but this is configurable from the main menu.

Playing BlockOut

The basic idea of BlockOut is to escape a system of rooms in which you have become trapped so that you are free and can go back home :) That will do as far as a story goes since it's just about all I can remember and it isn't very important.

There are several things found in a level that you can interact with in some way:

Blocks - Can be pushed about by walking into them.
Conveyor belts - Carry you or a block along, be careful you can't jump off until you reach the end!
Mines - Don't step on these, they will destroy any blocks

- dropped on them.
- Teleporters - This will teleport you to somewhere else on the current level. There may be many teleporters in a level but only one destination.
- Exit - Get here to complete the level

For a list of all blocks press 4 at the main menu.

Solution to level 1

Here is a quick solution to the first level of the default game. This level is not in any way difficult and is only intended as a sort of tutorial.

- Press 1 from the main menu to start the game.
- Press any key to start the level.
- Jump up onto the platform above the start position and push the block off the left side.
- Drop down on top of the block, move to the left of it then push it as far right as you can.
- Jump on top of the block then up onto the ledge above and walk into the exit.

That should give you a basic idea of how the game works. The first few levels are very simple and intended to introduce the basic features of the game.

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1.6 Main menu options

The Main Menu

1. Start Game

This should be obvious :)

2. Load New Game File

This loads a new .bog game file as created by the game editor.

3. Load New Gfx File

Loads a new graphics file. The default is HiresGfx for 1x1 screens and LowresGfx for 2x1 screens. If you have a Magic Workbench of similar palette you may want to change this to MWBHiresGfx. This will probably look better than the standard set on most 8 colour screens but it depends on the palette. The 4 colour graphics files were drawn with the standard 4 workbench colours in mind so should always look ok.

4. View Help Screen

View all the game blocks of the currently loaded graphics file.

5. Redefine Keys

Just like it says :)

6. Enter Level Code

Allows you to start a game from any level if you know the code for that particular level.

7. Quit

Quit and save the current settings eg. Game file, graphics
Same as pressing the close gadget. You can also press Escape to quit without being asked to confirm.

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1.7 The BlockOut level editor

The Level Editor

The level editor is an easy to use tool intended to allow you to create your own game files. Each BlockOut game file contains 32 levels and data for each level's name and password. Also you can define a password for the actual game file which will be needed to load it into the editor. This will prevent anyone else loading up your games and looking at all the levels. You may also attach an Author name to the game file although this isn't currently displayed by BlockOut, I recommend that you put your name in here though because future versions will certainly credit the Author when a new game is loaded.

I recommend using a utility such as cycle to menu since it makes tile selection MUCH easier.

When pointing at the main map window the left mouse button pastes down the current tile while the right mouse button will blank anything under the mouse pointer.

Map#

<
>

```
Clear Map
@| Player
Load...
Save...
Author
Password
Level Code
Level Name
Set Time
About
Quit
-> Buffer
```

```
Buffer ->
```

```
NOTE: At the moment there is no proper error checking to see if ←
the player
```

falls off the bottom or jumps off the top of the screen. If this happens then BlockOut may crash. Sorry about this, it should check but doesn't seem to work :(I will fix it as soon as I can see what I have done wrong. For now though you MUST ensure that it is impossible for the player to jump off the top of the screen (A row of walls across the top will work) and can't fall off the bottom. If you want the player to fall off the bottom then put a mine at the bottom of the screen wherever it is possible for them to fall, this will work the same and means that the level can't crash. Sorry about this bug, it is the first thing on my fix list.

```
<-- Back to main menu
```

1.8 Select a map

```
Map Selector
```

Use these gadgets to select the current level map that you wish to edit.

```
<- Go back
```

1.9 Select the current tile

@| Player/Exit/Platform/Block etc.

Use this cycle gadget to change the current tile that you are pasting onto the map.

When you select the teleport tile you will be asked if you wish to set the teleport destination, if you select yes then the next square of the map that you click on will become the new teleport destination. You can then paste down as many teleports as you want but they will all teleport to the same destination. To change the destination select the teleport tile again using this cycle gadget.

<- Go back

1.10 Clear the map

Clear Map

Click here to clear the current level map. This will clear the current map only (not the whole game!).

<- Go back

1.11 Editor file i/o

Load..., Save...

Load and save game files.

If you try to load a password protected file then you will be prompted for the password before the level is loaded up.

<- Go back

1.12 Set Author name

Author

Click here to set the author name for the game. The name is not currently displayed by blockout but it will be in the future.

<- Go back

1.13 Set the game password

Password

Click here to set the file password. This password will then be needed to load the file back into the editor. Do not confuse this with the level code which is an individual code for each level that can be used by the games player to skip to higher levels.

<- Go back

1.14 Set the level code

Level Code

Click here to set the code for the level map you are currently editing. This code is needed when a player selects option6 from the main game menu to skip levels.

<- Go back

1.15 Set the level name

Level Name

Sets the name of the current level map.

<- Go back

1.16 Set the level time

Set Time

This sets the initial time limit of te current level map.

1.17 About

About

Displays some uninteresting rubbish about me :) and the version number.

<- Go back

1.18 Quit the editor

Quit

Quit my lovely, wonderful editor (but only 'cos you'r gonna play BlockOut)
:)

<- Go Back

1.19 Cutting and pasting maps

-> Buffer, Buffer ->

Copy or paste the current map to or from one of two copy buffers. Usefull for rearranging the order of your game. NOTE the level name, code and time limit are NOT copied.

<- Go back

1.20 Creating new graphics files

Creating new graphics

In order to create a new graphics file you bust first save out a series of iff brushes using an art package such as DPaint or PPaint. The exact dimensions of these brushes can be found by examining the ILBM picture "Gfx.iff" which is in the main archive. When You have created all your brushes (Including and ending picture) run the MakeGFX program and you will be prompted with a file requester for each brush one at a time. When all the brushes are loaded You will be asked for a destination file name and then a new graphics file will be created.

You can make use of your new graphics file by selecting option 3 from the BlockOut main menu.

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1.21 Known bugs and things to do

Known Bugs

Here is a list of bugs that I know about. If you find a bug please contact me, preferably by email, with any relevent or usefull details that you can

think of.

- Currently jumping off the top of the screen or falling off the bottom will probably crash the program. I have put checking into the code but it doesn't seem to work :(This means that the error is most likely just a stupid mistake (probably a typo) on my part. Anyway it will be fixed soon.
- After closing BlockOut the most preferences programs refuse to change the worbench screen claiming there is a window open that you must close. I am not sure exactly what causes this and I have known other programs to cause the same problem but I suspect it is due to me not tidying up properly after myself.
- Occasionally during play the time limit jumps up to about 1700 seconds! I have not isolated this bug yet so if anyone finds a way to reproduce it please let me know.
- Possibly the biggest problem with BlockOut at the moment is that I (pretty stupidly) used timings based on the screen refresh. This means that BlockOut feels completely different when run on screens that refresh at different rates, in fact it is pretty unplayable in some screen modes :(BlockOut was developed with DBLPAL screens in mind (Which luckily seem to be the most popular) but should also be perfectly playable on PAL, NTSC and DBLNTSC. Other screen modes will probably make BlockOut too awkward to controll. I will fix this problem as soon as I can.
- There are a few things in the way the main character interacts with the enviroment (platforms and slopes etc...) that I'm not sure about. If you find the movement (Especially up/down slopes in crowded areas) odd or strange and think it should work differently then email me and tell me how you think it should work.

Things to do....

List of things I would like to do to BlockOut.....

- Get it to run on any public screen. This is a priority since BlockOut is intended to be a fun little thing to pass a few minutes when you are bored programming, drawing, rendering or whatever you do on your Amiga.
 - Make it a commodity. This kinda mixer with the above todo. I would Like BlockOut to be a tiny commodity that loads up it's data and adapts itself to the current screen at the touch of a hotkey, allowing you to continue where you last finished.
 - Add a pause function when the window is deactivated. At the moment the game can't be paused which is a pain if you're formatting disks or something like that which may cause requesters to pop up occasionally.
 - Adapt to ANY aspect. Currently BlockOut has two aspects either 2x1 or 1x1 pixels, when run BlockOut checks the screen and uses the closest mode which looks very wrong if you are running a PAL:SuperHires screen :) The option to create graphics files is the first step to making blockout run on user
-

definable screen aspects.

- Run on a custom screen. This may be nice if the last todo is done well so that you could configure BlockOut to run on a full Hires screen with 256 colours, or just run it on it's own screen because it doesn't fit well on your normal one.
- Add some sound. Probably just a few small sampled bleeps or something.
- Just make it all generally prettier and more configurable and most of all fun to play :)

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1.22 Copyright notice

Copyright stuff

BlockOut is freeware which means that the copyright remains with me (Lawrence Owen) but the archive is freely distributable as long as the following conditions are met....

- The original archive must be kept together. The archive consists of these files...

AltLowresGfx	930
BlockOut	67,896
BlockOut.bog	33,709
BlockOut.data	38
BlockOut.guide	20,852
BlockOut.guide.info	1,857
BlockOut.info	5,279
Editor	53,896
Editor.info	1,391
Gfx.iff	9,976
HiresGFX	27,612
LowresGFX	13,762
MakeGFX	29,420
MakeGFX.info	407
MWBHiresGfx	39,892
reqtools.library	43,628

I have included byte sizes for reference. I don't have any problems with anyone crunching or packing the files but the sizes may be usefull if you beleive the files have been tampered with or maybe that a virus has attached itself or something.

- No fee may be charged for distributing BlockOut other than to cover costs the only exception to this is CD ROM distribution since CD distributions of PD are such good value as long at the CD is sensibly priced. The Aminet range of CD ROMS may be used as a guideline for CD ROM pricing.

- I have the right to stop anyone from distributing this program if I feel they are making money from it and they shouldn't be. If you are in any

doubt then contact me first.

- If you like this game then please send me an email if you can saying what you think about this game and why.

- Magazines may distribute BlockOut on covermounted disks or CD ROMS but they must email me first. This way I can make sure you have the latest version and I will probably buy your issue :)

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1.23 Author and Credits

If you can then email is by far my preferred method of ↔ communication. Feel free to snail mail me but I can't guarantee that this address will still be correct or that I will be able to reply (depends on my financial situation).

Email me at:
loz@phish.nether.net

Or snail mail:
Lawrence Owen
19a St Martins
Leicester
LE1 5DE
England

I am gratefull to anyone who emails me with comments or suggestions about BlockOut and I will always reply to email unless I have a good reason not to (Like my machine melting :)

Credits

The original BlockOut was written on the Amstrad CPC by my friend Ben Abbott (with a little help from me :).

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