

SATURN CAVES

An arcade adventure for the VIC20 (+16Kb RAM)

Year 2039. Our Earth, after a long and slow disarmament by the two superpowers, lives in a period of great social and technological development. Science has solved many problems of humanity, but not overpopulation, which has become so unsustainable that the Science Department, highest organ of scientific research, has sent a mission to Saturn called Mission Orion. The planet was once considered uninhabitable, but underneath the surface numerous caves were found. Although difficult to access, they present with conditions of habitability and theoretically allow the construction of underground dwellings.

Unfortunately, after a message about a contact with strange beings, radio communications with the mission were interrupted. The Scientific Department then organized a second mission which, starting from a station orbiting around the Earth, reached Saturn in order to explore the caves. Since it was impossible to access them with a spacecraft, they had to resort to a small probe shuttle, piloted by one man.

That man is you: the highest ranks of officers will be your reward... provided you manage to get out of Saturn Caves alive!

Rules of the game

The probe shuttle is initially equipped with a **flashlight** that can be operated in all four directions (press FIRE and the joystick lever in the direction you want to explore): you will know that the flashlight is working because the hum of the power generators will stop for a second. All objects or beings, except the ground of the caves and the snakes that pop out randomly, are not visible in the dark: hence the need for the flashlight. Any object or being touched directly with the shuttle will cause your immediate destruction, so to pick up objects you must use **mechanical pliers**, which can be oriented in the four directions with the cursor keys.

Your mission is to find out what happened to the previous mission: you'll have to explore the deepest caves of Saturn, which have a single barred access that will only open when you have recovered **ten rings** scattered in the caves.

The objects you encounter represent useful clues from the previous mission, while the beings can be friendly or hostile.

To have free access to the tunnel leading to the deepest caves, having already with you the 10 rings, simply exit the cave that contains the passage (closed) and return immediately: do not worry, once you have in your hand – perhaps it is the case to say "in your pliers" – all ten rings, the doors of the passage will always remain open.

Here is a simple list of some objects you can find in the caves (of course it is an incomplete list, otherwise what adventure would it be?):

- a) glasses, candlesticks (would you think they brought candlesticks in space?) and other **personal items** from the previous expedition: value ranging from 10 to 20 points.
- b) **maps**: each one (remember to use the pliers) will show the cave where you are, if you have the elixir with you (see below), how many lasers you have collected, the time and the current score.
- c) **elixir**: it can be used to protect your shuttle in case you come into contact with some object that would normally cause your demise, or it can create a flash effect (by pressing the SPACE bar) that allows you to see the objects in the cave where you are. In both cases you will lose the elixir.
- d) **lasers**: if you have at least one, you will be able to survive if you light up a Saturnian with his helmet, being immediately adjacent to the shuttle. Otherwise, the Saturnian will try to "peel" the shuttle to reach you (do not forget that Saturnians are as big as the shuttle itself). Obviously* once you use it, you will lose the laser. The Saturnians, as already mentioned, represent a danger only in case you bump into them or dazzle them without even having a laser on board. The same goes for the termites in the caves, which are looking for nothing but good free metal. However, you can dazzle them at will.
- e) **Gologs**: strange creatures also equipped with tongs openers. If their tongs are closed, they can be captured and analyzed (which will earn you 10 points), otherwise they will cause a disruption of the instruments and the opening of the shuttle like a sardine can (unless you have an elixir).

We stop here to not spoil the taste of discovery. Anyway, we are sure that you will be able to understand what happened to the Orion mission (the previous one).

You should remember that every time you pick up an object you will be warned with an acoustic signal. If it is the elixir, this signal will be very peculiar; if it is one of the 10 rings in addition to the sound signal you will be warned by a flashing of the edge of the screen.

*A final tip: do not reach a crazy speed with the shuttle before you have seen with the flashlight what's in front of you. There are many obstacles for all tastes in this game 😊

To play plug in 16 Kb RAM, turn the VIC on, insert disk and type

POKE642,32:SYS58232 (return)

Then LOAD"*",8 (return)

RUN (return)

...and follow on-screen instructions.

Fabio Siani

December, 1985