



ABOVE: Look at the size of the 'brand!' The full screen delights the eye in 1984.

By 1984, arcade game Pole Position was still doing great in the arcades but at home we were missing a great arcade racer. Until Epyx saved the day. Released first in the States, then in April 1985 in the UK - as published by US Gold.

In 1983 Jamie Fenton created 'Pitstop' for the Atari 800—a home computer (Jamie's other contribution was on the Midway Nurburgring Clone). Pitstop was ported to the Commodore 64 amongst other machines. But it's not Pitstop that made a lot of sales, nor, in fact is it a memorable game.

The Speccy and the 64 were in heated competition during 1984 and for a further three years. Sinclair had a two year head start and cost half that of a C64. The C64 however had far superior sound and graphics and played host to some killer games; this being one of them. For the UK at least, Pitstop 2 offered the only two player split-screen racing—and this was cutting edge Formula One racing, not a slow truck where you'd be lucky to see your opponent after an hour of play. Fuel depletion was not new, but actually stopping in the pits and tyre wear was. Manually moving your two man crew to change the four tyres, refuel and then stand clear so the car can exit gave Pitstop 2 a new and involving experience.

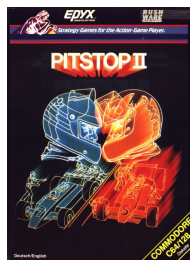
The review in Zzap was all very thumbs up yet it didn't sell initially. It was a slow burner, but when word spread it stayed in the reader's top ten for six months and the top twenty for exactly eighteen months. No small achievement given the quality of other games.

Emulation addicts often revisit this game today. It still plays well, and burning up your mates' tyres and forcing him to re-tire or using traffic as a rolling road block is still as good now as it was then.

Programmed mostly by Stephen H. Landrum with contribution later by Dennis Caswell, it took just three months to complete.

The much loved C64 was host to only two other memorable racing games: Racing Destruction Set and Test Drive. It did have arcade ports of Outrun and Buggy Boy which were both respectable but hardly worth a mention (as was often the case in the eighties/nineties - home conversions of arcade games, no matter how brilliant could never ever compete with the original).

Epyx first traded in 1978 under the name 'Automated Simulations'. It was a company set-up by two 'Dungeons & Dragons' fanatics. They started writing games for the Commodore Pet, and eventually moved onto more popular machines. One of their early products became the first game released by Trip Hawkins' new company Electronic Arts. They later changed the name to Epyx and after a change in direction to arcade-like games, both founders of the Company left. Epyx created a legendary game that will never be forgotten by the twenty million plus Commodore 64 owners. Sadly, Epyx collapsed in 1988 after years of financial trouble and a failed dabble with hardware.



Pole Position famously used the Fuji circuit from Japan. Pitstop 2 also featured real racing circuits. In an interview for 'Epyx Shrine' Stephen H. Landrum suggests they never licensed the tracks! It featured:

- Brands Hatch (England)
- Sebring (Florida)
- Rouen Les Essarts (France)
- Hockenheim (Germany)
- Watkins Glen (New York)
- Vallelungue (Italy)



FAR RIGHT: Pitstop 2 in full 'pit' action

RIGHT: Note the 'white' on top player's tyre—he's blown out and heading for the rumble strip.

LEFT: Original Pitstop on Atari 800

