

Before Luke Skywalker and Han Solo there was another great space hero — DAN DARE. Dan blazed across the spaceways long before the Star Wars crew had even stepped out of their anti-grav nappies! Now Virgin Games are recreating the adventures of Dan Dare and his faithful partner Digby in a soon to be released arcade adventure. C+VG stepped aboard Dan's spacecraft, the Anastasia, to get a sneak preview. Meanwhile good old Digby contacted us on the sub-ether waveband to inform the uninitiated all about his great chum Dan Dare!

DAN

PILOT OF THE

“Hallo? Is that the Editor of *Computer and Video Games*? It's Digby here, Sir — Albert Fitzwilliam Digby, Spaceman Class 1, Interplanetary Space Fleet. I've got those details you wanted about Colonel Dare. Are you ready to take this down? Righto, then — here we go:

Colonel Daniel MacGregor Dare. Born February 5, 1967, Manchester, England. Mother: Jean MacGregor, younger daughter of the MacGregors of Culloden. Father: 'Mad Billy' Dare, explorer and space pilot. Colonel Dare's father was the first man to explore the dreaded Matto Grosso

of Brazil fully and find the fabulous El Dorado. At the age of 12, young

Dan entered Rossall School. By all accounts he was a bright lad, but, a bit of a tearaway. He got six of the best the time he climbed the school clock tower! But he was Captain of the school when he left to go to Cambridge — and it wasn't long before he had his degree and moved on to Harvard.

Now, this is where the story really starts. In 1987, at the age of 20, he joined the Space Fleet as a Cadet Navigator. By the time he was 24, he was a Pilot Major and was sent for an Interplanetary Exploration Course on the Moon. At 29 he was Chief Pilot and was under the direct command of Sir Hubert Guest, Controller of the Fleet.

Most probably you know a bit about what happened after that. A lot of our adventures — Colonel Dare's and mine that is — appeared in a weekly

paper called *Eagle*, by courtesy of a brilliant writer and artist called Frank Hampson.

I'm sorry to have to tell you that Mr Hampson died recently, but you should see the work he left behind. A lot of his tales of Colonel Dare are available in book form.

I expect what you most want to hear about is all the times we've battled — and beaten — that evil, green refugee from a reptile house, the Mekon. Without Colonel Dare, Sondar and the rest of the Treens of Venus would still be suffering under his mad, despotic rule. I've lost count of the number of times we've foiled his dastardly schemes.

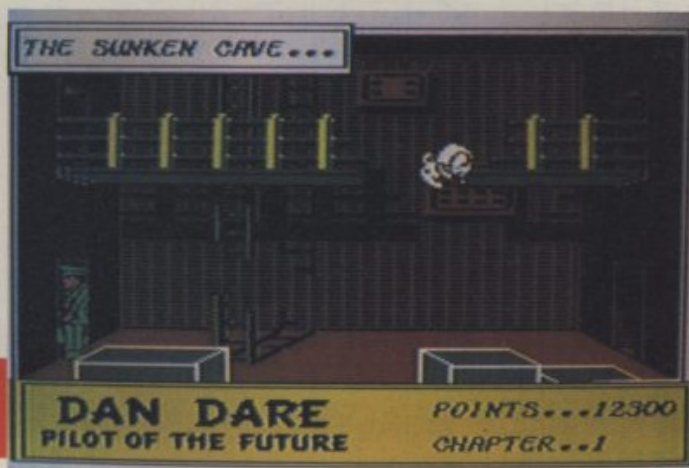
What d'you mean, there's somebody on the other line? Just hold you horses, lad — I

haven't had time to tell you about all the other weird beasties we've come up against. It makes me space-sick just thinking about some of them!

What about old Xel? He was a nasty piece of work, right enough. And then there were the Phants — Colonel Dan and I journeyed to the other side of the Universe to stop them conquering the peace loving Crypts.

What's that? You think you've got enough? Enough my Aunt Anastasia! I haven't told you yet what kind of man he is. You see, what makes the Colonel so special is that he's a Hero in the real sense of the word. He gets by on intelligence, commonsense, determination . . . and a good old British stiff upper lip!

Anyway, you haven't told me why you want all this. A new computer game, you say? Palpitating Planets! What will



DARE



FUTURE

they think of next? Colonel Dan'll be tickled pink! 99

THE GAME

Virgin's *Dan Dare* game has been masterminded by programmer Andy Wilson — who admits to being a DD fan.

"We've attempted to keep the game as close to the spirit of the original comic as possible," he says. "For instance, Dan doesn't kill people. His ray gun is always set to stun. And he'd rather use his fists than a gun anyway." Punch-ups are built into the game — but more of that later!

But first here's Dan's

deadly mission. He has to save the world — of course. This time the Mekon, Dan's melon-headed arch-enemy, has

constructed a giant bomb inside a hollowed out asteroid and aimed it at the Earth. Dan has to stop the asteroid and capture the Mekon.

The planetoid is being controlled by six satellites. Dan must first knock out the satellites and then dive into the caverns of the planetoid, save Digby and Professor Peabody and capture the Mekon.

The first half of the game takes place above the planetoid's surface. Dan — dressed in his space gear — has to find the gadgets which deactivate the satellites and stick them in the right place while fighting off attacks from the Treens, the Mekon's specially trained bodyguards.

He also has to stop dear old Digby getting captured by the Treens. Which isn't easy as they will get him in the end anyway because that leads on to the

next part of the game! Before he disappears how ever, Digby helps

Dan find the deactivators by pointing the way for our hero.

Once he's destroyed all the satellites, Dan — now in his smart Interplanetary Space Fleet uniform — has to find an entrance to the underground caverns where his friends are being held captive. Here the game becomes an action arcade adventure as Dan has to solve lots of problems and puzzles as well as having the odd punch up with a Treen or two.

"We had this feature in long before the boxing and karate games came along," said Andy, "I've included an intelligent fire button which means that if you hit it when there's a

Treen within boxing distance Dan will start some fisticuffs!"

Andy has developed a unique four way scrolling method to capture the comic book flavour. Each screen looks like a frame from a comic — and Digby "talks" to you via speech bubbles. Captions also appear at the top of the screen, comic style.

The graphics are big and bold. Ian Mathias is the man responsible for the C64 and Amstrad versions' graphics and has produced some really impressive visuals for the game.

We confidently predict that Dan's computer game debut is going to go down well with his fans — new and old. But I've a sneaking suspicion that the real smash hit character from the game is going to be Stripey — a cute mini-elephant creature. Watch out for him!

