



usability of the interfaces, but also of the quick reaction times of the user," he says. "Touchscreen can therefore create a unique gaming experience that cannot be easily recreated at home, with ordinary input devices like a mouse or gamepads."

Andrew Ludlow, managing director of Games Media, reinforced this point, telling *InterGame*: "Total flexibility of positioning and messaging of touch panels allows the concept of a multigame terminal – the bedrock of our business – providing flexible digital gaming and entertainment solutions."

"Touchscreens provide players input in precise locations, which greatly enhances the game flow and comprehension. Furthermore, by virtue of the changeable nature of game graphics that also act as versatile buttons – when we update or change a game, the control mechanism is also quick and easy to alter, giving tremendous flexibility to the customer."

However, there are plenty of players out there who still enjoy the tactile nature of push buttons, which Games Media is well aware of, ensuring that its new Juice and Replay terminals incorporate both control methods.

Games Warehouse, based in the UK, is another manufacturer that has traditionally focused on touchscreen technology for its Paragon SWP terminals but is seeing the benefits of push buttons – and how they can compliment touchscreens – by recently introducing push buttons as an optional enhancement. "One of the drawbacks of current touchscreen products is the unavailability of a cost-effective multiple simultaneous touch variant," said Andy Powell, managing director. "Speed of repetitive touches can also be limited. With buttons these issues do not exist and this provides game designers with further scope to develop ideas that may previously have been restricted – Paragon TT is now unique in offering the best of both worlds within our markets."

There are some games that tend to lend themselves better to the touchscreen format than others and game developers would be wrong in thinking they can transfer an idea that works in one format on to another – a bit like the situation in the UK with video versus analogue AWP. Game developers are finding that successful analogue games are not necessarily experiencing the same success in video format. The same principal applies when developing games for a touchscreen or push button product – some games lend themselves better to either/or format.

"Card and puzzle games work great with

touchscreens," says Lanfranchi. "Action games like Hoop Jones and Monkey Bash are also fun to play on a touchscreen machine because they require players to perform simple and intuitive actions."

Öhlinger supports this theory, telling *InterGame*: "Casual games such as Kick the Fish or Pengu Flip, which require quick reactions by the user, work very well with touchscreens because the

technology supports the player's skills needed to play these games successfully. The high sensitivity response reactions of touchscreens make quick playing moves and menu-driven handling possible."

And for Astro Corporation, which uses 3M's capacitive touchscreen, the technology assists the implementation of bonus games and features and completes the multigame concept, which so often goes hand in hand with the technology.

For Powell this statement is also true. "Playing via a touchscreen interface is an immersive experience. It lends greater variety in play format with games such as our own Dr Who for example – containing sub-games and puzzles that are totally dependent on the touchscreen interface that adds all the excitement."

So where do we see all this heading? How important a role is touch technology going to play in the future industry and what further opportunities will it bring?

There is the view by many in the industry that as technology advances digital products will become the mainstay of the industry. For Ludlow, without doubt the revenue from traditional AWP machines is in decline and outlets have to update their overall gaming provision in order to reverse this trend. "Utilising new digital gaming technology is the only opportunity to appeal to the huge customer base that currently does not engage with the traditional analogue coin-op offer."

For Simon Herbert of Astro Corporation, touchscreen technology will become the protocol within the gaming industry. However, at the moment each manufacturer has different protocol and it would be a good move for a plug and play touchscreen to be introduced. He said:

"We believe it will be the standard for the coin-op industry in the near future. We can think about it like years ago when we were still using CRT monitors in the slot machines, but now all the machines use TFT monitors. So we think every machine will begin using this technology as it makes things so simple and easy."



Above and below: graphics used in Astro's touchscreen game

