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March 1993
Number 104

Spelljammer • Star Control 2 • Car & Driver

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

The Premier Computer Game Magazine

Spectrum HoloByte's *The Iron Helix*

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Battles of Destiny
Three New Football Games
Comanche: Maximum Overkill

***Crusaders of the Dark Savant* Hints**

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Spear of Destiny

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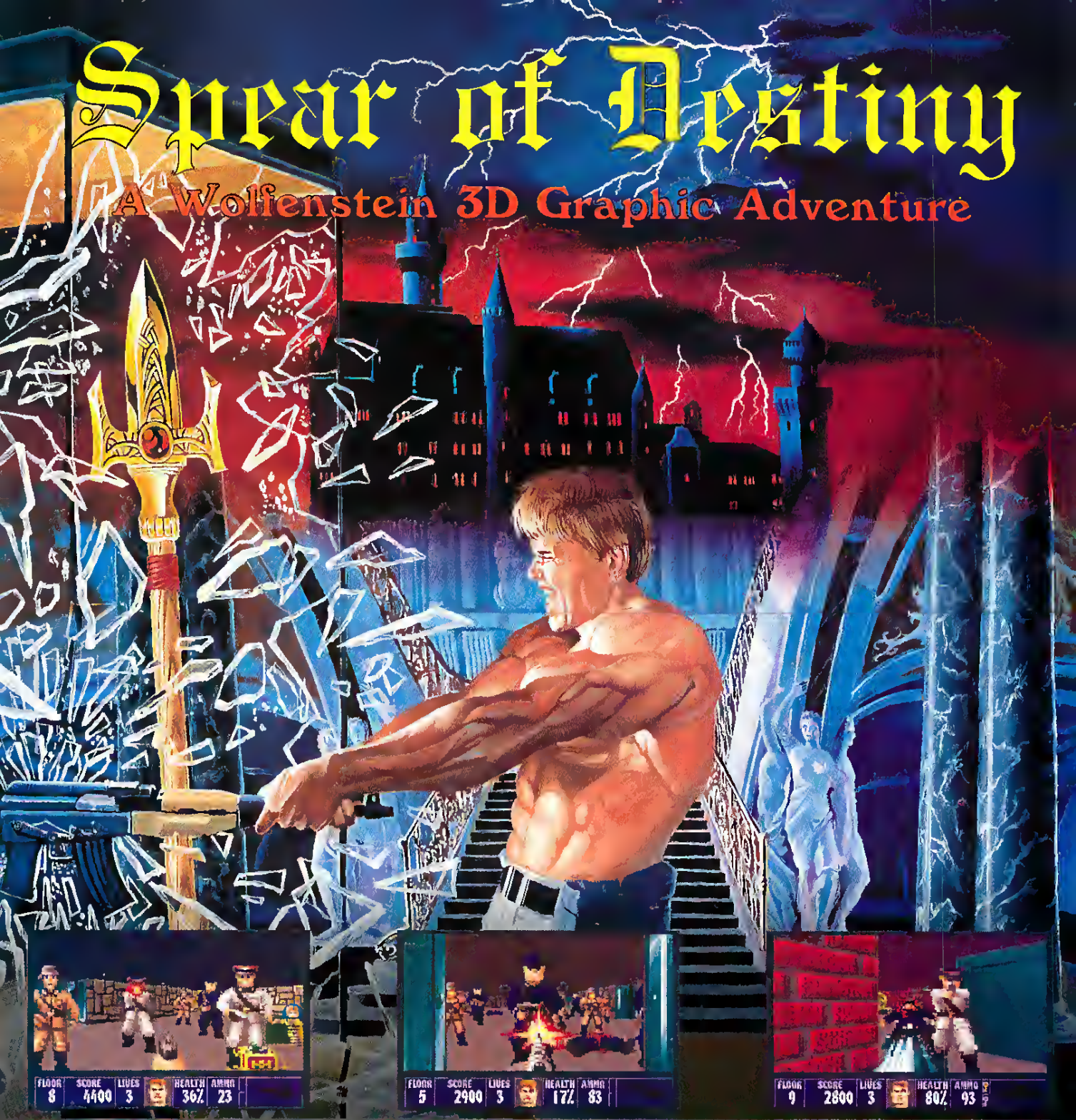

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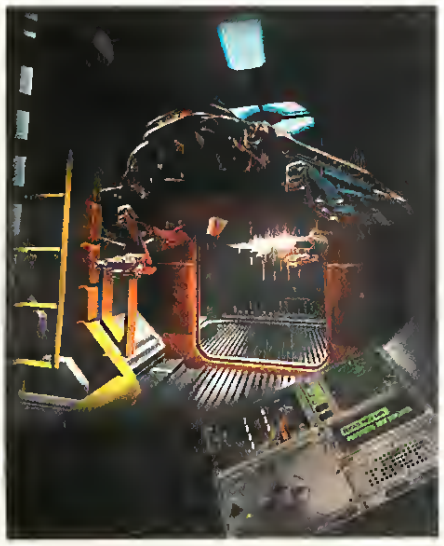

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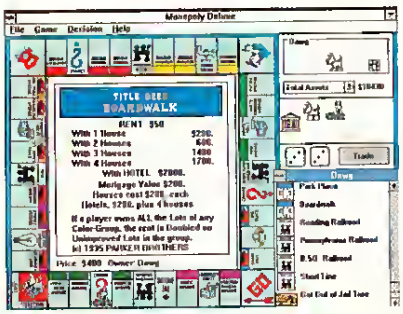

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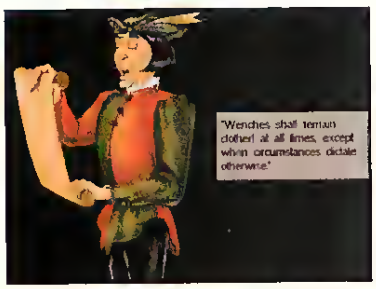

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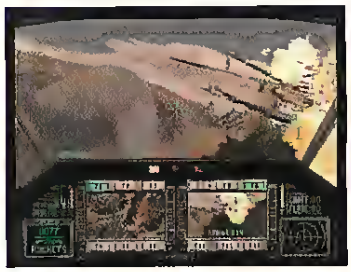

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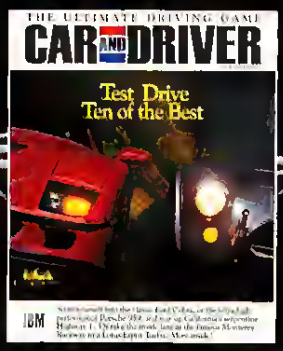

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sneak preview

I SEE A BAD PROBE ARISIN'

Spectrum HoloByte Unleashes *The Iron Helix*

by Johnny L. Wilson

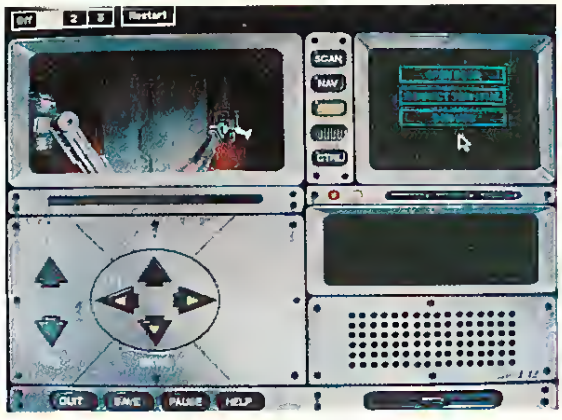
Sneak Previews are not designed to be reviews. They are feature articles based on "works in progress" that CGW's editors have deemed worthy of early coverage. These articles are not intended to provide the final word on a product, since we expect to publish appropriate review coverage when the game is finished.

Six stories toll and still dworfed by the space that surrounds it, the ship took shape and then took over my viewscreen. As I maneuvered my rusting, dilapidated probe into the leviathan ship's landing bay, I felt swallowed up by the dark maw of this malevolent ship. The massive cargo of destructive power continued to knife through space en route toward its venue of mutually assured destruction when it would deliver its lethal load and trigger the retaliation that would destroy, not one, but two sentient races.

It's an old story. The 20th century worried about the "Fail Safe" devices on the Strategic Air Command bombers, and we should have worried about the consequences of our so-called "defense" establishment. What was it my professor of Pre-Stellar History said? I think it was something like: "Those who fail to learn the lessons of pre-stellar history are trapped in a disintegrating orbit with its failures."

He was right. "The Iron Helix" is ready to deliver the death blow to humanity and its closest analog, the aliens who have been our enemies. The ship's crew is dead and our own "Fail Safe" device, those security probes, are routinely activated on an "as needed" basis to ensure that the ship actually makes its deadly delivery.

I just received a sub-space message. The big boys, the military guys, need my help. Imagine that! The big, bad defense department needs help from a naturalist with a worn-out observation probe, an unarmed probe at that. All I have to do is get access to the secure parts of that huge vessel and shut down its automated attack before the security probes blast my own unarmed probe or the ship launches the attack. Sounds simple enough, doesn't it? It just takes a miracle!

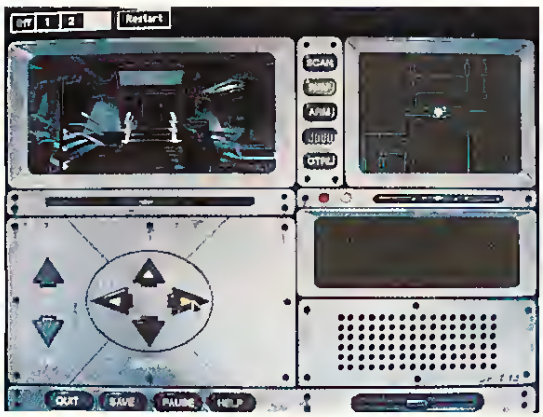


The extended fiction used to introduce this sneak preview is designed to set the stage for describing **Drew Pictures'** *The Iron Helix*, a CD-ROM release from **Spectrum HoloByte**. Shipping on the Macintosh around March of 1993, it is expected to debut on IBM compatibles prior to the summer months of the same year. As the fiction should have implied, this is not a leisurely "busy-bath" exploration of a 3-D gaming environment. Instead, the gamer will have a limited amount of time (possibly defined by the gamer himself as part of the difficulty toggle) to disarm the ship.

Further, the fiction underscores how a design constraint became an integral design element. The designers wanted to have smooth scrolling through 3-D rendered environments without sacrificing detail or game speed. As it is, the 3-D graphics window scrolls at 6-8 frames per second off a CD access time of 1.51 seconds. By limiting the action to the small graphics window and using the fictional background that the player was having to explore the ship via a remote-controlled probe, the design team was able to interweave the technical limitations of CD-ROM access time with the gamer's suspension of disbelief. Then, when the interface of the game itself took on the appearance of a dilapidated control panel, the small action window became a moot issue.

In addition, the designers were concerned about some of the poorly executed and slow responses to be experienced in other CD-ROM entertainment titles. They decided that, rather than

fooling with a limited parser and the lag time caused by accessing too much data, they would design a story where the crew was dead. As the player accesses computer terminals, he or she will eventually find video logs for some of the crew members. When these are discovered, a Quick-Time-style movie unveils some interesting and/or vital information and the gamer is not stuck with trying to figure out what to ask and how to outguess the parser.

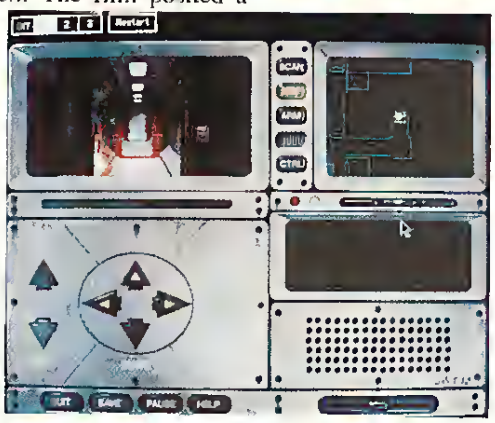


Also, the video logs and diaries get the most mileage per byte of data, since they only play about 30 seconds of data at a time before the player must get the good probe on the move and start trying to avoid the bad probe, again. This means that the player must pay close and quick attention to these segments as soon as he/she accesses them. There is no time for busy-bath exploration in this game. The player must keep that probe on the move.

Finally, the design team didn't want to have to develop an entirely new set of tools in order to create this game. They used "off the rack" programs like *Macromind Director* and an animation system from **Electric Image** to develop *The Iron Helix*. Curiously, all of the probe's navigation is handled via a text parser and interlocking databases. When one sees it work, it is actually rather amazing.

My Mother The Alien

The game play in *The Iron Helix* feels like a cross between the film *Wargames* and an old **Avalon Hill** computer game called *The Alien*. The film posited a non-military type (a hacker, to be specific) trying to use his computer skills to stop thermonuclear war. As noted earlier, the game has a limited time in which the player as protagonist must work through the probe interface (i.e. the computer) to stop the war to end all galaxies.



The Alien game had the player strategically searching an abandoned ship full of alien biological samples in order to halt their metamorphosis into lethal creatures. In *The Iron Helix*, the gamer must send the unarmed observation probe through the corridors in a search for DNA samples before the good probe is terminated by the bad probe (i.e. the security probe becomes sort of a cyberalien. The DNA samples, in turn, allow the player's probe to have access to sensitive areas and computers where the clues necessary to stop the attack can be collated. Interestingly enough, the ship diagrams depicted in the upper right hand corner of the probe interface (i.e. monitor) screen look a lot like the simple white-on-green line diagrams of the early Apple II game.

As the player sends the probe through the six levels of corridors, the message bar on the interface informs the gamer that a trace of organic material may be near. If the player's probe is far enough away from the security probe, one can scan the area and find out if that sample is one of the hundreds of useless finds or one of the eight or so important finds that are a key to winning the game.

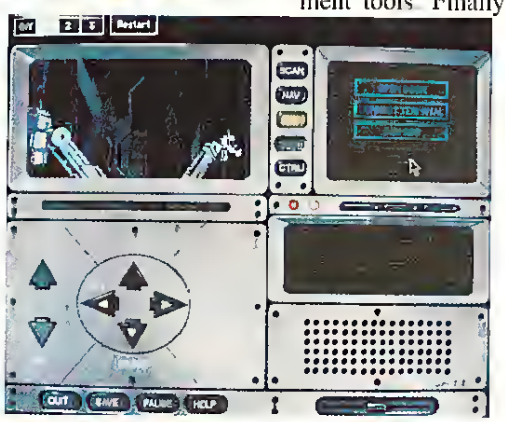
Mission Im-Probe-Able

The key to the game not being just another busy-bath CD-ROM product, however, is the artificial intelligence for the security probe. One does not have unlimited time to explore because every time the good probe accesses a computer terminal or opens a door, its position is updated for the bad probe. The bad probe's artificial intelligence divides the ship up into hierarchical trees. The routine lists all nodes which can be accessed (for opening or accessing) in a pyramidal structure and searches both up-tree and down-tree to determine where the player's probe is currently standing. Then, the bad probe uses its knowledge of the ship's layout to try to cut off the player's probe and waste it.

The observation probe doesn't have any weapons (except for the possibility of discovering a virus that can be Emailed to the bad probe via the security officer's desk), so the player must guide his/her probe through the corridors in such a way that the bad probe never gets a direct line of sight. Once an LOS is established, the bad probe automatically shoots and never misses. If the player can successfully perpetrate the neutralization of a security probe, however, a new probe is launched in four or five minutes.

The Naming of the Drew

Drew Pictures has to be proud of the fact that they were able to move beyond technological constraints and turn them into design features. They have proven that slow access time does not have to be an insurmountable problem, as long as one approaches the design logically. They have shown that a beautiful looking and potentially fine playing game can be created using "off-the-shelf" development tools. Finally, with **Spectrum HoloByte**'s backing, they should have a solid marketing plan behind the product. Finally, with both Macintosh and IBM versions of the game scheduled, *The Iron Helix* even has a chance to be one of the first multimedia entertainment products that can become a good-seller. Now, let's hope it reaches its full potential and more games take its lead in getting away from the busy-bath school of game design. **CGW**



CGW and the Whale

Special Report from the Winter Consumer Electronics Show Part 1

from the CGW Editorial Staff

It was a dark and stormy day. The rain had dampened our clothes and our spirits enough that we felt like a crew of Jonahs disgorged by a Southwest Airlines whale. The image wasn't all that inappropriate. One of us did get boarding card #13, and several of us were ready to answer the invariable avalanche of queries on the state of the industry with dour tidings of doom and gloom, along with our editorializing admonitions to "Repent! The vengeance of the consumers is at hand! Yet, three fiscal quarters and entertainment software shall be destroyed!" Well, maybe not that strongly, but we knew consumers were frustrated at: delays (many of the products we saw at the show were supposed to have shipped at Christmas '92 and at least one was supposed to have shipped at Christmas '91), bugs (the technological leaps in processor speed, memory management, sound card proliferation, *et al*), machine obsolescence (the Amiga sales drops causing many U.S. publishers to quit publishing Amiga titles and minimum requirements which do not support 286-based IBM compatibles) and the lack of follow-through on the promise of ground-breaking CD-ROM titles (since most of the present generation of CD-ROM games are either shovelware or minimally enhanced versions of successful MS-DOS versions).

Frankly, the consumers were mad and we were feeling the edge. Like Jonahs, we came to the city of heathen (Las Vegas, Ninevah, whatever it takes!) expecting more trouble than promise and, also like Jonah, we found that authentic voices (whether prophet or pundit, seer or scribe) must keep an open mind. Here, then, are our impressions of this year's Winter Consumer Electronics Show.

Buyers and publishers alike seemed pleased with the Christmas '92 season, and both entities seemed optimistic about the coming sales year. We felt pleased because there seems to be evidence that the technology is consolidating, and an emphasis on game play could be shaping up. At least, that's what this bunch of salty old Jonahs converted into Saint Johns perceived (at least *that* seer concluded his vision (the Book of Revelation) with an optimistic perspective!).

EA design team Richard Hilleman and Randy Breen confer with World Chess Champion Garry Kasparov.

The Stars Come Out (Celebrity Involvement)

Celebrity licenses have been around for a long time. Often, one simply purchases the license and creates a game around the characters, universe, situations or celebrity that makes the license valuable. The licensing agency checks the work at several points during the process, and if the game hasn't broken any fundamental rules for the agreement, the game is published as is. Sometimes, the developer has to change a pose in a shot because it is unbecoming to a celebrity or remove a scene or puzzle because it doesn't fit the "image" of the licensed celebrity or world, but it is generally a case of very little cross-fertilization between the licensor and the licensee. The good news is that this is changing in many circles. At WCES, we were particularly impressed by the involvement of World Chess Champion Garry Kasparov in both the design and promotion of **Electronic Arts'** *Kasparov's Gambit* and by the level of cooperation between **Tsunami Software** (prior to this year's releases, this company formed largely of ex-**Sierra** employees, had only published software for the Sony Bookman) and stimulating science fiction/fantasy author Larry Niven on the *Ringworld* game (originally scheduled to be published by **Electronic Arts**, but now distributed by **Accolade**). In both cases, the celebrity has had plenty of hands-on with the game as it has evolved.

Kasparov eloquently expressed the rationale for what initially appeared to be "another chess program." He noted that most chess programs on the market can beat 99% of the players and expressed his disappointment with the fact that chess programs are currently being written in order to satisfy only 1% of the chess-playing population. Also, Kasparov is an advocate of advancing the hobby so that it includes a broader base of

Larry Niven, creator of *Ringworld*, displays its latest incarnation.

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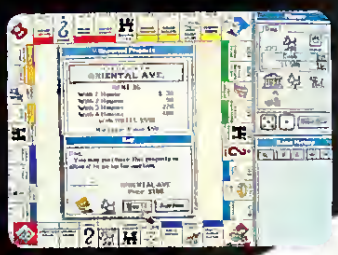
IBM PC version

WINDOWS ™ version



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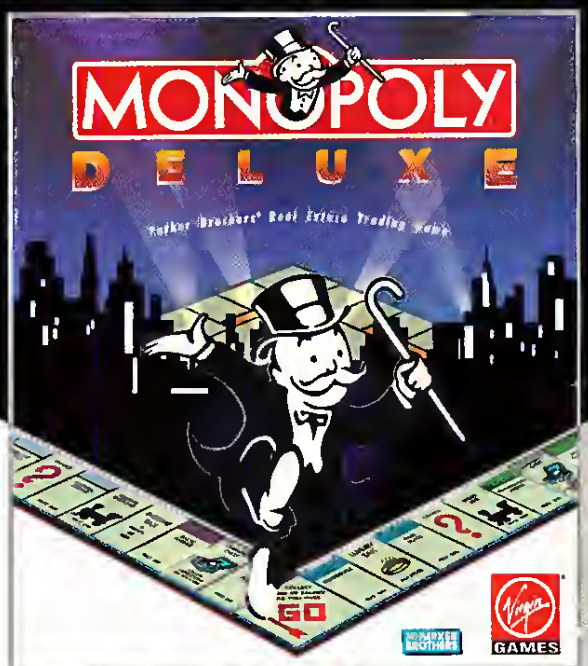

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players. So, the focus of *Kasparov's Gambit* is to provide the type of interactive experiences that would explain to the 99% *why* they are losing to computer chess games.

In addition to his long stint as World Chess Champion, Kasparov is ideal for the task because he was integral in the creation of a computerized chess database (work began in 1986) and understood the decison-making processes of the software. In fact, he defeated 32 different chess programs in 1985 (using what he self-effacingly described as "tricks" which disrupted the algorithm's logic) and IBM's *Deep Thought* in 1990. This translates into *Kasparov's Gambit* where the information from 500 annotated World Championship matches and Garry's own audio-video advice are available as the game is being played. One can quickly access information to answer questions like: "What would Fischer do?" or "How would Spassky counter that move?" as well as hear Kasparov's advice.

In a different vein, Larry Niven wasn't expected to be as involved in the *Ringworld* project as he has become. The license was originally a deal where the designers would use Niven's universe, but none of Niven's characters. Hence, the plotline was set up where the main characters would not directly interact with the player's characters. As it stands, Niven has played every version of the game all the way through and is tremendously pleased with the way **Tsunami** is developing it. He is allowing them to use some characters from the game (e.g. The Highmost) and with his characteristic generosity says that those in the **Tsunami** crew have become *almost* as good at telling stories as he is. As prolific and ingenious as Niven is, one had better read that "almost" as being fairly significant.

Another upcoming product with celebrity involvement is **Strategic Simulations Inc.**'s *Tony La Russa Baseball II* where the Oakland A's manager gets co-designer credit with **Beyond Software**'s Don Daglow. Tony's contribution was primarily to the designer's understanding of his managing philosophy and the database for Tony's analysis and suggestions. The sequel to *CGW*'s 1992 Sports Game of the Year will feature more of an old-time baseball feel (when appropriate), as well as new camera angles and digitized voice commentary by syndicated sports commentator, Ron Barr.

A's Manager Tony La Russa plays his game with Don Daglow.

Finally, **Accolade** announced licensing agreements with Brett Hull for a hockey game and Pele for a soccer. Hull has already met with Accolade and provided numerical evaluations of NHL players for the design team, but we do not know how much additional input he will provide for the overall design nor what Pele's involvement in the soccer will be. In addition, **Spectrum HoloByte** will publish **Sega**'s *David Robinson's NBA Action* for the MS-DOS market, but no information is available as to the extent of any possible celebrity involvement.

TV Magic Games (Smart TV?)

On the hardware front, two new platforms will try to get gamers to hook-up interactive technology to their television sets. Both products have a lot of technological pizzazz to offer, but the success of either will depend on the companies delivering products compelling enough to encourage consumers to purchase them.

Pioneer Electronics has built upon its laser player technology to create a unit they call *LaserActive*. This unit would allow game developers to use the capabilities of a standard laser disc to store analog data for up to 108,000 images and 60 minutes of FM sound, *as well as* 540 MB (equal to CD-I storage) of digital information or images (up to 7,000 images). This enables one to have broadcast quality backgrounds and animation/film sequences with the interactive aspects overlaid in digital images. In Japan (where the unit will debut), the master unit

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Pioneer's LaserActive

will retail for approximately $700, and the consumer can add three other units (approximately $350 each) onto the system so that it can play Sega *Genesis* CD games (Mega LD), NEC's (TTI in the U.S.) *Turbo-Grafx 16* CD games (LD-ROM²) and **Pioneer**'s own *Karaoke* discs, respectively.

The **3DO Company**, a multi-venture from companies with plenty of entertainment experience (like **Electronic Arts** and **Time Warner**), is also launching a platform that allows one to interact with television-quality images. One can play music discs, photo discs and MPEG standard video discs on the 3DO machine, and its suggested (Fall of '93) retail price is $700. The machine uses a 32-bit RISC processor, 2 MB of RAM, a multi-tasking operating system and a fast (the company claims "double speed") CD-ROM drive. Video images and sounds are handled via separate custom processors. With 27 bit planes and the capacity shown in the demo of presenting real-time light-sourced 3-D images, the potential is great.

The ROM Stranger (CD-ROM Games)

CD-ROM games are ready to hit the shelves in all shapes and sizes. In addition to *The Iron Helix* (see this issue's cover story) from **Spectrum HoloByte**, a Mac game that is soon to be converted to the MS-DOS world, new player **Pop Rocket** is just about ready to ship *Total Distortion*. The concept behind the game is that the player explores various worlds and assembles graphics and sound in order to create a music video gone wild. The edited version of the video is sent back to earth and one's potential wealth and fame is predicated on the result.

Total Distortion

Finally, multimedia veteran **ICOM** is preparing a Macintosh only title which follows in the wake of their old Macventure series (published by **Mindscape**). The new "Macventure" is called *Beyond Shadowgote*. It features 3-D graphic adventure in a Sierra-style, offers full speech and 26 different environments. Purists may be put off by the heavy amount of action sequences that are tantamount to other horizontal scrolling, running and fighting games.

On the MS-DOS side, games run the gamut from multimedia versions of existing games to CD-only titles. **Interplay** plans to publish a *SimCity* CD-ROM game with lots of video and a few game design twists, as well as a new *StorTrek* game that will feature William Shatner and Leonard Nimoy. They have also filmed the tutorial material for a multimedia version of their successful *Omar Sharif on Bridge*. They also plan to develop a multimedia version of **Three-Sixty Pacific**'s *Harpoon*. Also, **Origin** has hinted about a CD-ROM version of their long-awaited *Strike Commander* game.

In the same vein, **LucasArts** will release the *Indiana Jones and the Fote of Atlantis* "talkie" and **Virgin** will release the CD-ROM version of *Dune* (with more footage from the film to provide cinematic segues, new 3-D rendering of landscapes and a significant amount of audio dialogue to replace the text screens). In the same way, the CD-ROM versions of the *Adventures of Willy Beamish* (**Dynamix**) and *Space Quest IV* (**Sierra**) are expanded talkie versions of their hit MS-DOS predecessors. *Kasparov's Gambit* (**Electronic Arts**) will also be available as a CD product which will have more video and audio. **Novalogic** is also developing a CD-ROM version of *WolfPock*, their World War II destroyer game, originally published by **Broderbund**.

Access took a different approach to "creating" a CD-ROM version of Links. They licensed the game to **Compton's NewMedia** as part of their *Compton's Multimedia Golf Guide: California/Hawaii Edition*. This combination reference/game product allows the gamer to peruse over 750 courses and then, play *Links* (the Torrey Pines course). **Compton's NewMedia** is also experimenting with "distribution" by allowing potential customers to rent their CD-ROM products through video stores. **Major Video Concepts** will provide the distribution to video stores.

Activision's *Return to Zork* design team said that the CD-ROM version of *Return to Zork* will feature a *7th Guest* style that would enable the gamer to "walk through" a 3-D environment, but featuring the capacity for gamers to turn off the animations and conversations after experiencing them once. They have already captured more than 45,000 digital images of the professional actors featured in the product. The goal of the programmers is to create a "boot and play" game that doesn't require the kind of room on the hard drive that many CD-ROM games have demanded in the past.

As opposed to these CD-ROM *versions*, there are a number of new products which will be *initially* released as CD-ROM titles. **ICOM**'s *GGA Tour Earth Invitational* is the most improbable golf product ever, sort of a "massive" instead of miniature golf. Players attempt to conquer wacky golf courses made from internationally famous terrain (edges of volcanoes, Mt. Everest, etc.). To add to the players' entertainment, goofy commentators give shot-by-shot analysis.

Rebel Assault

The movies are another source of inspiration and source material for CD products. *Rebel Assault* is a 3-D *Star Wars* shoot-'em-up from **LucasArts**. Expected to be available on both MS-DOS and Sega (under the **JVC** label) CDs, the product will feature 15 levels of fast-paced action, as well as sound effects and full-motion video digitized from the original *Star Wars* film. Then, in another genre, **Psygnosis** (on the MS-DOS) and **Sony Electronic Publishing** (on the **Sega** Genesis CD) are developing *Bram Stoker's Dracula*. Although the basic game is largely a horizontal scrolling "shooter," the cinematic segues are taken directly from the Francis Ford Coppola film and the sets/backgrounds are rendered from the actual blueprints for the film's sets.

Although we are not aware of **Renovation**'s design team, Japanese software developer **Wolf Brothers**, using any *actual* film

Road Avenger

footage, their Sega CD driving game, *Road Avenger*, features cartoon quality Japanimation in a fast-moving and violent driving game. If a player is good enough to do everything right at maximum speed and hence, not see the different animation sequences for crashes, deaths, etc., they will still get 30 minutes of non-repeating animation by playing the game straight through.

Microcosm is a product from **Psygnosis** that uses custom film footage to take player's through the human body (and take control of a human body) via a probe. To be available on MS-DOS, this 500 MB plus game features footage that looks like a cross between the movies *Fantastic Voyage* and *Inner Space*, with some portions where the scrolling is up to 60 frames per second.

Virgin's *The 7th Guest* is a game whose introduction almost needs no introduction. The publisher has been showing bits and pieces of the game for quite a while and the stunning visuals and tremendously effective soundtrack virtually guarantee a success for this CD-ROM only product. The game play is not very rich, but the exploratory experience is sure to have most CD-ROM owners buying the adventure as a showcase to impress their friends.

Jutland

Finally, a wargame enters the picture. San Diego-based **Software Sorcery** is ready to release *Jutland*, a very cinematic and visually rich wargame based on World War 1 naval combat. The player responds to digitized voice commands and participates in six major engagements (encompassing dozens of scenarios and small actions) in order to earn possible knighthood, statues, parades and historical impact as opposed to death or, worse yet, humiliating defeat.

Finally, for something completely different, the **Revell-Monogram** company is publishing a series of CD-based products called the *Power Modeler Series*. Each will feature information and a simulation for four model cars/planes and will include a Skill Level 2 or 3 model, animated step-by-step instructions, the ability to check out possible paint jobs and see what to paint while the model parts are still on the parts trees, modeling tips *and* a sophisticated 3-D simulation in which the modeler will get to turn into a gamer and actually drive or fly the model in a sophisticated 3-D simulation that looks very competitive with other driving sims on the market. The first release in the series (Spring) is *European Racers*, followed by *American Muscle Cars* (Summer) and *High-Tech Aircraft* (Fall).

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Power Modeler Series

Face Off! (Interface Trends)

Interface technology continues to improve. Current design philosophy wants the interface to be as invisible as possible, while being as accessible as possible. Several techniques are becoming standard. For example, the graphic menu screen. Seen as early as the set-up phase for the original *Starflight* and the main menu screen for *Silent Service*, this approach was enhanced in *688 Attack Sub* and the original *Wing Commander*. It is a screen environment where the "hot spots" indicate one's menu choices. Typically, one clicks on a doorway to enter the training facility, storage bay (to equip) or briefing room (to start a mission). Naturally, **Origin**'s *Strike Commander* and **LucasArts**' *X-Wing Fighter* use this technique, but even a dissimilar product like **Revell-Monogram**'s Power Modeler Series uses the graphic menu for everything from database information on the cars (click on sales poster) to modeling instructions (click on the shop door) to the simulation (click on the overhead door leading out of the showroom).

Another standard technique is the use of pop-up windows. Whenever a decision needs to be made, the gamer can always call up just the right menu to deal with the situation. **Electronic Arts**' *SEAL Team* uses this technique with opaque pop-up menus, as does **Novalogic**'s *Comanche: Maximum Overkill* and its new mission disk with the semi-transparent pop-up windows that enable one to see the entire screen (which we first saw in **Interplay**'s *StarTrek: The 25th Anniversary Game*). According to **Novalogic**'s John Garcia, it is significantly more memory-intensive to provide the semi-transparent windows than to use the standard opaque ones.

This memory requirement may explain why **Interplay** is not using the semi-transparent windows in their full-screen, first-person perspective, 3-D rendered role-playing game, *Stonekeep*. Instead, they are attempting to keep the pop-up menus very incidental so that not only do the menus not pop-up until the player needs them, but they show up on the periphery of the screen in icon form.

Activision took a different tack in *Return to Zork*. As noted in last issue's "Behind The Screens" look at the product, the interface is

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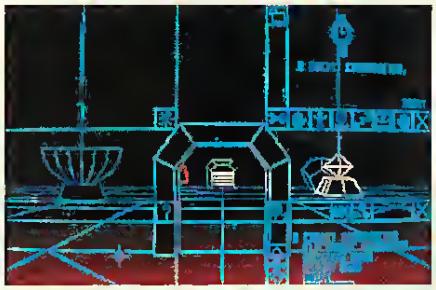
diamond-shaped, pops up wherever the cursor happens to be on the screen and allows the player to "point and click" on the animated icons that represent actual game commands.

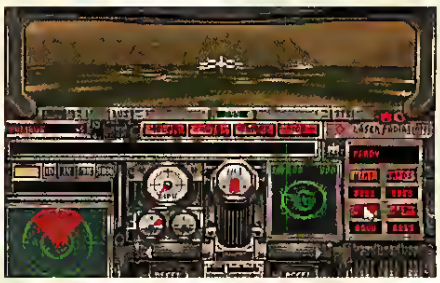


Cyber Space

Another interesting approach is being tried by Canadian-based **Empire Simulations**. Their cyberpunk role-playing game, *CyberSpace*, is based on the **Iron Crown Enterprises** "people and paper" game of the same name. It is a polygon-filled game which assumes that everyone's perspective has been "cyberized." The fiction allows the entire screen to have something of a perpetual H.U.D. (Heads Up Display) combined with the 3-D "virtual" worlds created on the fly and should keep cyberpunk fans jacked into the fiction of the game.

Spectrum HoloByte's *Tornado* has the most elegant mission-planning interface we have seen. Where other flight sims require gamers to page through screen after screen of menus in order to set-up a mission, *Tornado* allows them to select as many different options as possible through the unique management of menus and sub-menus on a single screen. In addition, the systems management for the pilot/vehicle interface is as well-designed as their mission-planning screen.

Strategic Simulations' booth at WCES



Armored Fist

Novalogic's *Armored Fist* uses a system analog approach (i.e., where the on-screen "hot spots" graphically conform to the systems which they emulate) to specific tank controls/cockpits as their pilot/vehicle interface, as well. The fascinating addition to this product, however, is the object-oriented editor that will allow gamers to create terrain and deploy platoons prior to playing out each battle. The game (originally entitled *Battlefield 2000*) also features a pull-down menu for selecting AI tactics for the tanks which the player is not controlling directly.

Finally, one cannot write of interface issues without considering the use of interface

devices. Even the **Nintendo Entertainment System** now allows use of a mouse, and it considerably facilitates the play of games like **ASCII**'s *Spellcasting: Aspects of Valar*. We noticed that more and more joystick companies were offering flight yokes and understand that **Thrustmaster** is introducing a *Weapans Cantral System Mark II*. The latter will eliminate the need for dip switches and will be programmable with the company's new interface card.

Perhaps the most impressive use of an interface device, however, was the *3-D Mouse* prototype from **Logiteeh**. **Interplay** used the so-called "flying mouse" to demonstrate *Stanekeep*. Programmer Peter Oliphant stood in front of the computer and used the infrared device to control his journey through the 3-D rendered dungeon. With the "flying mouse," he looked just like he was swordfighting with the mouse. Even with a prototype 3-D mouse and the program running on a 386/33 Mhz computer, the motions seemed natural and the game play more vivid than it would have if one were playing the game with the traditional "flat" mouse.

Strategic Heir Command (Strategy Games)

Strategy games will appear in all shapes and sizes throughout 1993. Chess games will be released by several companies with several different agendas. In head-to-head competition with **Interplay**'s established *Battle Chess* and upcoming *Battle Chess 4000* (new animation sequences which parody sci-fi classics like *2001: A Space Odyssey* and use their *Checkmate* algorithms), **Speetrum HoloByte** plans to release their *Natianal Lampaon's ChessMeister 5 Billion and 1* parody of all computer chess games; **Capstone** intends to publish *Terminatar 2: Cyber Chess*; and **Gametek** adds a variation with *Ragnarok*, an old Viking boardgame with *Battle Chess*-style animation.

Speetrum HoloByte's game uses rotoscoped full-figure animation and promises to offer the most scatological humor and graphic gore such as any Python fan might enjoy. It is also billed as the only game that will "cheat" up front and personally. **Capstone**'s product does not follow any of the movie script, but picks up on the idea of cyborgs dueling it out on the field of honor. It is expected to use the algorithms from their current chess game. **Gametek**'s *Ragnarok* not only features the animated sequences, but looks like a challenging and well-balanced game, complete with tutorial and plenty of room to save games.

Those more serious about chess are expected to gravitate toward *Kasparav's Gambit* (**Eleetronie Arts**). In addition to the tutorial and database features described earlier, the game will feature three different 3-D chess sets in SVGA graphics and allow the gamer to customize the artificial opponent. Where most earlier chess games adjust the difficulty levels by simply giving the artificial opponent more or less time to make a move, *Kasparav's Gambit* lets the gamer modify the opponent's aggressiveness, creativity, attentiveness, orthodoxy and strength. Such factors really change the face of the game, since orthodoxy will often determine whether the opponent will be in the classical style of taking the center or in the hypermodern style where one boldly snipes from the side. The default artificial opponent plays at a 2185 Elo rating).

Strategy gamers who enjoy business simulations will enjoy several new strategy games. **Impressions** is preparing a new VGA version of *Air Bucks* which will feature the types of bells and whistles that some of

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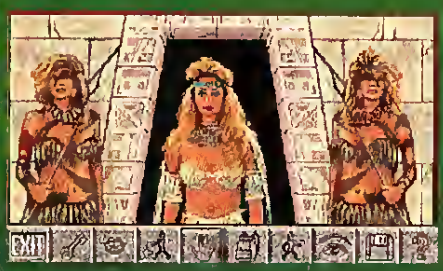

Gasp in disbelief at the lost tribe of Amazon women!*

*Actual Amazon VGA screens.
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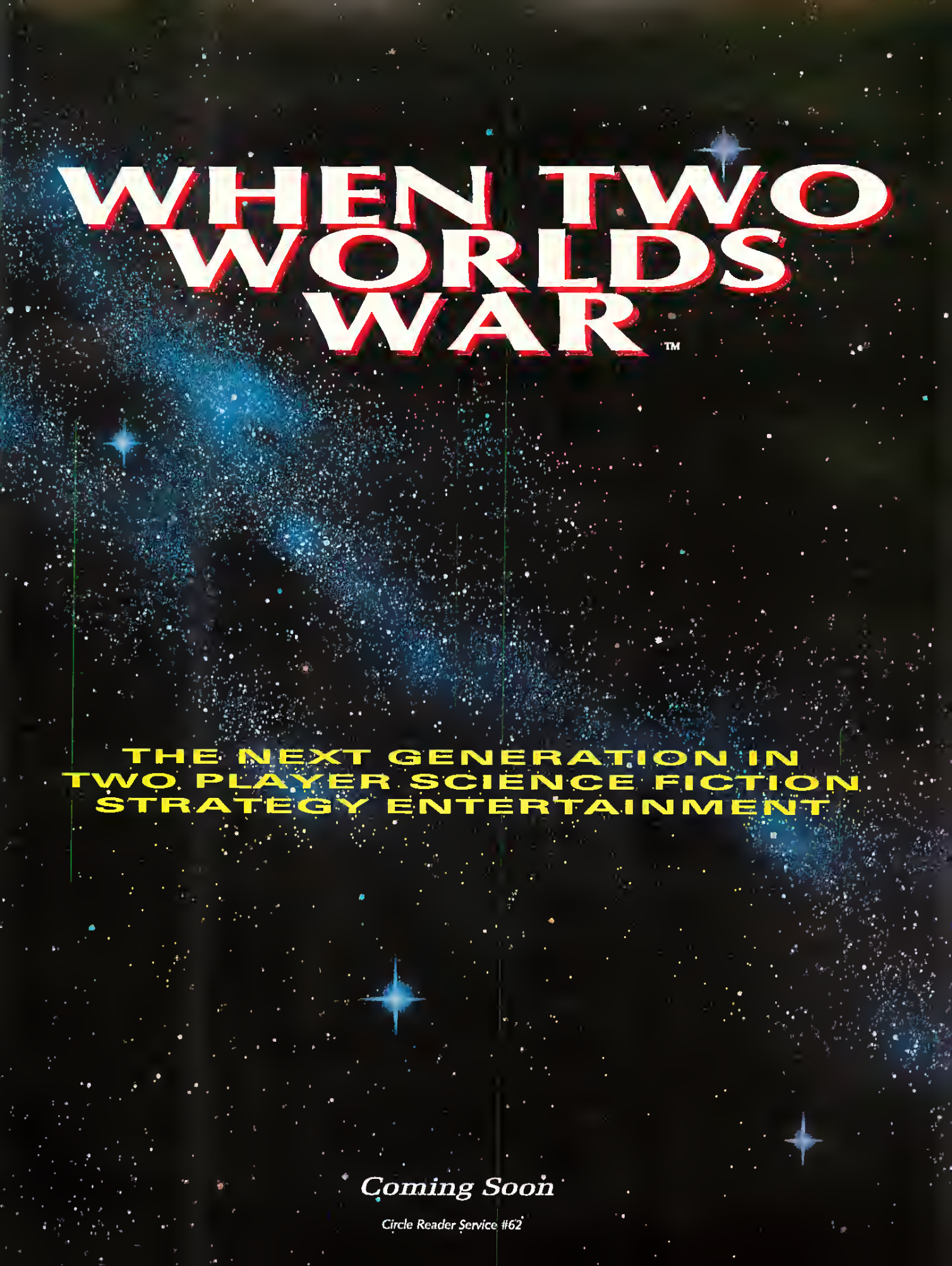
Entertainment software booths at WCES.

the owners of the original *Air Bucks* wanted. Koei tentatively plans to convert their Aerobiz SNES product into a VGA strategy game on MS-DOS in the Fall.

Would-be magnates don't have to build airlines to get rich, though. **Interplay**'s *Rags to Riches* provides a humorous, but detailed economic model of an up and coming investor. There are humorous encounters with shady characters and plenty of strategies to use in attempting to parley one's investments into millions. The game is based on a boardgame called *Speculate!*

Whale of a Good Time (Conclusion of Part I)

If one combines the trends described earlier in this article with games using SVGA graphics, announcements of new sound cards/technology and more emphasis on user-customizability, it is difficult to hang on to a pessimistic perspective. In the Bible, Jonah built a booth to protect him from the sun and went outside of Ninevah to watch it fall. God surprised him. As readers should be able to tell from the booths pictured in the article, there is a lot of excitement and optimism surrounding the entertainment software industry in 1993. Instead of pouting like Jonahs, we definitely left the show with a host of new revelations. Next month, we will provide genre-by-genre rundowns and plenty of pictures about all the new action, adventure, role-playing, strategy, simulation, sports and war games which we saw at the show. We think everyone will have a whale of a good time. CGW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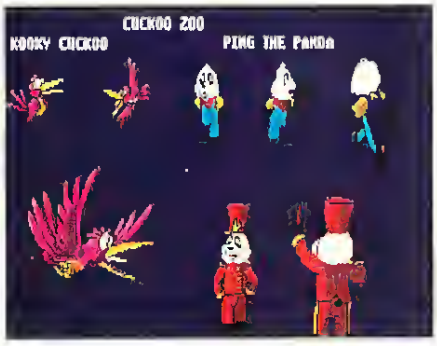
Computers Don't Teach; Software Does

The Philosophy Behind EA*Kids

In 17th century England, even common cobblers, tailors, weavers and carpenters would teach the village children how to read. Usually, these abecedarians would give the children a hornbook or battledore with the basic letters and numbers printed (or posted) on them and require the children to memorize the basics by rote.

A few of these abecedarians came up with some creative notions, however. They carved letters into blocks so that children might learn spelling, or they developed rhymes as a mnemonic device. In Colonial America, many of these hornbooks offered theological lessons (since religion was the most important thing in the world to the Puritans) where A was for Adam ("In Adam's fall, we sinned all.") rather than the Apple of today's pre-primers.



However effective these abecedarian methods may have been in teaching skills with limited scope, they didn't do much toward teaching children how to think and how to solve more abstract problems. It is also likely that the methods turned off as many students as they inspired. Of course, that didn't make too much difference, since they only needed to read enough to conduct basic business. Except for the nobility (who usually had private tutors), there was really no reason to learn to research or be motivated to read widely, since the libraries of the common man were largely restricted to the Bible, Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* and occasional pamphlets.

In today's era of information explosion, an abecedarian approach is dangerous. Children need problem-solving and information-sifting skills that cannot be learned by rote. These skills can only be learned by doing. With computers becoming omnipresent tools in accomplishing these research skills, it continues to become more and more vital to involve children in computerized learning activities.

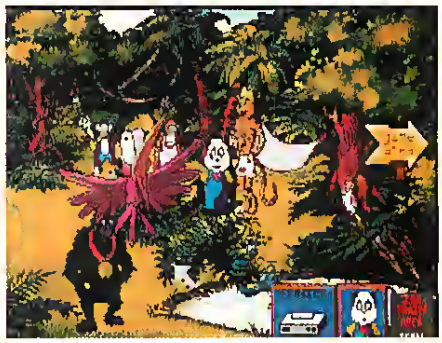
Such a need is readily discernable. This is why more and more software publishers are mobilizing to meet these needs and why *Computer Gaming World* now has a sister publication focused on *Kids & Computers*. The most obvious result, for purposes of this article, is **Electronic Arts**' foray into the "edutainment" genre.

The Digitized Hornbook

Taking their initial cue from a line by Marshall McLuhan, the Ur-prophet of media, those responsible for shaping this new line of "edutainment" software take seriously the idea that "Those who draw a distinction between education and entertainment don't know the first thing about either." That is why the company has expended the amount of resources necessary to make sure that discovery and surprise are major elements within the formulae used to create each product in the series. That is why there is tremendous emphasis on providing animated and verbal reward sequences to reinforce the child's efforts. It is also why every product is presented to an advisory board that includes: school superintendents, learning specialists, educational psychologists, computer educators and parenting advocates.

Another distinction between EA*Kids and its antecedents is that the entire product line uses a common set-up/access interface. Children love to go to the movies and to play their own videotapes of favorite movies, so all of the EA*Kids products begin at the EA*Kids theater. The theater is, essentially, a graphic menu that allows children to select their favorite programs by double-clicking on the movie poster-style icon for a given program. The side of the theater that says, "Now Playing" allows access to the programs for the children without ever forcing them to use a C: prompt, and the side of the theater that says, "Coming Attractions" presents previews of upcoming games or products. Installation of programs and removal of programs from the hard disk can all be handled (by parents) through this front end.

Further, the entire line uses on-line help pals to ensure that children do not get bogged down in the gaming/learning environments. These colorful cartoon characters serve much the same function as an inspiring teacher in that they provide assistance and encouragement as necessary, without intruding on the player's independence.



Ping and Kooky's Cuckoo Zoo is an early learning product which allows children to drive a train (in first person perspective) through four environments. The technology used to depict the train's motion is surprisingly sophisticated for a "learning" product. That was an unexpected surprise. Also, the animals to be found in these habitats are not depicted realistically (since realistic animals are sometimes frightening to young children, as anyone who has seen crying children at the zoo is likely to be aware), but as warm and cuddly caricatures of animals that are designed to become animated friends of the child. That was an unexpected, but appreciated, design decision, as well.

Through interaction with the animals in these four habitats, early learners are likely to learn to recognize colors and how to count. As a game element, however, they are also likely to have to learn how to match elements to each other whenever Kooky (a bird who is probably a distant cousin of the Cocoa Puffs cuckoo bird) flies through the scene and mixes up spots,

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stripes, limbs and heads so that the young child has to set chaos right again.

For children who are a little older, *Scooter's Magic Castle* allows them to explore a castle with an on-screen friend. The game actually reminded us of an updated *Little Computer People* (the classic **Activision** busy-box software program) with an educational agenda. Counting, matching and creativity comprise the scope of this product and, as in all of the products, on-line help is available through an on-screen companion. In this case, the companion is Theo, a wise old owl who offers advice which is much more useful than, for example, the pedantic esoterica disseminated by the owl in the *Winnie the Pooh* stories. Theo is a friend, not an obstacle.

The most intriguing innovation in the line, however, is the colorbook adventure of *Peter Pan*. Remember Maurice Molyneaux? He is the artist who developed the spaceship control interface for the original *Rules of Engagement* (**Omnitrend/Mindcraft**). A paintbox full of animated drawing accessories sit at the bottom of the screen like the musical staff in *Loom*. Whenever Peter gets into difficulty onscreen, the child selects the drawing tool by pointing and clicking on the tool and the object to be acted upon. When a useful selection has been made, a delightful animated sequence takes over and the story continues. Artistically, this product is absolutely resplendent.

For children over seven years old, *Kid Vid* allows children to create their own music videos. We thought of this as *Cartooners* with more tricks and a simpler interface. Also for older children (8-13 years old), there is *Eagle-Eye Mysteries*. This product should do wonders for improving reading comprehension and problem-solving skills. Think of it as *Scooby-Doo* without all the goofiness. The program assumes that pre-teens can think and doesn't insult them with plots that do not make sense or cases where clues are withheld.

Report Card

Naturally, with these products yet to be released, it is difficult to see how successful they will actually become. One thing seems certain, however. **EA**'s entry into the edutainment arena, along with **Sierra**'s entry into the same arena, means that **Broderbund** will no longer be the sole mainstream consumer publisher producing edutainment titles. This should be good news for parents, since it likely means that educational publishers and consumer publishers alike will push each other to a new level of excellence. **CGW**

TWIN ENGINE GAMING PRESENTS:

Out Time Days
a game of Time Travel in an alternate dimension

THE EXPERIENCE: OTD is a game of life on a strange world. Although populated by a variety of semi-humanoid races, it is nothing like the Earth that your character left behind. Gone is the industrial might of large nations. The multi-talented worker is a thing of the past. Even your famed Time Jumping skills have been checked to a certain degree. However, you do happen to be one of the few Time Jumpers on this world, and that in itself is a major strength.

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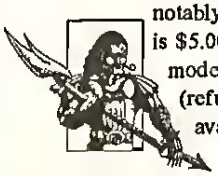
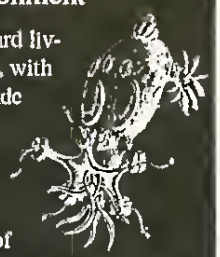


OUT TIME DAYS is a highly interactive role-playing Play-By-Mail game with turns processed weekly. It has received excellent reviews, notably from Flagship and Paper Mayhem. Turn cost is $5.00. The game is open ended and 99% computer moderated. The rulebook may be obtained for $5.00 (refundable with startup). A special startup is available that gives you the rulebook, the startup turn, and five turns for only $15.00.

Dependable, weekly, error-free turns since 1984

Space Combat
a game of pure tactical combat... in a rather unique environment



You'll be fighting in an edgeless contest zone aboard living creatures. **Space Combat** is almost all combat, with some room for diplomacy. Offensive actions include the creature's Psychic Screams to mentally disrupt others, launching Inverse Mines that will implode near your enemy, freeing Spores to destroy internals, using Nerve Pulses to paralyze pesky scouts, and Virally Infecting your opponent in the hopes of taking over their alien. Each turn comes with a special full-page graphic printout of your ending position to aid you in planning.

Space Combat was designed to be easy to learn, but difficult to master. Every game starts with ten players, and as each is eliminated, the chances of the game ending will increase. Turnsheets are custom made on a laser printer to aid you in filling out your next turn. Ten games are [illegible] turns. Cost is $3.50 per turn. A rulebook (required before you can join) is $1.00 (**free** if you mention this ad!).

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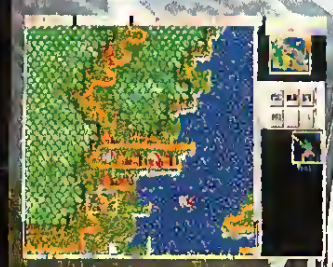

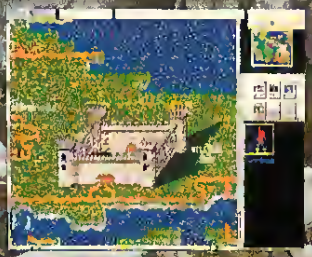

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The Rumor Bag

by Bagzilla and Hobbes

As I stomped through Tokyo Harbor on my way to Tokyo proper, I brushed aside ships with the wake from my brobdingnagian torso and my gargantuan tail. Pleasure yachts and commercial shipping vessels alike capsized in the wake of my wrath. Ordinary humans might have to play **MicroProse**'s *Task Force 1942* in order to sink so much Japanese tonnage, but film monsters don't have to play games to perpetrate destruction.

There is currently a lot of interest in Pacific Theater games, but you wouldn't find us movie monsters getting excited about an alleged deal between the designers of *High Command* and **Three-Sixty** which would put a scenario-builder and a Pacific Theater version of the game (*Pacific Command*?) on the market within the next 12 months. That may bode well for all concerned, but it's not as much fun as frying a destroyer by exhaling.

We movie monsters are made of sterner stuff. You wouldn't find us interested in the possibility of Gary Grigsby updating *Second Front* into a *Second Front II* by adding some of the *Pacific War* innovations. You wouldn't find us wondering if he were going to redo his 1985 **CGW Game of the Year** and bring out *Kampfgruppe II*. No, we monsters simply step on ships and tanks or any other weapons of destruction with our Size 10^5 feet that we defy **Nike** to shod.

I thought over all the upcoming naval games and briefly wondered what **Software Sorcery**'s *Jutland* would look like. An SVGA game of World War I naval action with digitized voice commands and digitized video clips should be rather interesting. Put it on CD-ROM and it should be even richer in both data and graphics. The madness took me over once again and I no longer cared about games, even when they are based on my favorite naval era.

The Japanese assembled their most modern technology in order to stop my rampage. I couldn't understand the orders being given in the streets, but everyone seemed very excited about something that sounded like **General Midi**, a new chip set that is being incorporated into the existing sound boards of several manufacturers. In fact, the madness receded for a moment and I remembered that **Creative Labs** is supposed to be unveiling the *Wave Blaster* at the Winter Consumer Electronics Show; a card that will provide real MIDI sound for roughly $250.

That stopped my rampage for a moment because I realized that John Ratliff's new (as yet unnamed) flight simulator is supposed to have more general midi music (scored by no less than George Alistair "Fat Man" Sanger himself) than any other published game, except for **Virgin**'s *The 7th Guest*. The new flight sim is expected to totally immerse the gamer in a world of sound which adjusts to the action a la *Wing Commander*'s "Tense-o-Meter" approach.

The madness returned. No wall of sound, no matter how versatile, could stop me! Movie monsters are characters of legend. I faltered, somewhere in the back of my reptilian mind I remembered that **National Videotext** had landed *British Legends II*, the sequel to the popular multi-player game that kept users hooked on **Compuserve** for so long. They also plan to run a version of Jim Dunnigan's *Hundred Years War* parallel to the games which are currently running on **GEnie**.

I left the harbor awash as I crunched the pier structures beneath my feet. Huge supertankers bobbed in the water like a fighting sail ship in a typhoon. I kicked in the wall of a warehouse in frustration that **Simulations Canada**'s *Man O' War* game hadn't shipped. Then, I remembered that I was too big to care that it was supposed to ship in March, 1993, along with the World War III game, *Red Sky At Morning*. I also set a small fisherman's vessel afire with a sigh when I realized that **SimCan** plans to quit publishing Amiga and Atari ST games, marking the end of an era. From now on, **SimCan** games will feature modest VGA graphic situation maps and no more printed maps and markers.

Finally, I remembered what had set off the rampage. I stormed through Tokyo. I ripped up rail lines and scattered commuter trains from Shibuya Station to Yokohama. I was absolutely furious about the misinformation I'd written in a previous column. The deal for *Tearaway Thomas* and *Ugh!*, the two Amiga arcade games to be published by **RAW Entertainment**, had fallen through after we had gone to press. I stepped on dancing teenagers in the streets of Harijuku. Then, I discovered that *Ringworld* is not going to be published by **EA** at all. It is going to be developed by **Tsunami** and published by **Accolade**. Another source told me that the on-line flight simulator that was supposed to accommodate campaigns with up to 2,000 pilots would no longer be funded. I shoved a building over and watched it fall. The next thing I expected to hear was that the rumor that **Nintendo**'s CD-ROM unit was going to turn the *SuperFamiCom* into a 32-bit processor that runs under **Unix** was false.

I pushed over another building. It landed on my foot — my modest size 9 foot, not a size 10^5 foot — and it wasn't a building, it was a filing cabinet. I looked around in vain for some puny mortals to terrorize. There were only unsympathetic co-workers frowning as my tantrum subsided. I started to clean up the disaster, so embarrassed about my "Calvin and Hobbes"-style fantasy that I didn't even get to tell them which network is supposed to be building an on-line version of *Star Fleet Battles*. Ah, well! Plenty of time for more rumors after I get myself under control. **CGW**

T.I.M.

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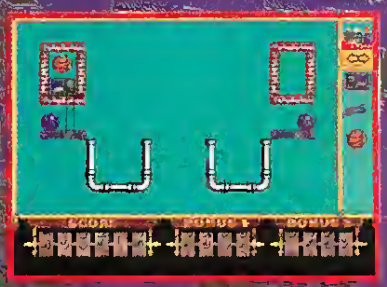

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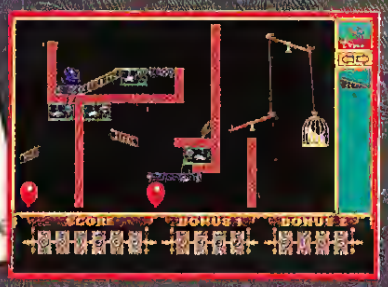

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Scorpia's Travel Guide For Crusaders

Or, How to See the Realm on Under 100 HPs a Day

Sir-Tech's *Crusaders Of The Dark Savant* is a tough game in many ways. Typical of the *Wizardry* series, it has an excessive amount of combat, so you need to be prepared from the start with the best possible team. If at all possible, bring your party over from *Bane of the Cosmic Forge*. As noted in my article last month, the characters will come in at level 5, and retain some of their equipment, including such gems as the Muramasa Blade and Holy Basher (presuming they had those items, of course!).

If you didn't play *Bane*, or have no team to bring over, then you must start from scratch. The one advantage to this is that you can give the members some points in the skills of Swimming, Climbing, Mapping, and Diplomacy right from the start. Only one person needs Diplomacy, and only one requires Mapping, but all characters will have to work on Swimming and Climbing, which are *quite* important.

As to the actual make-up of the party, there is no one "perfect mix." Different combinations work for different people, so you will just have to experiment a bit to find out what's best for your style of play. In general, classes that have spell abilities as well as fighter abilities (Samurai, Lord, Valkyrie, etc.) are better than the straight fighter type. They go up a little more slowly in level but they will be worth the wait.

Ninja are better than thieves any day and no party is complete without at least one Bishop. Bishops need to be developed carefully for maximum effectiveness. After first level, they gain Priest spells on the odd levels and Mage spells on the even ones. Therefore, it is best to put all the Academia points into the appropriate magic skill at level gain time to obtain the best results.

This is because the spells offered at level gain are tied directly to the score in the relevant magic skill. That holds true for *all* classes capable of magic. The higher the score in Thaumaturgy, Alchemy, Theology, or whatever, the better the spells your characters will have to choose from. Never stint on putting points into magic skills.

You should have at least one Fighter, Lord, or Valkyrie in the party. Sorry to say, most of the good top-drawer stuff is designed for that trio, with a few things thrown in for Bards and Rangers. Neat Items (not to mention decent armor) for Samurai are few and far between. The situation is worse for Bishops, Priests, Alchemists, Psionics and Mages, who have even less to choose from in the way of weapons and armor. All you can do there is hope that something usable by those classes will turn up from time to time.

The alternative is to bring a character along to a certain point, then switch class to something else; for instance, switching a Priest to a Lord. That will give the character access to the better equipment, although he or she is back at level one and has to be developed all over again in the new profession. Still, some players find this a good way of working up a powerful party, so choose whichever method suits your inclinations.

Speaking of weapons, remember that the people in the back ranks can fight, too. Get extended or long-range weapons (quarterstaffs, bows, slings, whips) into their hands as soon as possible. Spell power is going to be pretty limited for some time, and there's no reason to have half the party standing around doing nothing during combat.

One thing you may have problems with later in the game is spell failure. Even my 30+ level mage with 100 Oratory and 100 Thaumaturgy had 7th level spells fizzle out far too often (ditto for other classes). You can generally avoid this by having several people cast spells at a lower level. Two or three Nukes at power level 5 can do just as much, if not more, damage than one 7th level Nuke. Casting at lower levels is also less draining on stamina and spell points—an important consideration.

Once you get into the game proper, you will soon find there is much more to be done than mere fighting (although combat is a major part of *Crusaders*). Many puzzles must be solved, items obtained, and NPCs dealt with along the trail to the Astral Dominae. This is the point where people can start running into problems.

The game's "open design" allows the party to go almost anywhere, provided they can handle the hostiles in a particular area. Unfortunately, this means that players can wander around for a long time, gaining character levels, but not progress-

Wolfenstein 3d

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ing very far towards the game's objective. Everything is so spread out among different locations that finding any sort of path through the game can be difficult.

The ultimate goal is the Isle of Crypts. You need Wikum's Boat (complete with power globe), the Wand Majestik, the Key of Dragons, the Legend Map, the Crystal Map and Vitalia's Device. If you lack any of these items, stay away from the Isle. Otherwise, you'll just be making a lot of extra work for yourself running back and forth to pick up what you're missing. Collect everything first, and life will be a little easier in the crypts.

Probably the best place to start is New City. Imports from the "trash Bane" ending of *Wizardry VI* and newly-created teams start in the vicinity of the town. Imports will have to find a way around the orchid patch (level 10 or better needed to cross safely); new teams can walk right in, but do stop off in the beginner dungeon first for some experience and explore the outdoors for the map kit (to enable automapping).

Not everything will be open to you. The T'rang House, Umpani Detache, Condemned Area, and Forbidden Zone must wait until later in the game. The Twisted Heads Puzzle in the Museum must likewise wait for later. These areas aside, you should be able to get in everywhere else. Be sure to buy some bananas at the inn and check out the statue in the fountain.

After that, you have several choices on where to go next. Below is a list of major locations with some highlights for each place. Areas in parentheses indicate places that you should do beforehand, either to save time or because they have items you need in the current location.

Orkogre Castle (New City) — Visit the barracks under prison level. Pick up a jar of Munk Innards (icky, but you need it later; one is enough). You must get into Murkatos' Sanctums (Outer and Inner); the steelplate will help. Talk to the king.

Munkharama (New City) — Answer the Well Riddle. Find your way to the Land of Dreams and go through it. The pipe and pastille are very important. All of the items offered at the end are good; save early and check each one out, then restore to pick the one you like best. Find the four special gems (swimming necessary).

Hidden Temple (under Munkharama) — Explore thoroughly with an eye out for wall buttons. Visit (heh) the Lord of the Dark Forest (Munk's Key needed). Be sure to enter all the little side rooms. Do *not* enter the pit/lever/grate room until after you have taken out Lord DF. Watch out for a very nasty trap in the power globe room.

Dane Tower — This is the only standalone dungeon (nothing needed from outside). Buy two bags of Jonga powder. You will have to take out both the Demon and Magna Dane; Magna is better done first.

Ukpyr — Join the Scouts and follow orders. Search thoroughly after the attack.

Rattkin Ruins — (Orkogre, Nyctalinth, Sacred Grove) Join Thieves Guild. Stop in at Bertie's and buy the unusual item. In the Funhouse, the most difficult puzzle is the water slide. The rope/bar must be in place before you fiddle with this. Only three levers need to be pulled. Visit the Razuka; Don Barlone can help with the Condemned Area in New City.

Nyctalinth — Talk to H'Jenn-Ra twice (accept or decline Shritis' offer as you please; be sure to open the chest!). Clear out the town. Wake the Savant Guards in the cellar. Dig around in the graveyard. There are two ways up from the great caverns; you must find *both*.

Dragon Mountains (Curio Museum, Rattkin, Dane Tower) — Can only be entered at night. Be prepared for *BROMBADEG*. Explore the caves thoroughly.

City of Sky (Dragon Mountains) — Many invisible walls here so get out the graph paper and make your own map. Pick one item from the museum (after you have the Key of Light). The Light Sword is best; needs no power packs and does terrific damage against killer robots (good as a general weapon, too). Take the Crusaders test. Save yourself a lot of time; break down the second door (Strength 18+ for each party member necessary). Search the ship completely.

Witch Cave (Giant Cave, Haunted Forest) — Simple matter of rambling through and defeating the four evil witches. The Giant Cave is south of this one; the forest is west of the north road from Ukpyr. Giant cave *must* be done first. Haunted Forest must be visited at night.

Whirlpool Cave (Curio Museum, Witch Cave) — The Sphinx Map will tell you what needs to be done here. Be sure to search carefully and do some swimming.

Isle of Crypts — Nasty, nasty place. Traps on the upper levels, so go carefully. Some can be avoided, others can't; eventually, you can turn them off as in Dane Tower, but it will be awhile. Below crypts is the Chamber of Gorrors; there are six Gorrors, all optional (the best stuff is in those chests). Ra-Sep is the easiest (a true wimp); the Beast of 1000 Eyes almost impossible (even in "easy" mode). The rest are very tough but possible. You must find the Jewel Of The Sun here (not in a Gorror room). Further down is the infamous teleporter maze; patience required. You want to end up in the Crystal Room, where solving the puzzle leads to the final level.

This place is guarded by killer robots, who are mean opponents. You must go all over the level (every spot) before you can enter the Tomb Of The Astral Dominae. At this point, assistance is needed to reveal the Dominae itself. The party should be at its peak, with protections up. If things go very badly, use the Elysiad.

Finally, a word or three about maps. These items are important; hidden within the elegant language are clues to solving several of the puzzles in the game. The name of each map indicates what puzzle it is needed for: the Temple Map, for example, tells you how to get into the Hidden Temple of Munkharama, and the Serpent Map how to get into Dragon Mountains. Only the Legend Map has no text; it is the one map that is physically used (and must, therefore, be in your possession).

Maps are generally found in chests, but on occasion, someone else may have gotten there first. In that case you will need to use the Trade option when talking to NPCs (stationary or wandering) to see if they have a map for sale. Maps can be discarded after they have served their purpose. Good luck! CGW

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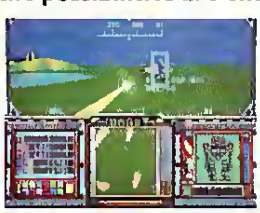

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Starry, Starry Fight

Accolade's *Star Control II*

by Stanley Trevena

Sequels are rarely as good as originals, and hybrid games are often less than the sum of their parts. Yet, *Star Control II* from **Accolade** not only goes where no sequel has gone before, but proves that with the right synergy and technology, a sequel can be exponentially greater than the sum of its parts. *Star Control II* is as much of a sequel to the *Starflight* series as it is to the original *Star Control*. This should be good news to lovers of the award-winning *Starflight* series, since there are no announced plans for a third installment to the series and *Star Control II* is the closest one can get to the rich, whimsical universe inspired by the capricious and irrepressible Greg Johnson.

Caught in an Ur-Quan-dry

Although introductory fiction is typically quite mediocre in computer games, usually only read after the game has been played a few hours and background information becomes necessary to understand the story, this is definitely *not* the case in *Star Control II*. Though the plot is a rehash of many 'star saga' themes, it is well-written and engaging. The story picks up at the end of the war between the Alliance of Free Stars and the Ur-Quan with their Hierarchy of Battle Thralls. In 2134, faced with eventual defeat at the hands of the Hierarchy, Captain Burton led a task force of heavy cruisers on a deep recon into previously friendly territory. Unexpectedly, the group was ambushed by an elite force of Androsynth Guardian com-

bat vessels and the task force was all but destroyed. Captain Burton's ship was badly damaged but escaped destruction by creating the appearance of burning up in a close fly-by of a nearby sun. With the Androsynth ships off their tail, the Tobermoon limped to

TITLE	Star Control II
SYSTEM	IBM AT, PS/2 $ 100% Compatibles
PRICE	$59.95
PROTECTION	Star Map Look-up
DESIGNER	Fred Ford, Paul Reiche III
PUBLISHER	Accolade San Jose, CA

a nearby system and landed on the planet Vella II. Here the small group of humans would spend the next twenty years of their lives, marooned and disconnected from the events unfolding back at home on Earth.

The Hierarchy won the war and began to systematically destroy or enslave the various worlds throughout the known universe. Conquered races were given the choice of fighting for the Ur-Quan as battle slaves or being quarantined on their homeworlds, encased in an impenetrable planetary shield. As Burton's crew struggled to survive, their homeworld was encased by the Ur-Quan. Little did the survivors know, but the planet they crashed on contained ancient technology of a long vanished race known as the Precursors. Professor Famsworth would uncover a robotic Precursor starship factory. There were limited resources and only the skeleton of a great starship was able to be built. With this starship, twenty years later, the player's character carries the only hope of freeing Earth and defeating the Ur-Quan once and for all.

500 Points of Light

The known game universe consists of 3,000 planets in 500 star systems, lavishly presented in 256-color VGA graphics (not only is VGA a requirement, but a 20Mhz '386 is recommended, as well). Gone are the crude patchwork worlds of the *Starflight* series. Instead, fractal-generated planets are stunningly rendered and the player's ship orbits around them as they revolve. Scattered about these planets the player will discover 20 different alien races with which to interact.

Speaking of interaction, the interface is elegantly simple, using either a joystick or keyboard. All interaction is done in a point and click manner. In fact, when playing from joystick, the only time a player needs to touch the keyboard is when typing a save game name. (It is strongly recommended that the player save his game often.) Further, with the Starflight tradition behind the design team, it should not be surprising that the game requires 9.2 MB of disk space to handle the more than 100,000 words of dialogue that enrich the character interaction, as well as the graphics.

The universe may be vast but time is of limited quantity. The player starts his/her quest in February of 2155. It is soon discovered that the current timeline will lead to destruction in March of 2159. There is no time for a leisurely tour of the star systems. It is the players primary goal to systematically explore surrounding worlds, make alliances with other races and ultimately stop the aggression of the Ur-Quan.

Horatio Alger of the 22nd Century

The first phase of the game can best be described as dragging one's self up out of the

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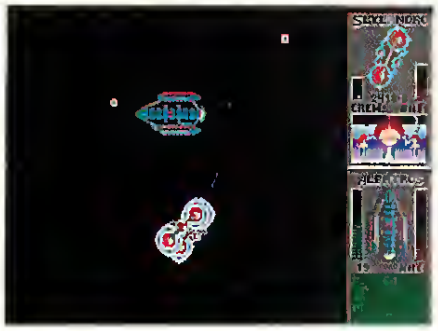

gutter of interstellar poverty. Equipped with a bare skeleton of a starship and a handful of planetary landers, the player must set out and prospect new worlds for the raw materials needed by Starbase to build new components for the starship. The starship can dock up to 12 escort vessels to assist in combat when it becomes necessary. At first the modules are basic (additional landers, thrusters, attitude adjusters, etc.), but as new alliances are forged, newer ships and modules will be produced.

Once the starship is at a minimum readiness, the player will want to strike out in search of friendly oppressed races waiting for a leader to free them from their slavery status. This stage of the game is best described as the diplomacy phase. Being diplomatic not only means knowing what words to use, it is also knowing when not to mince words and rather draw one's sword. The combat system for *Star Control II* is taken directly from *Star Control I*. Gravity and inertia are major physical influences placed on your ship in battle. Planets and asteroids litter the combat area, and it is best to steer clear of planets, as collision can severely cripple or destroy a ship. Almost all ships have a primary and a secondary weapon. Mastery of these weapons is essential for success.

A separate program is provided for honing combat skills. This game, Super Melee, is a stand alone program that is executed separately from the *Star Control II* program. Not only will Super Melee allow the player to set up different mixes of ships and wage war between them, a modem option is provided so teams can play head to head in cyberspace. If all this arcade action scares some readers, they need not worry; there is a Cyber setting in the combat menu of *Star Control II* that allows the computer to handle all the battles.

Travel between systems is done in Hyperspace. Hyperspace is another dimension that transcends normal space. While in Hyperspace, the player will not only have to monitor for other systems, they will have to be on the lookout for other ships. A collision with another hyperspace pocket will result in an encounter, be it friend or foe. Hyperspace travel will take the player quite a ways into *Star Control II*. A Starmap is always available to the player. The Starmap shows an updated display of all systems, spheres of influence of known races, and has an autopilot feature. One need only select a target location, press button #1, then button #2 and one's ship will proceed to the selected location unless intercepted by another ship.

Feelin' Quasi

In order to complete the game in the allocated time, mastery of another dimension known as Quasi-space will be necessary. There are only two ways to enter Quasi-space, one is a technology that will have to be discovered in the wreckage of an Ur-Quan ship, and the other is a warp nexus to the Arilou homeworld (those pale E.T.'s with the big black eyes that occasionally make the evening news in current day Earth; yes, present day E.T.'s are explained in this game). This warp nexus will appear as a star in Hyperspace once a month for a period of three days only. Discovery of this warp nexus and Quasi-space are vital to the game.

One of the first alien races to be encountered are the Melnorme Traders. This race, like the discovery of Quasi-space, is vital to the successful completion of the game. The Melnormes do not use the currency of the player's race. They pay for information and then sell information back to the providers of this information. The Melnorme are interested in the locations of rainbow worlds and data on alien life forms. The player is well advised to collect as much data for the Melnorme as possible--there is no way around trading information with them. They will also sell technology for upgrading both the player's starship and landers.

Much like that in the *Starflight* series, *Star Control II* has some of the best dialogue ever encountered in this genre. The storyline is well developed and occasionally takes byways through the absurd, always with tongue-in-cheek. This reviewer enjoys a good mix of comedy with his games, but must warn gamers new to this game's universe that the humor is sometimes silly and broadly drawn (sometimes, even as sophomoric as the bad puns in *CGW*'s subheads and article titles).

Star Control II has been placed on this reviewer's top ten list of all time. This has been one of the most enjoyable games to review all year. It is not often that such a perfect balance is struck between role playing, adventure, and action/arcade. Often, with this sort of hybrid one of these components is lacking and ends up being a distraction, detracting from the overall enjoyment of the game. With a sequel hinted at in the end of the game, this reviewer looks forward to more installments with great anticipation.

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Mastering *Star Control 2*:

Blasting Ur-Quons isn't everything, it's the only thing!

by Roger "Star Tzu" White

Upon starting a galaxy-spanning adventure in *Star Control 2*, the default starship can fly and shoot, but it doesn't do either well. So, the initial goal is to find efficient ways to improve the mother ship's potential (in other words, make it a real "mother"). To make this happen, there are two places that have to be visited, *often*: Earth, orbiting Sol, and Alpha Centauri (the super giant star nearest to Earth).

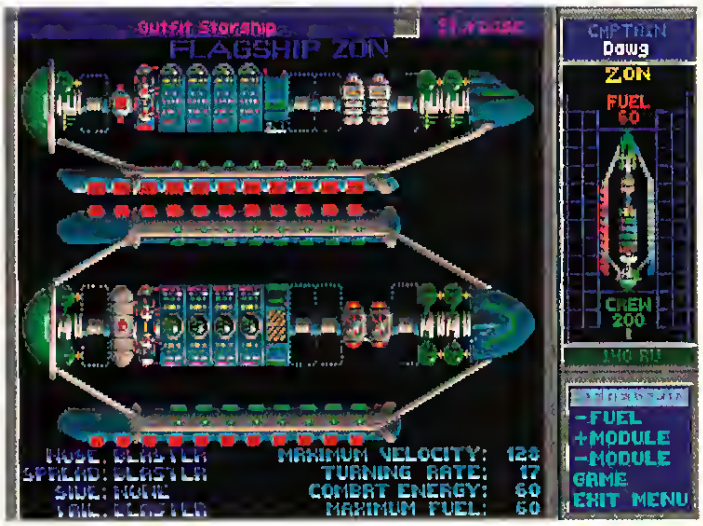
At Earth, a starbase circling the planet supplies one with fuel, crew and manufacturing facilities in exchange for minerals; at Alpha Centauri, the Melnorme are alien traders who provide fuel, information and technology in trade for biological specimens and the locations of "rainbow planets." In turn, these minerals, biologicals and rainbow planets are found by exploring the planets circling stars, and Sol is a good place to start. Hint: don't try Venus at this point; it'll toast the lander within seconds of landing, but Mercury has some valuable ore deposits that need to be harvested at this point.

The wise player will use the first minerals brought to the starbase commander to purchase a speed improvement for the ship. Things happen quickly in this galaxy and the faster one can get from place to place, the more time there will be to prepare for the coming Ur-Quon Armageddon. Speed also makes it easier to run from enemies that one isn't yet strong enough to fight.

Once the ship is fast, it is necessary to enhance the mother ship's other capabilities. Increasing the carrying capacity and fuel supply enables one to stay out exploring longer and hence, accelerate the rate of improvements for both the mother ship and the star ship.

Mining for Fun and Profit

The most productive stars to start with are the middle-sized stars, then the smaller stars. Planets around the large stars are the richest of all, but conditions are usually so hostile on the surface that the lander gets destroyed before it can get the goods loaded.



If a world has valuable goods — radioactives or exotics — but is hostile, it is possible to profitably pluck off ore deposits by landing, running over a single deposit, then boosting off before the entire crew gets killed. As the captain sang in the old *MAD* magazine musical parody of *Star Trek*, it's nice to have "A Crew That's Dispensable" (sung to the tune of "Age of Aquarius").

In the early stage, gamers will find themselves expending a lot of crew, fuel and landers for cargo, but one should not be profligate in this spending. The potential crew supply, in particular, is limited because there are only 2000 crew available on the starbase. Explore the worlds close to Sol in order not to use up too much fuel or time. Carefully study the weather, temperature and tectonics of the worlds before landing. Pass by those those that are greater than Class Three as too hostile. The good news is that the crew limitation will not last forever. After one solves the Shofixti mystery, unlimited crew reserves will open up.

As soon as a couple of planets worth of biologicals are successfully harvested, the next step is to buy technology from the Melnorme to increase the efficiency of planetary exploration. One of the things they sell are lander improvements so one's lander can resist storm, earthquakes, biologicals and heat. It is worthwhile to spend all early biological cargo on Melnorme technology. Once one's efficiency at collecting minerals and biologicals is improved, it becomes cost effective to land on all kinds of planets with impunity and then, one can afford to buy information.

During this first phase, it is not necessary to interact with any aliens other than the Melnorme traders. Take the time to find cargo, buy technology and fill out at least half the modules on the mother ship before moving on to Phase Two — alien interaction.

Getting Help from Friends...and Enemies

Once the mother ship is reasonably equipped, it's time to find out what's happening in the galaxy. To do this, simply head for one of the dotted circles on the Hyperspace star map and find an alien to encounter. Once again, save time by starting with the closer races.

There is one exception to this "start near" rule of thumb: the Spathi, whom players are destinted to meet if they are diligent about exploring the Solar system, have a clue that can lead one to the Arilou. Since the Arilou have a tool that can help one

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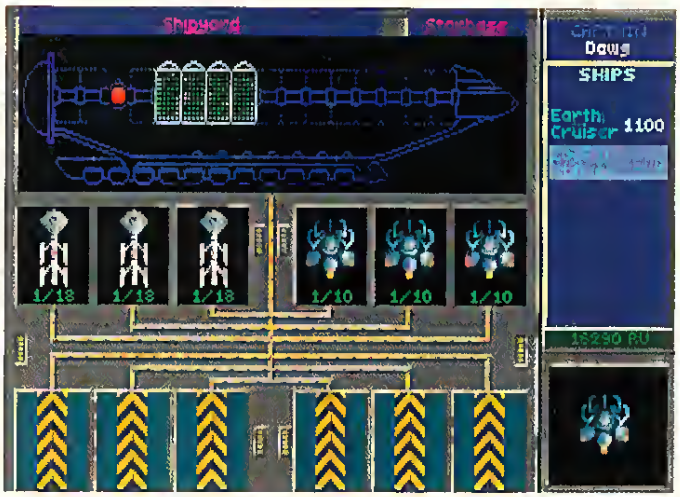
move quickly about the galaxy, making the Spathi homeworld one's first alien visit can be very profitable.

Each alien has an interesting story to tell and each story provides clues for solving puzzles with some other alien race. Hence, it is always wise to initiate contact with a diplomatic effort, even if war is likely. About half the races to be encountered start out as enemies. They will talk for a while, then fight. About half the races start out as friends. They will talk for a while, then leave, unless they are provoked or engaged in prolonged foot-in-mouth choices during interactive conversations.



Encounters with each kind of alien are basically of two types: a home world encounter and a non-home world encounter. It is easy to tell when it is a home world encounter because the screen fills with uncounted enemy ships (well ... not *quite* uncounted, there are 44, but I've killed as many as fifty Ilwraths at their home world and they just kept coming, so there are an uncounted number waiting off-screen.). The stories told by aliens are different when they are on their home worlds and home worlds are the venues where any special events dealing with the race will take place. So, visits to the home worlds are worthwhile, but combat at a home world is virtually useless. If the parley erupts into a fight, discretion definitely becomes the better part of valor. Combat is more efficacious at non-home world encounters.

Most home worlds, and most unusual worlds of every sort, are the innermost planets of a star system. When looking for something unusual in a star system, start with the inner world.

Fighting for Fun and Profit

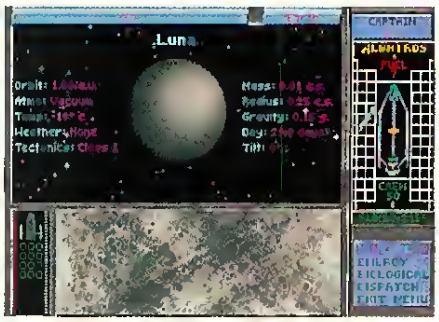
When travelling through hyperspace, it doesn't take long to discover that there are other black blobbies traveling there, too. This means that one is free to try "space mining" as a way to fill those "hungry" cargo bays. Space mining is looting the hulks of ships which one encounters and destroys in space. Of course, one must destroy them before they can be looted.

This is where tactical-level *Star Control 2* begins. It's much like the original *Star Control*, but the computer opposition has been improved a bit, so hot shots who waltzed through the original should be prepared for a surprise. These silicon-brained boys can fight!

Fortunately, players who adequately equipped their mother ships before venturing off into alien space will discover that it is their most formidable fighting ship. It is wise to plan on sending it into all the battles. Gamers also have the option of buying more daughter ships during their equipping phases. They are a good investment, but only after the mother ship is performing at an optimal level. Spathi daughter ships are the best because they hold the most crew. As the game evolves, however, players are faced with plenty of interesting tradeoffs to consider.

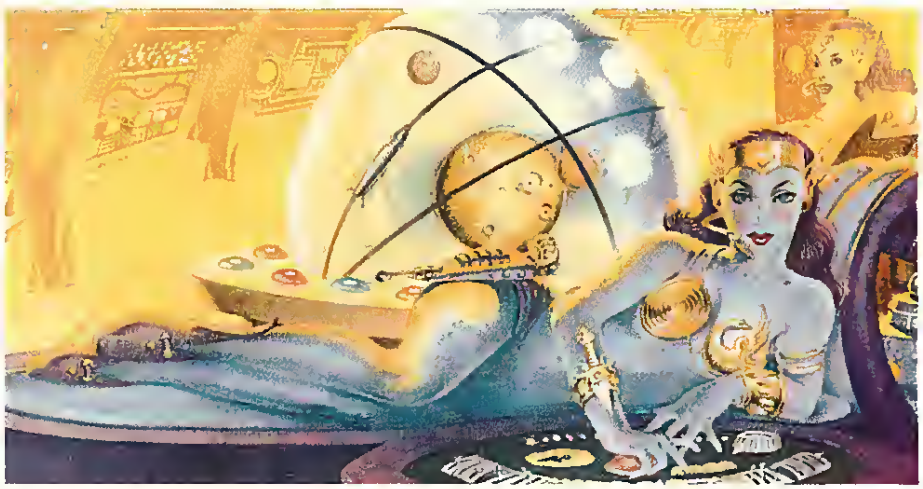
Dynamos reduce the recovery time between shots. Crew pods give ships more damage-absorbing capacity. Trackers turn shots into homing "missiles," but they take enough energy that one cannot shoot as often. It is possible to mount weapons front, aft and sideways, but the more guns mounted, the larger the amount of energy expended with each shot. Conversely, one may want to collect cargo instead of fighting, so there is a tradeoff between having a lean, mean fighting machine or one that can bring home lots of goods.

Fortunately, when at Earth Starbase, one can exchange modules without penalty, so prior to each expedition you can outfit to match your goals for that excursion.



Beyond Phase 2: Solving the Puzzle

Once the mother ship is well-outfitted, the game's goal shifts to saving the galaxy. This is the "solve the puzzle" part of *Star Control 2*. Talk to the aliens; listen for clues. Shoot up those that are hostile and deliver information or items to those that are going to become friends and allies for Ur-Quon Armageddon. All those fun things that are a day in the life of a save-the-universe starship captain. But, that's another story. CGW



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Three Top Computer Bridge Games

by David E. Lindeman

I'm not quite sure how it came to be, but Contract Bridge has developed an aura similar to that surrounding polo or croquet — a game played by dilettantes or an earlier generation. Even my friends who are avid players of games such as Hearts, Spades, and Pinochle seem intimidated by the complexities of bridge auctions, much to the dismay of the American Contract Bridge League. Fortunately, there are a number of fairly recent computer bridge games to help the player work out the kinks in his or her bidding before visiting the local bridge club. We'll talk about the top three: *Omar Sharif On Bridge*, *Grand Slam Bridge II*, and *Micro Bridge Companion*.

Before I get started, I should point out a few things about the review. Bridge is first and foremost a game of communications and those who play quickly develop a whole series of partnership agreements on the meaning of certain bids, leads and discards. A person with a different set of agreements might react differently to the pre-programmed bidding and play patterns of the games included in this review. I consider myself an intermediate bridge player and I have written this review presuming a basic knowledge of Contract Bridge. I personally consider bridge to be the best card game going and one of the finest games of any type known to humanity. I heartily encourage anyone considering bridge as a hobby to buy one of these products, learn the basics, find a partner and go visit the local bridge club. It's definitely worth one's while.

State of the Art

The first "big-time" bridge game was the original **Cybron Software**'s *Grand Slam Bridge*, published in 1986 by **Electronic Arts**. It set a standard for appearance and playability. *GSB* supported a variety of bidding options, simple sound effects, and had very legible EGA graphics. With selectable deal modes to help work on weak spots in the player's bidding and play, it stood on top of the pack for five straight years. It was not without faults, having not only an unpleasant tendency to ignore the selected bidding conventions at times and a very hard time figuring out when to unblock suits (playing high cards under high cards in the long suit to allow one to take every possible trick), but also tending to ignore the player's discards.

The New Breed

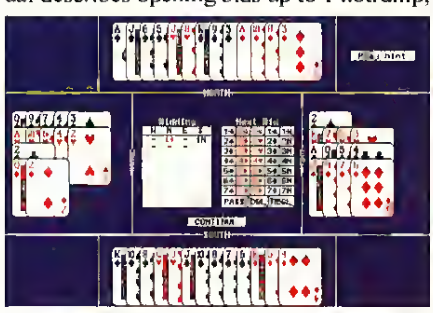
It was a long time coming, but competition finally arrived. Each is supported in some fashion by a well-known bridge master: *Grand Slam Bridge II* has practice hands from Mike Lawrence, *Micro Bridge Companion* has hands by Alfred Sheinwold, and *Omar Sharif on Bridge* has the name of Omar Sharif. The question, of course, is which plays like it?

Omar Sharif On Bridge

Omar Sharif, besides being a well-known actor, is a bridge master of no small accomplishment. It is quite possible that one's local paper carries the bridge column that he co-authors. Unfortunately, he seems to have had little else to do with the game that bears his name. The game, written by Chris Emsen and published by **Interplay**, is visually attractive and features Mr. Sharif's digitized voice announcing dealers, contracts and leads.

The opening menu is very simple: select a play mode (random, manual, or saved) and begin playing. Scoring is done as rubber bridge, which is to say that every time the player selects "play," he plays hands until one side scores two games. Each player can be human or computer. The game uses pull-down menus and hot keys, and provides hints upon request.

Trouble begins during bidding. The manual describes opening bids up to 1 notrump,



TITLE:	Omar Sharif On Bridge
SYSTEM:	IBM (MS-DOS & Windows)
PRICE:	$49.95
DESIGNERS:	CP Software & Thomas Decker
PUBLISHER:	Interplay Irvine, CA

using strong notrump (16-18) and recommending five card majors for 1-level openings in major suits. It also describes initial responses, the Stayman convention for 1 notrump responses and the Blackwood convention to ask for aces. It doesn't describe the Blackwood convention asking for kings, the Gerber convention for aces when playing notrump hands or much of anything else about its basic philosophy. Nor does it say if it plays strong or weak 2 openings, strong or weak jump overcalls, or if it understands cue bids. Further, its bidding is set in stone. No options can be configured, so if (for example) the player wants to use the popular two-over-one bidding style, he is just plain out of luck. After some experimentation, I can answer these questions, but I found it extremely irritating to have to conform to someone else's bidding style in order to reach sensible contracts.

Equally disturbing, it does not play a very good game of bridge. Like the first edition of *Grand Slam Bridge*, it ignores lead-direct-

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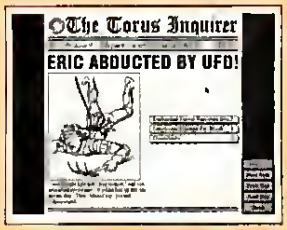

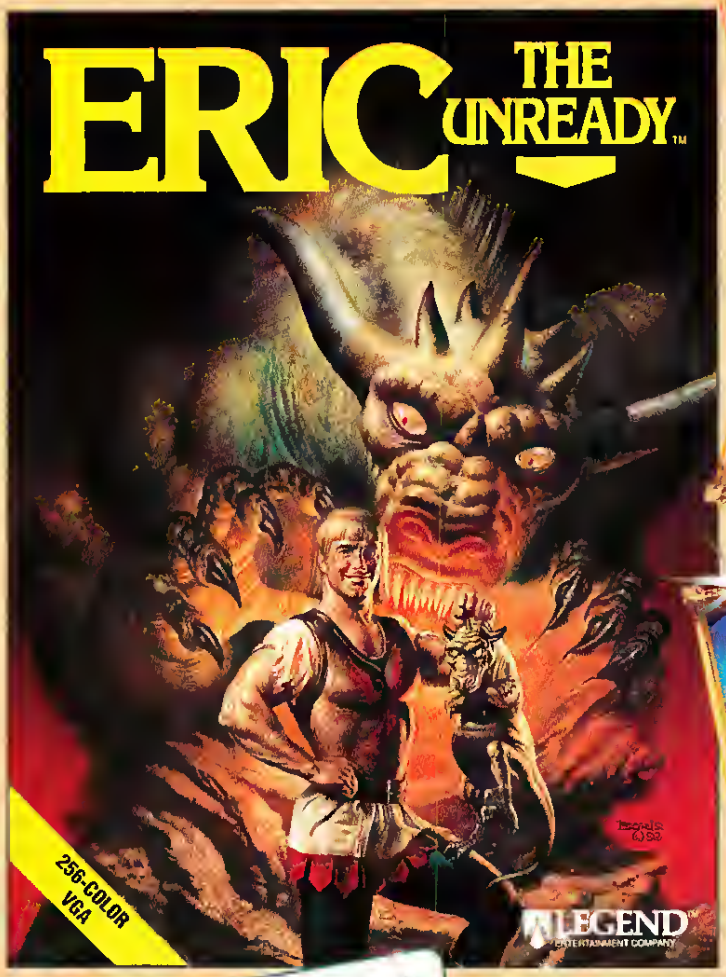

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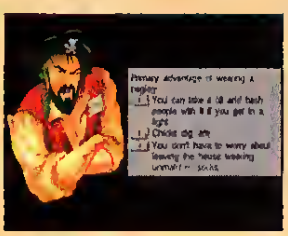

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ing discards. It may also ignore attitude signals, shows no sign of following count, and seems to ignore the dummy's hand when considering leads on defense. When playing solitaire and one's computer player is the declarer, it offers the player the chance to play both sides rather than watching the computer play. Unless one is looking for ideas on how to approach a hand, it's a good idea to try it oneself. During play, the game allows the player to take back cards, which is very helpful when one is searching for that perfect line of play. The game never plays any of the player's cards for him, even when he has only one card left in the suit lead.

The documentation, like the game, is physically attractive but lacking in depth. It covers every menu and feature but fails to give much explanation of any of it. For instance, the section on manual mode hand construction says that the player may assign cards to a hand by first selecting the player, then selecting the card. It does not explain that one may move a mis-assigned card in the same fashion. This is the sort of single sentence that distinguishes good documentation from that written by a programmer (as a programmer, I feel justified in making that statement). Further, it has no section on play at all, leaving one to discover by trial-and-error what its standard leads are. At 23 pages, this manual is the shortest of the three and it shows.

Omar Sharif on Bridge also comes with 10 tutorial hands, each designed to illustrate some specific part of bridge bidding and play. When in tutorial mode, the game will only accept the "correct" pre-programmed bids and card plays. These hands cover basic principles and will be of more use to beginning bridge players than to those who are already familiar with standard play.

Tennis, Anyone?

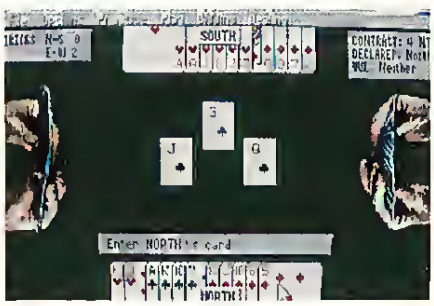
Grand Slam Bridge II (*GSB2*) is Cybron's update to its 1986 classic. It supports music (with selectable songs in the style of *Solitaire's Journey*) and basic VGA graphics. Like the original, it has settings files (called profiles) to allow multiple people to share the same game while still using their favorite conventions. The graphics are an attractive, if not spectacular, representation of a bridge table, with hands holding the cards so that only the current player's cards are visible. The music is very pleasant. Selectable bidding options provide support for cue bids, weak 2 bids, 4 and 5 card major suits, Jacoby transfers, unusual notrump, and the gambling 3 notrump bid.

Rather than an opening menu, the game goes straight from the title screen and shuffling animation to a dealt hand. This is a little confusing, because if the player wants to assign specific cards or hand constructions to one or more players, one must do the assignments and then select "redeal" to get the hand just specified. *GSB2* will score rubber bridge or single hands, which is much more convenient when one is assigning cards.

TITLE:	Grand Slam Bridge II
SYSTEM	IBM
PRICE:	$49.95
DESIGNERS	Gerry Rempel, Hanno Lemke
PUBLISHER:	Electronic Arts Menlo Park, CA

Despite the improved graphics and music, *GSB2* should be considered an evolutionary rather than revolutionary product. It plays better than its predecessor, but still ignores the dummy and most attitude signals. The interface is slightly different, as well. During play, the mouse pointer is positioned in the middle of the suit led, or in the middle of the player's cards if one is void in the led suit. This is probably a handy feature for those without a mouse, but winds up forcing one to manually reposition the mouse on the pad every so often. Also, there are still those hands where one wanders about trying to figure out how to get *GSB2* to bid the contract one thinks is right.

GSB2 is designed to coexist with a companion product called *Mike Lawrence Bridge Dealer*, which will be sold separately. The manual hand setup feature that is built into the game is functional, but not as simple as the graphic click-on-a-card scheme used by *Omar Sharif On Bridge*. *GSB2* also has a feature that allows the player to describe hands based on shape, points, controls, quick tricks, or losers, which is useful for practicing trouble areas in one's bidding and/or play. There isn't much hint in the brief plug as to what the *Mike Lawrence Bridge Dealer* will do.



The documentation is good. Besides covering the menu options and including cute entry names like "bellying up to the menu bar," it doesn't cover the game's response to card play, but does a fairly good job explaining how the game interprets the bidding options. It includes illustrations and a reasonably detailed summary of bridge bidding and play.

GSB2 also comes with tutorial hands, which it calls samples. Sample hands are bid and played like regular hands except that a commentary provided with the hand is available. As with *Omar Sharif on Bridge*, the samples cover basic principles.

But a Great Personality

Last but not least, there is 1990's *Micro Bridge Companion* by Thomas Throop, published by **Great Game Products**. Never heard of that company? Neither had I, but I intend to go find their catalog. *MBC* isn't the prettiest face, but is a darn fine bridge program. The graphics are EGA (clean and attractive, but still quite simple). There is no sound of any kind, and the documentation is clean but simple.

On the other hand, it is the most complete product in terms of features. It has support for a wide range of bidding conventions. Its basic conventions are strong 1 notrump, 5 card majors, strong opening 2-bids, Stayman, Blackwood, unusual 2 notrump, and 4 notrump over a 1 or 2 notrump open to invite a 6 notrump slam. Optional conventions include forcing 1 notrump, weak opening 2-bids, weak jump overcalls and negative doubles. *MBC* has three other unique features. The first is a hand-evaluation hot key to give a quick summary of how *MBC* evaluates hands. The second is a hotkey that gives *MBC*'s current evaluation of each player's hand based on the bidding so far, a very nice feature which allows the player to interactively adjust his bid until he can tell the program what he wants to.

The third unique feature, and my personal favorite, is a hot-key that summons the game's bidding flowcharts. *MBC* comes with a complete set of flowcharts that show how it makes each decision in bidding. This eliminates the guesswork from bidding with the computer partner. Did your partner make a bid you didn't understand? One can ask *MBC* for its current hand evaluation based on the bidding, and see what lie one told with the last bid. Unsure how to describe the hand? Call up the flowchart and see how *MBC* would make its decisions.

Playing is very satisfying. *MBC* will allow one to play single hands or matches of four

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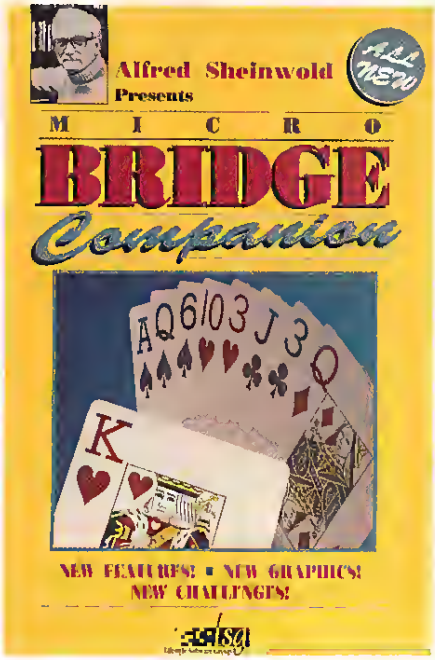
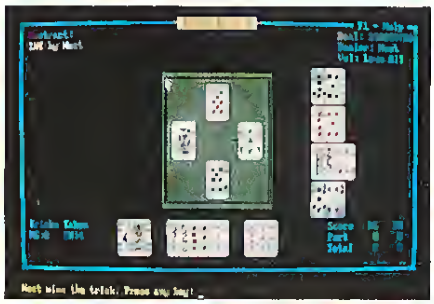


TITLE	Micro Bridge Companion
SYSTEM	IBM
PRICE	$59.95
DESIGNERS	Thomas Throop
PUBLISHER	Lifestyle Software Group Saint Augustine, FL (904) 825-0220

or more hands. It scores using the IMP point system, which is used for duplicate matches. In duplicate bridge, a player's score is based on the difference between how he and his partner performed on a hand and the way other partners playing N-S performed. For this purpose, the computer rebids and replays every hand after the player does, and compares the scores. If, for example, one plays 4H not vulnerable, making 4 for 420 points and the computer plays 3 notrump making 4 for 430, one's score in IMPs would be based on the difference, -10, which is 0 IMPs. Which is to say that the player's performance has to be substantially different than the computer's for anyone to score points.



MBC also has a monthly competition feature. When this is selected, one plays 8 hands of duplicate, first with the computer as partner and then watching the computer play, with all of the "take back" bids and "reveal cards" features disabled. The final score in IMP's is then given along with a verification number, which one can send into Great Games Products. The highest scores each month, the manual says, will be given credits towards purchase of other GGP products. The player is also given the numbers of the hands he played, so that he can go back later and figure out how to handle that horrible trump split in the 4th board.

So What's the Scoop?

For the purpose of comparison, I wrote down a couple of hands and played them in all three games. The results were interesting. Despite different bidding paths, the end contracts were usually quite close. There were wide differences in the play, however. Overall, I felt that *MBC* played more consistent bridge, but each game had strengths and weaknesses. I would not recommend *Omar Sharif on Bridge*, but the choice between *GSB2* and *MBC* is more complex. If one plays duplicate or is thinking about it, I'm confident that *MBC* will be the superior product. If one is strictly a rubber bridge player and might find the lack of graphics and sound disturbing, one may be happier with *GSB2*. As an intermediate bridge player, I would recommend *MBC* to my bridge-playing friends and sometimes partners, but I think most people would find either enjoyable. **CGW**

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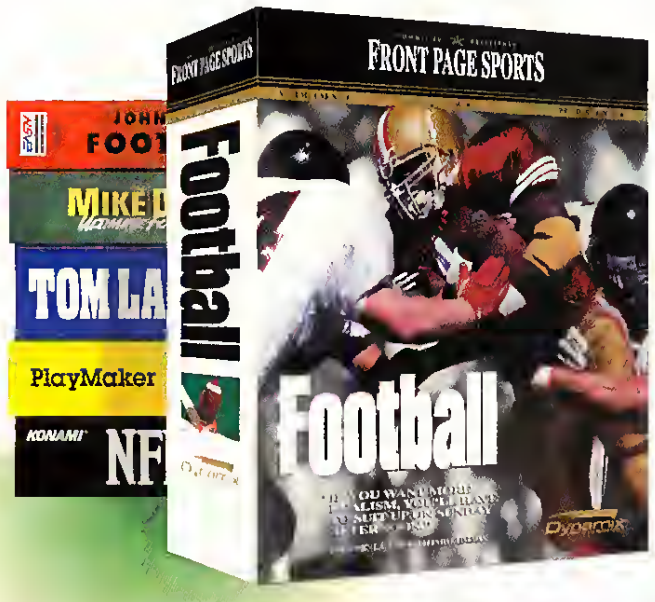

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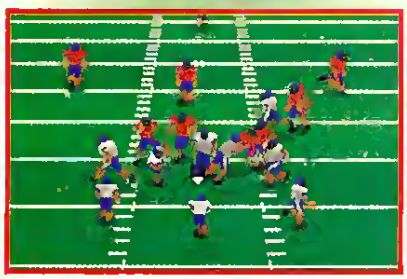

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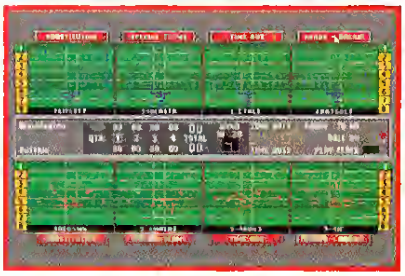
–Computer Game Review



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Three Computer Football Games

by Wallace Poulter

Wallace Poulter is an employee of **LucasArts Games**. *Though* CGW *does not usually tap writers from the ranks of those who work within the entertainment software industry, we make an exception with Wallace because of the scope of his knowledge of professional sports and the fact that* **LucasArts** *does not publish computer sports simulations.*

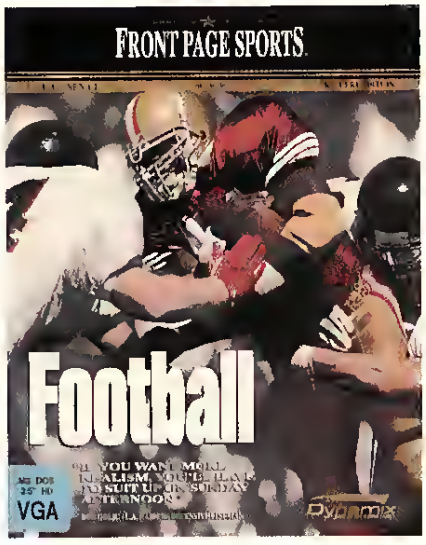
Ah, football, the game invented by the colonies because rugby was too tough for them. And just to confuse everyone it was called "football" because the players used their hands to carry and throw the ball. As different as football is to rugby, so to each other are the latest three football games to grace CGW Stadium.

Front Page Sports Football

Week 14 of the season. Playoff spots are still up for grabs. In the South Division, Atlanta and Miami are tied at 14-14 in the final quarter. In the North East division, Philadelphia is comfortably ahead of New England 27-3 and here, out West, Anaheim trails Seattle 24-21 with only 3 minutes to go in the game. Anaheim is at Seattle's 35 yard line 2nd and 2. Time for the new play from the Coach. Pro Set backfield, Turner in motion from left to right. The snap from Horton taken by the QB Oates. Oates hands off to Burrows sweeping right with the Left Guard and Tackle pulling in front of the play. Burrows hands off to Turner coming back toward him for a reverse and Turner gets buried by Oliver, the Free Safety, who didn't buy the play for a moment. Loss of 6 yards on the play. Back to the drawing board for the Coach and his new plays.

Front Page Sports Football represents the first foray into sports by the **Dynamix**, part of the **Sierra** stable. A better debut would be harder to imagine. Admittedly, I approached this product with some apprehension. Nor was I mollified by the following quote: "Our intention was to create the most complete, the most realistic football simulation ever made for the personal computer." Rather than trying to excel in one area of a product, whether it be action, stats, simulation etc., on a first time effort, Dynamix was putting in everything and the kitchen sink. However, I jumped in with both feet and took advantage of the "Quickstart" option. First impressions were very favorable, as the player controls were logically defined, the graphics smooth (if a little slow), and, most importantly, the computer AI and randomness factors appeared to be well thought out.

TITLE	Front Page Sports Football
SYSTEM	IBM
GRAPHICS	VGA
PRICE	$69.95
PROTECTION	None
DESIGNER	Patrick Cook
PUBLISHER	Dynamix/Sierra Coarsegold, CA



Front Page Sports Football has two modes of play: Playcalling and Action. Within each are three levels of difficulty: Basic, Standard and Advanced. The Playcall mode determines the screen display for each play. Basic mode lists the play type by name (run left, run right, etc.), Standard mode shows a diagram of the play, while Advanced mode uses only a number code to identify the plays. In the Action mode, the Basic setting is coaching only, Standard allows the gamer to take control of a player from the computer, and Advanced requires one to do almost everything. Simple and effective, yet the

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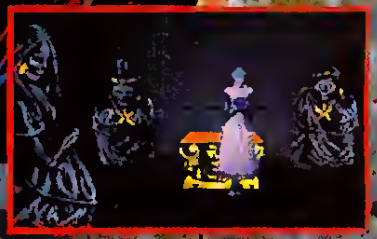

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option allows any style of football game fan to enjoy the product. My personal preference was to leave the game in Standard difficulty on both modes.

Once into the game, the graphics are very impressive. In the past, collision detection in football games has been haphazard at best. Usually the graphic depiction would jump from two characters approaching each other, to the two characters lying on the ground. Again, not the case in *Front Page Football*. The game claims over 8000 frames of rotoscoped animation and it certainly seems that way. The players react in realistic ways and the tackles, blocks, catches and runs seem natural.

Once into league mode, *Front Page Football* continues to shine. Multiple league configurations, stadium and surface options (finally we can outlaw Astroturf from the league), trading, college draft and team statistics are just some of the components available. Dynamix really did put everything they could think of into this product. It is possible that every single stat category, some 300, that a sports fan could ever wish for is in this game.

Yet, the play possibilities, stats and graphics are secondary to the real breakthrough that *Front Page Football* has made. Now, finally, there is a game with a play editor which allows the user to craft any and all plays that they wish. As an armchair Bill Walsh, more than anything else, I want the ability to diagram my own plays. Both offensive and defensive plays can be crafted in the *Front Page Sports Football* play editor.

More than any other part of the product, I have spent the most time crafting defensive scheme after defensive scheme. Blitzes, stunts, multiple coverages can all be tried. The editor also offers the ability to practice the play against different offenses. Again, the Dynamix crew has resisted the temptation to take the easy out. If I set up a free safety blitz against a medium pass, I get a multitude of outcomes. Two QB sacks, two completed passes for a first down and most impressively of all, a QB scramble for a first down when a running lane opened up for the QB *and* all receivers were covered downfield.

Now, before I gush too much, there are a number of nagging problems. With a 386/33 and 2 megs of RAM, the animation speed was *slow*. More importantly the program takes forever to simulate a single game and simulating an entire weekly schedule is terribly slow. The manual, while a complete looking 120 pages and full of tutorials and reference material, could actually use more information and more diagrams. However with a little bit of fine tuning (*Front Page Sports Football 93?*), *Front Page Football* will be a contender for best Sports game on the market. It already has the award for the best football game on the first attempt.

To quote from the Designer's Notes in the manual. "We found ourselves wanting to play computer football, but we wanted the best: one sports game that had it all—action, stats, management, seasons—everything. We couldn't find it. We decided to build it." Normally one could dismiss such a statement as a bunch of hype. Not this time. Patrick Cook and crew built it—the Super Bowl of Football Simulations.

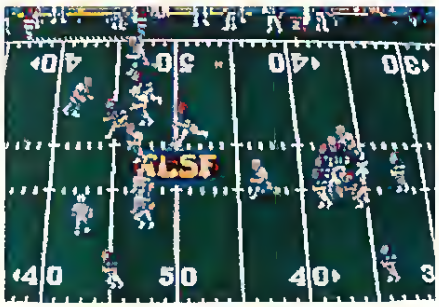
Tom Landry Strategy Football

Early in the first quarter. Houston has the ball at their own 45, 2nd and 8 yards to go. Time for some defensive strategy help from Tom Landry. A nickel defense is suggested with a double team on the top receiver. The snap, the Quarterback fades back and launches the ball to the Wide Receiver running a Fly pattern down the left sideline. The receiver is triple covered and the ball falls incomplete. Flag on the play. Defensive pass interference against San Francisco, 1st and 10 Houston at the San Francisco 30 yard line.

TITLE	Tom Landry Strategy Football
SYSTEM:	IBM
GRAPHICS:	VGA
# PLAYERS:	1-2 (Modem Option)
PRICE:	$49.95
PROTECTION	Documentation Look-up
DESIGNER:	Kerry Batts
PUBLISHER	Merit Software Dallas, TX

I found Tom Landry an interesting choice for a licensed product. While his accomplishments are many and his 1990 Hall of Fame induction richly deserved, there was a definite sense that the game had passed him by in his final few years in Dallas. Of course I may be a little biased. The 1981 NFC Championship game between Dallas and San Francisco was my first real taste of football and the game was against the "hated" Cowboys.

First impressions are very positive as a pleasant introduction leads into the best sports game interface I have ever seen. This interface is the model of simplicity and the screen "feels" completely uncluttered, yet all the information needed to select a play is depicted. More importantly the interface is completely logical, allowing for the setting of formation, coverage, shift, blitz, double teaming and primary receiver. What's really incredible is that those choices are just the defense. The offensive side allows for five different categories of plays, three different lengths of pass, play action and primary receiver. All of course pretty standard in a football product, but the effective use of "buttons" makes the choices effortless.



Once a play is selected, the play is shown in a side view. The player animations, while not state of the art, are more than adequate for the job. More than one user has commented on play representations that show a defender virtually stride for stride with an offensive player but making no effort to tackle. While this seems a visual graphic problem rather than an AI problem, it *does* look somewhat strange.

The computer AI is smart enough to pick out secondary receivers, but will occasionally force the ball into coverage. No control of individual players is available, as this is first and foremost a coaching challenge. To emphasize the coaching aspect of the product, a Scenario Editor is included which allows the setting up of specific situations. One memorable situation I set up was San Francisco trailing by 4 points against Pittsburgh with 2 minutes left in the game and San Francisco at the 50 yard line. San Francisco marched methodically down the field taking little time off the clock only to be picked off at the 5 yard line on a Corner Back interception. However with strategic use of time outs and a superb defensive effort I was able to hold Pittsburgh to 3 downs and out. With under a minute to go, an all out attack was made on the subsequent punt. San Francisco blocked the punt, the ball being

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picked up by the punter, who then scooted down the side line for a Pittsburgh 1st down. Argh! Whether that could happen in real life is debatable but as a game experience it provided a great set of highs and lows.

Tom Landry Strategy Football also contains a number of "chrome" features. The most obvious and enjoyable is the help one can receive from Tom Landry himself. Here Landry's Hall of Fame knowledge and abilities come to the fore and even the most experienced armchair general will learn new strategies from the Coach. It is very noticeable that today's coaches have trouble managing the clock effectively. *Tom Landry* also adds this option along with weather, scouting and substitutions.

The 40+ page manual, while well laid out, could use a lot more diagrams and information. An improved league system and more plays would enhance this product even more. Specifically the lack of corner and safety blitzes limits the defensive options.

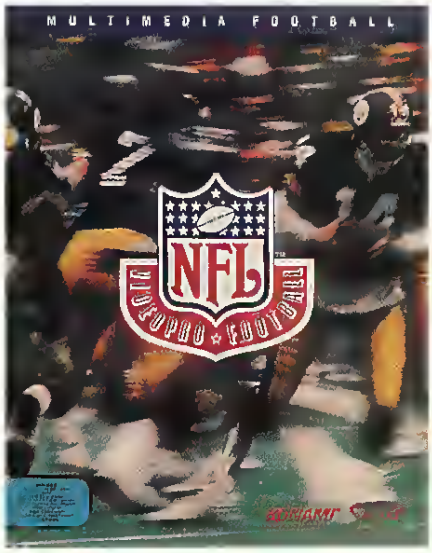
As noted in the manual, Kerry Batts first conceived, designed and programmed the game as a project for his Masters. While occasionally the coaching aspects outshine the game aspects, this is an excellent educational tool as well as an enjoyable game. The simple yet sophisticated interface is easy to grasp, yet contains all the information needed. While the more experienced gamer may wish for more, this is the perfect package for teaching the rudiments of football (both real life and computer). Score this one a pre-season touchdown.

NFL Video Pro

Week 1 of the NFL season, Green Bay verses Houston. Green Bay Quarterback Dan Fouts goes back to pass and throws left handed over the middle to Gary Anderson who picks up the first down.

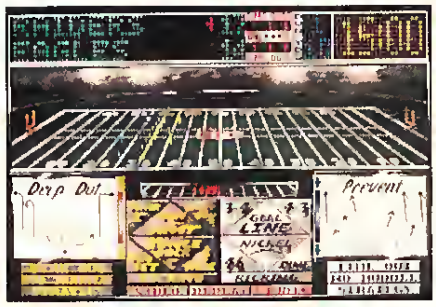
"When is a door not a door?" the old saying goes. When is a football game not a football game? — when it is a multimedia entertainment experience. First impressions are not particularly positive. The blurred box cover is an accurate representation of the video quality and the box copy is ambiguous at best. Checking out the Team Player Rosters, a graphic football card is displayed when clicking on a player. Regardless of the team the same photo is used—usually a San Diego Charger from the early 80s. In fact, once one gets into the game, this Charger fascination becomes a real problem. While this product may be using "film footage from the NFL Films archives," this seems to consistently translate into games between the Chargers and the Raiders from the early 80s. The QBs are obviously Dan Fouts and Jim Plunkett, and Raiders such

TITLE	NFL Video Pro Football
SYSTEM	IBM
# PLAYERS	1-2
PRICE	$79.95
PROTECTION	None
DESIGNER	Park Place Productions
PUBLISHER	Konami Buffalo Grove, IL



as Marcus Allen and the Charger's Gary Anderson are easily recognized.

This is particularly frustrating because this was a phenomenal idea. "Let's do a football game and use real NFL footage to represent the plays." That's a superb idea. I can only assume that part way into the project, reality set in. The game is 22 megs, yet the number of video clips seems limited. As mentioned in the notes, "*NFL Video Pro* is the first multi-media sports game...that does not require a CD-Rom drive," the problem being that it obviously *does* require a CD-ROM to store all the video clips needed to make this a quality product.



Once in the Video Studio, 14 screens carry the action of every game being played. Three other choices are available on the Video Studio Screen. The newspaper button pauses the games and allows roster changes, viewing of league stats, etc. The stats button shows the stats of the current highlighted game, and the Stadium button takes the player into the stadium of the currently highlighted game where he or she can take charge of the home team.

Once in the Stadium, there are six basic offensive and six basic defensive alignments that can be set. Within those alignments are numerous individual play patterns. While the interface is easy to use and logical, its "look" is rather gaudy. Once chosen, the play is then depicted in video—which brings us to the central component of *NFL Video Pro*: the video itself.

A note from the creators is ominous. "The video used to depict the outcome is the CPU's best approximation of what actually occurred. We have stretched the available video as far as possible using several techniques such as real time film splicing and flipping, however there are situations where the video is somewhat inconsistent with the actual event." "Somewhat inconsistent" is definitely in the running for understatement of the year. A play up the middle has the running back bursting through the line and tackled by linebackers. Result? A one yard loss! Or the hand off goes to one running back and immediately cuts to another completely different running back. Or one sees a successful video completion in the endzone when the play is actually a completion at the 30 yard line. The "flipping" mentioned also results in players numbers being backward and Quarterbacks throwing right handed in one quarter and left handed in the next.

Somewhat inconsistent? It's a joke.

The biggest question to ask of this product is "Why?" There is no game to speak of, and no challenge. Again to quote the manual, "and you get the real experience of multimedia entertainment."

As another old saying goes, "Come the revolution, the lawyers will be the first against the wall." Hopefully whoever came up with the term "multimedia" will be a close second. Multimedia is a word that attempts to convey the merging of a number of good ideas and technologies into a cohesive product and meaning. It is a banal, ineffective term that conveys virtually no meaning whatsoever to the average consumer. *NFL Video Pro* and multimedia were made for each other.

Post Game Show

As I noted at the beginning of this piece, three products that are so very different; *NFL Video Pro* is instantly forgettable, *Tom Landry Strategy Football* is the best football teaching product on the market and an excellent start for the new sport/football fan, and *Front Page Sports Football* is one of the top product releases of 1992. Only **MicroProse**'s *World Circuit* can challenge it for the title "Sports Game of the Year." CGW

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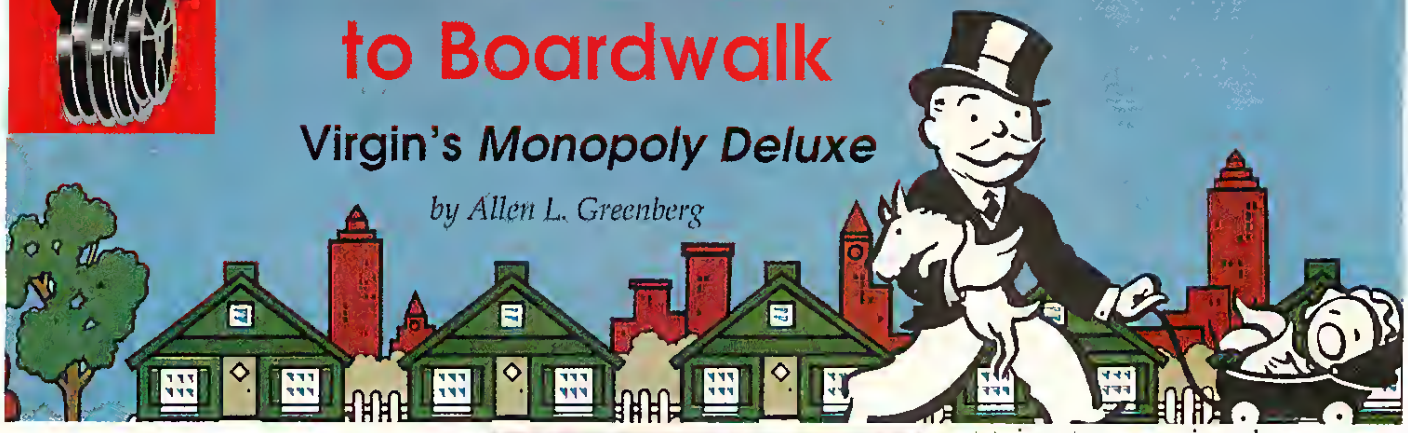
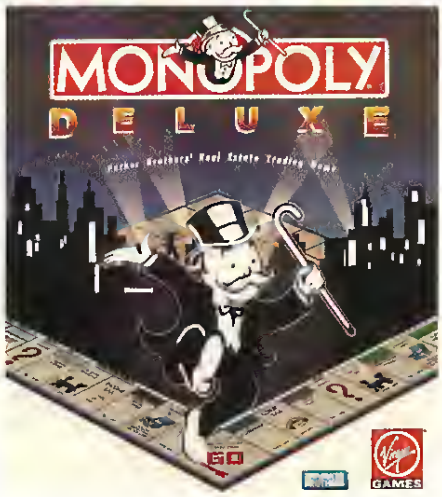


"Why did we name our son MARVIN GARDENS?"
—Danny Kaye

TITLE:	Monopoly Deluxe
SYSTEM:	IBM (MS-DOS & Windows)
PRICE:	$59.95
PROTECTION:	None
PUBLISHER	Virgin Games Irvine, CA

Recreationologists—those scientists who study and explore the origins of humanity's most classic and beloved pastimes—have managed to trace the earliest form of the *Monopoly* game as far back as the year 7000 BC. Up until that time, pure survival had been the only issue on the human mind. This, however, led one ambitious individual to adapt "survival" into history's first role-playing game—now thought to have been called "Hunter-Gatherization." As the game enjoyed rapid popularity, food and shelter became scarce as real-life survival became secondary in importance to this new concept of recreation. With the introduction of the inevitable "Hunter-Gatherization 2," players were challenged not only with their own survival, but also with providing shelter for someone else—after charging a considerable sum, or "rent," for doing so. From this early design, we may easily see how *Monopoly* continued to evolve so that even Plato is said to have played the game on a map of an Atlantis city.

Okay, all kidding aside. Almost everyone knows the real story. With the icy fingers of economic depression clasped tightly at its throat, 1930's America yearned, once again, for the feel of money in its hands. It can hardly be surprising, therefore, that *Monopoly*, the work of an unemployed heating engineer, should have proved such an instant success. We can easily picture depression-era players as they amassed simulated wealth, traded



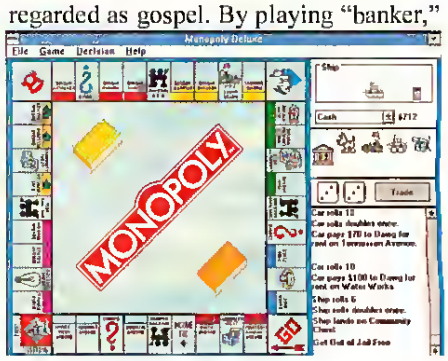
properties with over-mortgaged opponents and readied deadly traps whose poison-tipped barbs took on the innocuous appearance of houses and hotels. While the game's initial success may not be difficult to comprehend, it is somewhat astounding to note the enthusiasm with which *Monopoly* has been embraced by later generations of game-players, including the baby-boomers, for whom wealth has often been no mere fantasy.

With our economic future once again in doubt, *Monopoly* is, not surprisingly, doing as well as ever. A series of spin-off products intended for younger players have appeared on the market, as well as the latest attempt to establish the game on the personal computer. In *Monopoly Deluxe* (*MD*), one can customize the rules to allow a huge variety of popular, yet unofficial, options. But what will probably draw the most attention, are the extensive sound effects and animations which now embellish the already well-known game play.

MD allows up to eight players to compete in a game, any number of which may be controlled by the computer as it simulates a novice, intermediate level real estate investor or experienced entrepreneur. While keyboard commands are available, the program is very clearly designed to be used with a mouse. Most of the screen is used to display an overhead view of the classic *Monopoly* game-board. Icons for most of the common commands, such as "roll dice," are easily accessible. However, the use of a somewhat cramped, pull-down menu is occasionally necessary. In addition, there are icons for summoning a detailed picture of a participant's portfolio, or assets still held by the bank. Finally, a scrolling window provides an ongoing description of each move made in the game.

The only awkwardly-designed element of *MD* is a real-time sequence in which players bid for a property which has been placed on the auction block. For this, each player must place a finger on a number key at the top of the keyboard (the numeric keypad may not be used) and press his or her key when a desired bid appears on the screen. This represents a very small space in which to crowd eight anxious bidders, several of whom are likely to be on very intimate terms once the final gavel has sounded.

Traditionally, once that sacred document—the instruction leaflet—had been lost from the Parker Brothers box, numerous confrontations have been known to occur over which set of rules are to be regarded as gospel. By playing "banker,"



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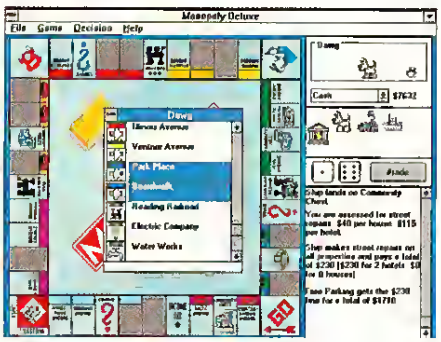
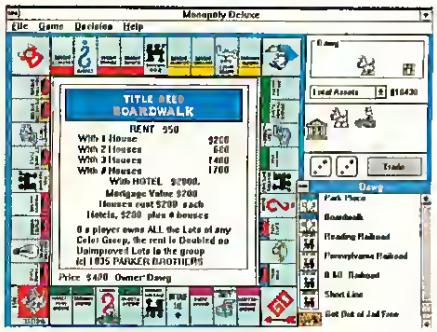
MD will eliminate most of those squabbles. However, by allowing an almost infinite number of variations on the traditional rules, far more severe playroom conflicts may result. The "free parking" space may now be used as a collection plate for all fines and taxes, which are then turned over to the first player who lands there. Another option allows the player to collect a windfall sum at that same spot, determined by a roll of the dice.



For those preferring a simpler game, property auctions may be eliminated, deeds may be distributed at the beginning of the game, or a game time-limit may be imposed. Other options allow players to limit their ability to negotiate trades or collect rent while in prison. When large numbers of players are involved, an option which requires all players to circle the board once before purchasing any properties proves a welcome innovation. "Spoiled" players (those who grew up without other children around) even have the option to recreate the thrill of cheating by transferring whatever funds or property they wish from the bank directly to their own account.

Replacing the feel of those original metal tokens and cardboard deeds are *MD*'s sounds and pictures. Starring the minimalist entrepreneur "Rich Uncle PennyBags," brief animations pop up whenever a player passes "Go," builds a hotel, or initiates the many other well-known Monopolistic events. Sound effects are also lavishly distributed throughout the game, including a surprising variety of music, bells, whistles, grunts and exclamations.Users are given a high degree of control as to which animations and sound effects they wish to experience. Easily the most entertaining sequences involve those familiar tokens—the iron, wheelbarrow, ship, car, dog, thimble, shoe, hat, cannon and pony—all of whom circle the board with grace, charm and digitized dignity.

The computer becomes an aggressive, although relatively predictable, opponent for a solitaire game of *MD*. Generally, it will continue to invest in property until bankrupt. Further, the computer will flatly refuse to consider any but the most self-serving property trades — the type only a suicidal opponent would agree to. Strangely, it will not condescend to bid on a property which is up for auction. Taking advantage of this eccentricity ("cheating," as one of Virgin's technicians referred to it) a player may never have to pay more than $1.00 for any property during a solitaire game. For an honest game with the computer, it is suggested that the "no auctions" option be selected.



It has obviously been with a great deal of care and attention to detail that this version of *Monopoly* has been rendered on the personal computer. The program is ideal for bringing newcomers into the game, as well as pleasing older, more nostalgia-minded players. Recreationologists everywhere will be pleased that Rich Uncle PennyBags has finally been shown proper respect by electronic media. CGW

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sneak preview

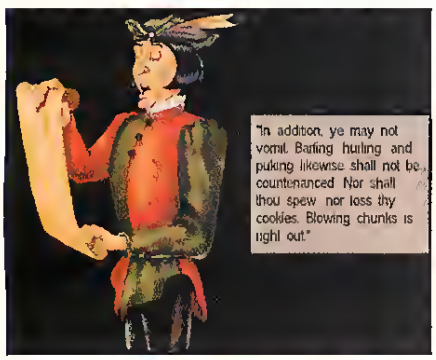
When Knights Were Rotten And Eric Was Unready

Legend's *Eric The Unready*

by Johnny L. Wilson

Sneak Previews are not designed to be reviews. They are feature articles based on "works in progress" that CGW's editors have deemed worthy of early coverage. These articles are not intended to provide the final word on a product, since we expect to publish appropriate review coverage when the game is finished.

Sometimes, say the sages, it is better to be lucky than good. This is certainly the case in **Legend**'s *Eric the Unready*, a new adventure by Bob Bates in which the least intelligent knight with the least physical prowess has to save the kingdom through a series of misadventures. It is Mel Brooks meets Camelot in a raucous tour de farce where games, television, films and legends (or should that be **Legend**?) are all subject to Bob Bates' powerful Parser of Parody. Whether one is solving one of the simple puzzles in the early game or groaning at the puns in the endgame, fantasy fans are likely to find themselves experiencing the same type of esoteric chuckles to be found in one of Piers Anthony's *Xanth* books or Robert Asprin's *Myth Adventures*. No pop cultural icon and no industry entity is safe from Bob Bates' Wand of Witticism.



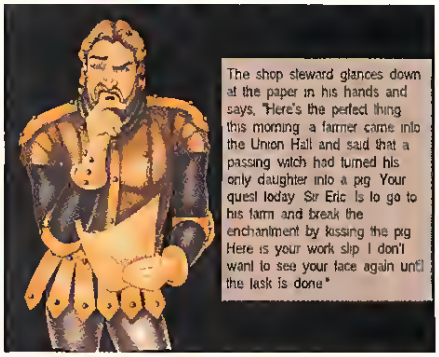
The set-up is deceptively simple. Eric is trying to prove himself as a knight of the romboid table. To do so, he must successfully solve some simple quests. If the gamer is good enough, Eric solves those quests, but ends up creating more chaos in a few command lines or mouse clicks than Lucy could conjure in a half-hour television show. Just when many gamers would wonder if they were playing the right character, Eric is assigned the task of rescuing the beautiful princess and saving the kingdom. Unfortunately, the gamer soon finds out that Eric has been selected precisely because the villains do not believe he is able to fulfill the quest. That's when it starts to become better to be lucky than good.

If gamers think that they've "said it all" when they say, "Bud Wizard" or can't figure out why that castle looks like it might have been designed by Lord Brutish, *Eric the Unready* is not for them. If they get offended by Elvis sightings (has anyone ever noticed how closely Eric and Elvis sound?) and have little patience with tabloid journalism, they probably will not enjoy being tantalized by the titters and giggles that seductively lure gamers through the puns, sight gags and badinage of *Eric the Unready*. Gamers who have to have a Meretzky-sized injection of titillation in order to play an adventure game are also forewarned. Some suggestiveness is present, but bawdiness is not the overriding goal of this game.

Textual Variant

Legend believes that *CGW* has been grossly unfair in describing their games as text adventures. They believe that this undervalues the efforts which they have made to present intriguing adventures using a variety of technologies. In a sense, they are right. We have called the games "text adventures" because they did not present the full-screen parserless environment of leading edge graphic adventures. The games do contain a lot of text, sometimes wonderful text, but they also contain more.

In addition to the input available in previous games: command line, reverse parser (where gamers click on each element of the sentence as lists of words appear), pointing and clicking on the graphics windows, or using the compass rose, the designers have now introduced a number of different interface technologies. When one pilots Captain Smirk's raft, one works from a dynamic animated map screen; when one plays the "Concentration"-style game at the carnival, one works with full-screen point and click; and when one initiates a conversation, one gets a menu of verbal ripostes to toss in conversational sparring matches.



Yet, interface is not the only non-textual addition to **Legend**'s bag of tricks. There is a full-screen cinematic sequence that introduces the game's hero and there are animated full-screen transition sequences that serve as cut-scenes to advance the plot and provide a certain amount of dramatic (well, actually melodramatic) tension between various puzzles. At one point, the entire screen takes on the appearance of the original *Zork*. At other points, the player accesses a newspaper and a large representation of a tabloid fills the screen for the player's perusal. At another point, the raft interface or memory game fills the screen graphically.

So, it is true that *Eric the Unready* has lots of text, but it is also true that much of that text is very funny. In particular, we

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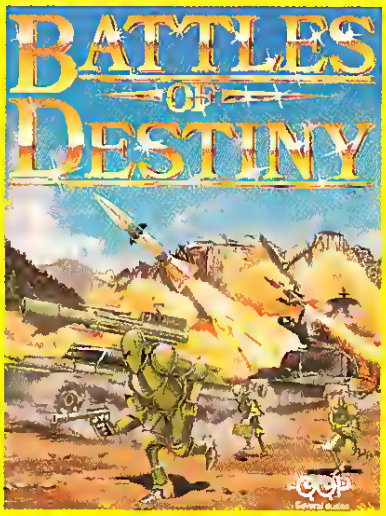

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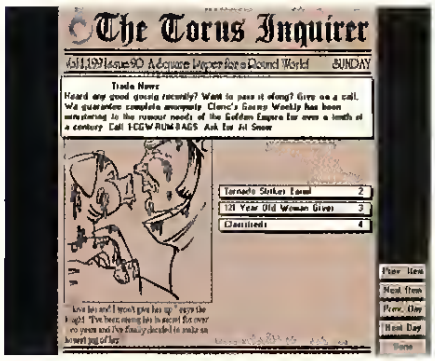
recommend that gamers peruse every portion of the newspapers. Not only are there clues for solving the puzzles, but esoteric jokes based on literature and computer games (even a well-placed barb at the Rumor Guy's expense). Further, the conversations are the wittiest we've seen this side of *Monkey Island.* In fact, one wonders where Fran the Rock Salesman and the Columbia School of Piracy might have originated. Naaah! It's punfully (and delightfully) obvious.

Doin' The Parody Thing

Zork, Ultima VII, Monkey Island, Star Trek, Computer Gaming World, Saturday Night Live, Fantasy Island, Gilligan's Island, Camelot, Lord British, Elvis, Gene Roddenberry, Pepsi-Cola and Baskin-Robbins are just a few of the victims of Bob's barbs which I can remember. There are many more. Who would you expect to be the monk in charge of copying manuscripts when one enters the abode of the gods and their sacred library? "Air-IK, Ericster, doin' the copyin' thing!"



Most of the puzzles are not only clever and challenging, but they lead into some puns or comedic dialogue that advances the plot and heightens the A.P.I. (aggregate pleasure index). If I had to quibble about any puzzles, they would be the timing puzzles. Gamers like to be active, not passive. I can understand the necessity of being passive if there is some obvious reason to be passive. As in *Timequest*, however, Bates shows that he likes puzzles which rely on the gamer doing nothing at precisely the right time. The trouble is that the clues that one should wait are not always obvious. I personally find the timing puzzles less than satisfying, but that may be because I am such an impetuous gamer that I tend to prod instead of pause. The timing puzzles and occasional spelling errors were the only hindrances to my enjoyment of the game.

Heir-head Hero

In short, *Eric the Unready* is a delightful comedy adventure, more challenging than cute and full of whimsy and wonder. It succeeds on many different levels and creates high expectations for **Legend**'s upcoming game based on Xanth (another punful world). **CGW**

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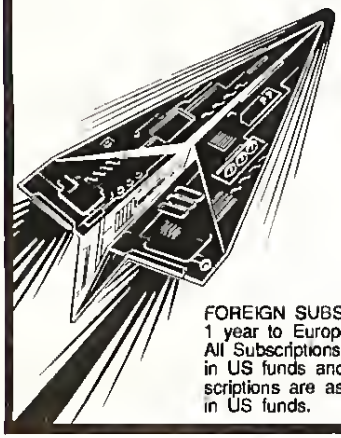

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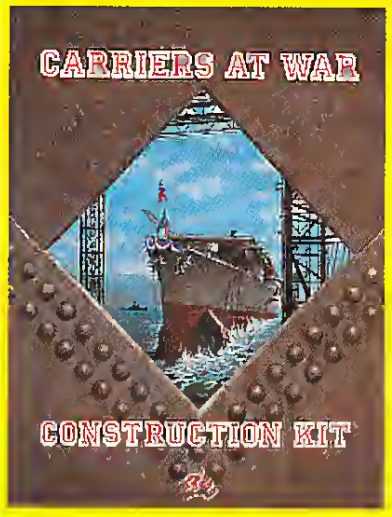

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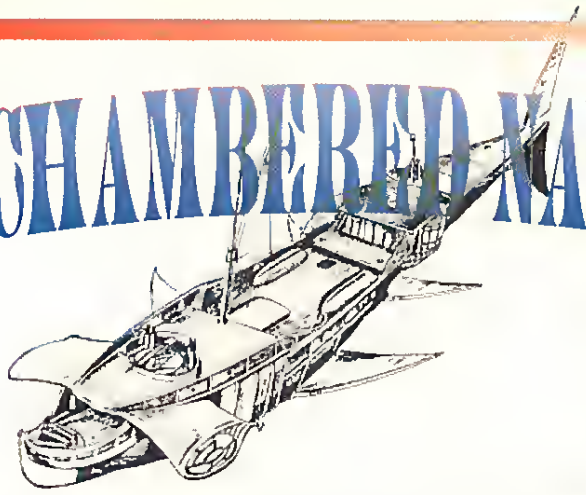

SSI's SpellJammer: Pirates of Realmspace

by Jeff James

TITLE	Spelljammer: Pirates of Realmspace
SYSTEMS	Amiga, IBM
REVIEWED ON	IBM
PRICE	$59.95
PROTECTION	Documentation Look-up
DESIGNERS	Cybertech Systems
Publisher	SSI Sunnyvale, CA

Not ready to rest upon its fantasy role-playing laurels, **Strategic Simulations Inc** (SSI) takes fantasy gamers on a voyage into the final frontier with the release of *SpellJammer: Pirates of Realmspace* (*SJammer*). While not exactly science fiction, *SJammer* does offer fans of SSI's *Advanced Dungeons and Dragons* computer products a unique opportunity to take to the spaceways while retaining all of the monster-slaying, spell-flinging appeal of more conventional AD&D products.

Boldly going where no AD&D adventure has gone before, *SJammer* is rooted in the *Forgotten Realms* gameworld, home to such other AD&D adventures as *Eye of the Beholder I & II* and the two *Forgotten Realms* gold box series (*Pool of Radiance* and *Gateway to the Savage Frontier*, et al). Yet, while these adventures take place in the *Forgotten Realms* gameworld on the planet Toril, *SJammer* allows players to journey through Realmspace and visit the seven other planets in Toril's solar system. Crossing through the "wildspace" between planets is made possible by the use of vessels equipped with a magical device which allows a cleric or magic-user to essentially will the ship into motion. Moving a vessel in this fashion is called Spelljamming.

Although venturing out into space will be a new experience for the traditional fans of SSI's AD&D adventures, the fiction upon which it is loosely based is nothing new. Indeed, science fiction legends H.G. Wells and Jules Verne both envisioned 19th-Century adventurers journeying about the solar system by way of specially prepared ships designed to sail through the seas of "luminiferous ether" which supposedly separated Earth from the moon and other celestial objects. In a similar vein, the U.S.A.'s own Edgar Rice Burroughs pictured Martian warriors flying through the limited atmosphere of that planet via sky ships which were analogous to fighting sail vessels.

Jammin'

Moving a vessel throughout space isn't the only task players have to accomplish. *SJammer* consists primarily of three game segments. The first involves moving the vessel through wildspace and docking at ports, which contain pubs, weapons shops, temples, et cetera. The second portion of the game—ship-to-ship combat—occurs when, and if, the player happens to run into another vessel while journeying through space. Finally, boarding combat occurs when the player's party gets up close and personal with the crew of enemy ships.

The first game segment is where the behind the scenes work of maintaining a Spelljamming vessel takes place. In addition to voyaging between the eight planets in Toril's solar system through Realmspace, players can dock at ports located on most of the planets. At these ports, ships are repaired, rumors heard, crew hired and jobs taken. Each world offers a unique set of port facilities, with bustling Toril and its Waterdeep port, as the most active.

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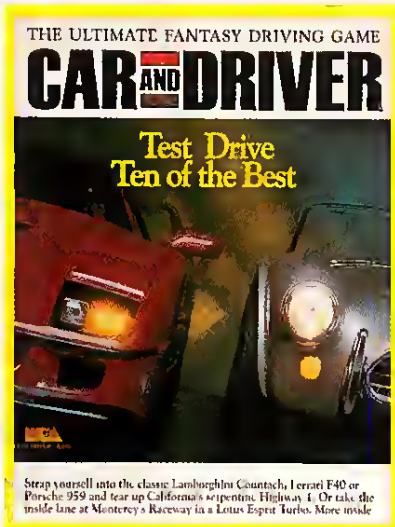

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Catapults and Kilrathi

Ship-to-ship combat occurs only when another vessel is encountered in wildspace. This portion of *SJammer* loosely resembles the format used in *Wing Commander*, with bitmapped vessels and projectiles zooming about the game screen. But while *Wing Commander* allowed players to move in three dimensions (up/down, left/right, forward/back), *SJammer* restricts players to a level playing field, as if all of the vessels sailed on an invisible sea: no diving or climbing

allowed. Combat usually involves only the player's vessel and one enemy, although about half of the ships encountered during this reviewer's sojourn into Realmspace were non-hostile. If the enemy ship does prove to be hostile, a number of weapons are available for taking the fight to the enemy. Ship-mounted ballistas, catapults, jettisons (useful for clearing crew from the deck of an enemy ship), and bombards (crude cannons) are available for striking down foes. In addition, players can attempt to shear the rigging from an enemy ship (slowing it down), or can even physically smash the enemy into space debris by ramming. Finally, a grappling option allows gamers to close with an enemy ship and board it. Once successfully grappled, the game shifts to the boarding combat screen.

Bash 'em and Thrash 'em

The boarding combat segment appears much like a stripped-down version of Ultima VI, with an isometric overhead view displaying all of the action. At the start of combat, the player's characters (also called officers) and crewmen (0-level soldiers) are scattered across the gamescreen (which usually consists of a ship's deck, the tunnels of a dwarven space-fortress or some other locale). Each officer is represented by a single on-screen character, while crewmen are displayed as a soldier figure with a number hanging at his feet ranging from 1 to 5, indicating the number of soldiers represented by that figure. The player can control each of his officers and crewmen by accessing a bank of icons located in the upper right corner of the screen. Characters can be directed to move, cast spells, view inventory, be placed under computer control, and even can parley with the enemy. In true AD&D style, each of the combat turns consists of a collection of short rounds in which combat takes place. I found this segment of SJammer to be the most enjoyable, with plenty of tactical options and maneuvers to try with one's assembled forces. At times, combat can be overly tedious and time-consuming (with large numbers of units on both sides); fans of miniature wargaming will welcome the detail and tactical options.

The SpellJammer's Prime Directive

Most of *SJammer* involves ferrying cargo from planet to planet for a fee, picking up an odd mission or two along the way. Only by tackling as many missions as possible (and by avoiding space combat like the plague) will players have much hope of advancing beyond the first portions of the game. Finding larger, more powerful vessels with which to carry one's intrepid band of swashbucklers through Realmspace is essential; massive ships such as the Man-O-War, Hammership and the awesome Neogi Deathspider are required equipment for finishing the game.

SJammer begins by offering players a few scattered missions here and there to build up a surplusage of funds and experience. As the game progresses, more challenging obstacles such as defeating space pirates, raiding slave trading vessels and exploring ancient dwarven space-fortresses will help prepare players for the ultimate goal: defeating the evil Neogi, who have planned to unleash a vicious campaign of brutal conquest across the solar system if the player fails.

Lost in Realmspace

As challenging as completing the game was, getting *SJammer* to work properly on my machine was an even greater challenge. My first attempt at playing *SJammer* resulted in the program locking up immediately after the copy protection had been correctly entered. SSI's technical support stated that the first version of *SJammer* (1.0) was having trouble running on some systems, so they shipped me a patch disk to upgrade the program from version 1.0 to 1.1. Installing the patch fixed the loading problem, but left open a host of other less-important (though annoying) defects. First among these foibles was the lethargic hard-drive performance. Some of the simplest actions in the game, such as generating a set of six, two-digit character attributes, caused the hard-drive to spring into action for several seconds. Loading a saved game often took more than a solid minute of continuous hard-drive operation. From loading the program to entering combat, *SJammer* is sure to give the ol' hard-drive a workout.

In addition to the aforementioned hard-drive problems, SJammer suffers from a host of other minor defects. During boarding combat, I discovered my characters (including those under computer control) to strangely unready their weapons in the face of combat. Spellcasting has its share of problems, too: on several occasions I found characters with a sudden bonus of more than 200 first level spells, all of which were available to be cast and used. Even the inventory of my characters wasn't safe, with the computer often renaming a character's "Longsword +3" as a non-magical Longsword in the heat of battle. With all of these problems, one can't help but think that SJammer was rushed out the door to meet the Christmas buying spree without a suitable amount of beta-testing.

As it stands, *SJammer* is a product with a good deal of promise, thwarted by an unfortunate number of defects. AD&D role-playing stalwarts who can look past the problems and enjoy *SJammer* as an alternative to the usual SSI AD&D products should find the game to be an enjoyable one. As for the rest of the gaming public, *SJammer* is still a few updates away from being a product worth playing.

CGW

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Review

LURKING IN THE SHADOWS

Psygnosis' *Shadow of the Beast III*

by Chuck Miller

TITLE	Shadow of the Beast III
SYSTEM	Amiga (512k)
PRICE	$59.99
PROTECTION	Disk-based
DESIGNER	Reflections
PUBLISHER	Psygnosis Ltd Liverpool, United Kingdom

Beginning life as a side-scrolling arcade feast featuring bright colored backgrounds, smooth animation and superb multilevel parallax scrolling, the *Beast* series from **Psygnosis** has taken Aarbron, and the player, from a beast himself to a clone of that intrepid adventurer, Indiana Jones. In the third and final game in the *Beast* trilogy—*Shadow of the Beast III*—Aarbron looks like a shirtless Indy with backpack and a rather comical hat reminiscent of those donned by members of a barber shop quartet.

He's Such a Beast

The original *Shadow of the Beast* began the trilogy with Aarbron enslaved by the Beast Lord as a tormented servant in beast form himself, programmed by will-sapping drugs. After regaining control, Aarbron sought revenge on the death of his father and his own torment.

When *Shadow of the Beast II* arrived, Aarbron's appearance had changed to that of a Cro-Magnon man. This time, however, his mission against the Beast was the rescue of his infant sister; a more satisfying and higher goal than revenge.

Now, in *Shadow of the Beast III*, Aarbron's goal is to strike the final blow and rid the world of the Beast once and for all. With the help of a magician named Rekann, Aarbron must locate four items that will enable him to face and destroy the Beast.

Beast Your Eyes...

Anyone who saw the original *Shadow of the Beast* remembers the beautiful graphics and exceptional parallax scrolling it offered. It is still, in my opinion, the best of the *Beast* series in appearance and play. With *Shadow of the Beast II* came more advanced puzzles than those offered in the first game. However, it also exchanged the bright colors and superb parallax scrolling of the initial product for dark, ominous tones and more simple parallax effects with bi-directional scrolling. In an effort to combine the best of both previous releases, *Shadow of the Beast III* incorporates the brighter colors and multilevel parallax scrolling of the original and the more advanced puzzles of *Beast II*. The results, I believe, are mixed.

While backgrounds in *Beast III* are more colorfully appealing than those in the previous release, the foreground and character colors are still too dark and drab. They need more pizzazz. Granted, the design called for a sinister feel, yet "sinister" doesn't necessarily require muted, heavy shades to convey its message. Still, the graphics are very good overall and the improvement in the parallax effect comes across well, while maintaining bi-directional scrolling.

...And Beast Your Ears

As usual, the musical accompaniment is excellent. There is no lack of quality mood music in *Beast III*. Exceptional soundtracks have become a hallmark of the *Beast* series as well as almost all **Psygnosis** releases, and the tradition, thankfully, continues. Digitized sound effects are also very good and realistically reproduced.

A Puzzled Beast at Best

As did most players, I found the puzzles in *Shadow of the Beast II* far too difficult. This criticism has been addressed by the programmers to a limited extent. According to the documentation, the puzzles in *Beast III* begin "very easy" and become "gradually more difficult" as the game progresses. That the initial puzzles are very easy, I will gladly concede. However, I would not classify the increase in difficulty as all that gradual. They appear to shift from easy to difficult very quickly. Apart from the first few puzzles in each of the four main sections of the game, the puzzles are still too difficult overall, especially when failure to correctly solve one results in the need to start the level over again—from the beginning in many cases. Some puzzles are still difficult enough that many players will give up before finishing the game.

The Beast of Your Worries

While *Shadow of the Beast III* has much to commend, it still suffers from some problems that have followed the series

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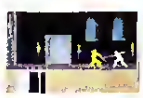

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through from the beginning. For starters, disk-based copy protection is still employed. As such, *Beast III* cannot be installed on a hard drive. What makes this all the worse is that disk access is painfully slow, even on an Amiga 3000. Mix this with the traditional "death scene" (which I quickly tired of being forced to view) and most players will add numerous gray hairs before they ever finish the game. Loading and reloading time is too slow from floppies!

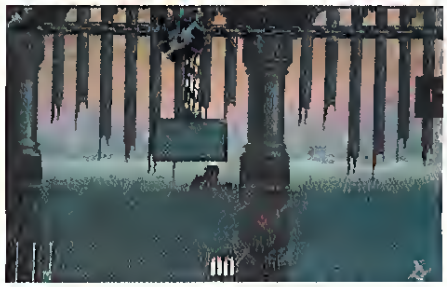
Documentation, while barely adequate, is like that provided with most **Psygnosis** products—so brief it is a joke. What is supplied in 20 pages (in very large type) could have easily fit onto a single two-sided quick reference card. This has been a longstanding problem that **Psygnosis** is aware of, but has failed to address.

Shadow of the Beast III also suffers from one of the same failings of many arcade adventures — a lack of any save feature. This is understandable in a coin-op product. It is, however, unacceptable in a product for home use. I have grown tired of playing and replaying the same section of a game over and over 20 or more times, simply to have yet another unsuccessful try at the same puzzle. Why designers of arcade games cannot fathom the term "save game" or provide a means to do so is beyond my comprehension. Is this too much to ask?

The Beast Thing Going?

From the start, the *Beast* games have been popular products. Yet, I wonder if the key to their popularity lies more in their "look and feel" than in their play. As mentioned above, *Shadow of the Beast III* is the third and last game in this series. Perhaps it is best that the *Beast* is finally being laid to rest. True die-hard joystick jockeys who thrive on an intense, relentless onslaught of digital opponents, and who do not mind replaying the same level to excess until an offending puzzle is solved will probably love it. However, average gamers may find the game overly frustrating and even annoying to play.

Unfortunately, *Shadow of the Beast III*, in my estimation, provides more glitter (it does have that **Psygnosis** charm) than gold, falling low on the playability scale with the reward for playing insufficient to the effort required. In fact, I experienced the same love/hate relationship with *Beast III* as I did with **Electronic Arts'** *The Immortal*, another game sporting superb graphics, audio and atmosphere, but with a frustration level too high to enjoy playing it for any length of time. While some may think that I am being overly hard on this product, I have simply grown tired of arcade games that punish the player rather than reward them for their efforts.



If one lives and dies by the joystick, enjoys facing near-insurmountable odds and takes relish in repetitive play, go ahead and drop the bucks on *Shadow of the Beast III*. Otherwise, the player should rest his or her joystick finger until something more rewarding comes along. There is no sense in turning oneself into a beast just to play it. **CGW**

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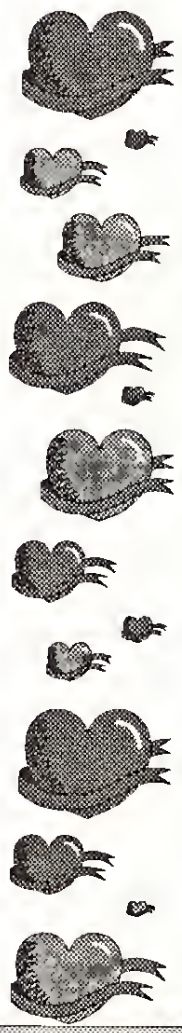

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A Spring Break Report From Fort Naughtytail

As told by Scorpia

Step right in and warm up by the fire. Winter is still with us, even if it is getting on towards March. And after March comes April, that time when a young man's fancy turns to thoughts of booze, babes, and bashes (at least it does if you're Steve Meretzky, hehe). That's right, the time of *Spring Break*!

Yes folks, he's baaaaack! Everyone's favorite nerd sorcerer, Ernie Eaglebeak. This time, though, the books and classrooms are left far behind as Ernie and his Hu Delta Phart brothers live it up at Fort Naughtytail during Spring Break in **Legend**'s *Spellcasting 301*.

Well, maybe "living it up" isn't quite the phrase. See, there's another frat from another school, the Gotta Loda Yu boys, who don't want the HDPs on the beach (or anywhere else). So, a curvaceous blonde, calling herself The Judge, sets up a bunch of contests for the rivals. Whoever has the most points at the end is "King Of The Beach" and whoever loses has to pack up and go home.

Since the GLYs are athletic studs, and HDPs are mostly brainy nerds, the Yus look like a shoo-in...unless, of course, our boy Ernie works his magic tricks to, ummm, give he and his frat brothers a little edge. Okay, it's cheating, but hey, it's for a good cause!

Getting to Fort Naughtytail is half the fun, since Ernie is Carpetmaster and drives the magic carpet to the resort. It's not hard if he follows the directions (part of the game's Seepy...err, CP, or copy protection. heh). Just 'cause there's a few malfunctions along the way doesn't mean they won't get there. Ernie simply throws a little something off here and there, that's all. Of course, he's gonna have to track all that stuff down later, but think of it as a good way to see the sights (and he should find those things as quickly as possible).

Anyway, it isn't long after arrival that the HDPs and GLYs have their first confrontation. Ernie just needs to lighten up a bit so the HDPs come off looking like champs. Then The Judge pops up, goes into her act, and everything is set for the contests.

This is where it gets tricky. Time is important throughout the game. Ernie better keep his eye on the clock, so he doesn't miss any events...or even things that go on between the events. And he better not be too far from his room (with its delightful view of the dumpster) late at night; the boy starts to get tired around 10:30 PM.

Also, there's lots of stuff to pick up, but only so much can our hero carry at once. Some of it has to be stored in some convenient location until it's needed. Fortunately, most items (outside of spells) only have to be used once, so after something's been used, it can be dumped and forgotten (but Ernie may need that shovel twice).

Ernie has to buy some items along the way, and his money may start to run out pretty fast. Then he'll have to try his luck at the Casino. Looks like a pretty crooked place to me; Ernie oughtta straighten it out before he gambles his gold away. Just keep in mind that even in an honest game, he can have bad luck (ya can't save in the casino, so if Ernie is making a pile, hop out now and then to save the game).

I should mention the cops. Anytime something gets smashed or broken, you know who they're gonna tab for a "cellular" vacation. Right, our hero! This could happen maybe seven times (or less). So Ernie has to be prepared. Each time he gets nabbed, there's a way out...but it only works *once*. There's no special order here, it's just whatever Ernie has in the way of spells or items at the time. Jailbreaker's choice <grin>.

Just to make things even more interesting, there's a special spell that changes other spells. So when Ernie grabs that one, he should fool around (save the game first!) and see what happens when he uses it. Some of those "transmuted" spells are gonna be important later on.

Now, it gets hard. There are things Ernie needs to do between contests, but exactly when is another matter. So I'll just indicate the deadline in a general way and Ernie can squeeze it in wherever he finds the time in his busy schedule.

All right. The first contest is Sunday night, so that gives Ernie time to walk around, check things out, and buy a few items (don't pass up any spells), not to mention, find as much as he can of the stuff he dumped from the carpet. Speaking of the Sunday night Kick-Off Party, nothing attracts women (at least the women around here) like studs.

With the HDPs winning the first contest easily. Ernie can get to work on the Sandcastle Contest Monday afternoon. Since the contest is judged at 1 PM, early arrival is advised so our boy can give Sid a little help.

Sometime between Monday afternoon and Tuesday morning, the bridge has to be fixed, and any time before Tuesday night, Ernie has to visit Hillary Tickingclock (we all remember Hillary the Inexhaustible, right?). Save time; *don't* buy a ticket from the dispenser.

Also, some time before Tuesday night, Ernie's gonna have to get into that mysterious mansion. You know, the one with the dog at the gate. Good thing it's the other side, from the look of him. I have a haunch

that being nice could do Ernie a hole lot of good (heh).

Once inside, Ernie should see about making the place more cheerful; all this blue stuff is, well, kinda depressing, eh? There's hardly any real color around here. And when Ernie gets downstairs, he should pay close attention to what's down there (besides the lady, that is).

Speaking of color, there's the Huemaze. That has to be done, one way or another. If you're not good with color tricks, or you have a monochrome monitor, or you just don't want to be bothered, you can pay the 100 gold and be done with it. But it's more fun to do the maze (easy mode recommended).

During his rambles, Ernie may have come across a spell box he can't open. Sorry Charlie (oops, Ernie), you have to be level 4 to open it. That means a trip to the lighthouse and running a few errands for the Presiding Sorcerer. Get at least the first one done before Thursday morning (preferably well before). Don't bother picking up the spell box, just use it where it is. After the big splash, Ernie should come back with four items (berries not included).

So it's Tuesday AM and time for the Belly Flop contest. Here's where a little roc and roll (or was that roc and drop?) comes in handy. You could say Ernie calls the shots here, and pulling this one off would be a real feather in his cap (or was that Vince's?).

Then, it's the big liquor bash Tuesday night, and BIG is the word for it. Can Ernie make the world's largest daiquiri...and then, drink it without collapsing? Sure he can, with the right spells and the right items (this is a pretty easy one, if Ernie's hit all the shops by now, and he certainly should have!).

Well, the week sure is moving along fast, huh? Let's hope it hasn't moved along so fast that Ernie didn't get a chance to see the women wrestlers. A little favor for one of them will be repaid at Wednesday morning's Wet T-Shirt contest. True, the lady isn't exactly well-endowed, but Ernie can do something about that. He can even help Mona (who almost doesn't need it, but doing that is extra points).

Wednesday certainly is a busy day. After the T-shirt contest, there's a little bull-fighting late in the afternoon. Ernie ain't exactly a matador, so it's time for more dirty tricks. What that bull needs is a little "get up and go" feeling. A small distraction is advisable, though. I'm sure if Ernie thinks about it hard enough, the right idea will float into his head.

And the day isn't done yet. Here are the HDPs, looking for a little real fun at Club Club, when who should walk in but those nasty GLYs. In no time at all, a fight breaks out. Good thing Ernie's not directly involved, since it gives him a chance to throw a spell or two to good effect.

One thing you can say about these spring breaks, there's never a dull moment. Hardly has Ernie recovered from Wednesday, when it's time for Thursday morning's Body Surfing contest. This is one that Ernie has to do himself (presuming, that is, he got that Bigfinno spell box open).

Well actually, Ernie *and* Fred (FRED??? Oh, not *my* Fred, whew!). Too bad Fred is out like a light. If the HDPs wanna win the Surfing contest, Ernie is just gonna have to find a way to bring sleeping beauty back to consciousness.

Drying off after that hardly leaves any time for the afternoon Tanning bout. True, by now (and probably long before) Ernie's found the case of suntan lotion, but that lotion doesn't quite have the oomph necessary to beat the GLYs. Remember, we don't want our side looking like lemons, right?

There's nothing else scheduled for today, so our boy has a little free time for himself. One thing he can do with those leisure hours (ha) is have a chat with the rummy in the groggery (grog, for those of you who were wondering, is rum diluted with water). Sorry to say, he won't fork over until Ernie forks over 500 gold. Ya gotta do it, Ernie, and it has to be done before tomorrow.

That's because Friday morning is the Volleyball contest, and we want our HDP team to win. With the right spells in alternation, deflating the GLYs should be a snap. This leaves a few hours for pyramid practice, and we know Ernie wouldn't want to miss that.

So now it's time for the mystery event. Huh? What? Sheer destruction? Y'know, this don't sound exactly kosher. Still, Ernie's gotta go through with it, for the sake of dear old Sorcerer U. and the HDPs. And our hero is practically led by the nose to the right act of vandalism, thanks to the dropped key.

But that's only because there's more to come (you didn't think it would be over this soon, did you?). Now the HDPs have to find the Prokturingham Bull. First though, Ernie better have four seahorses. Is he missing one? Maybe our hero needs a conch on the head, or possibly he didn't drink his soup like a good boy in the first place, or perhaps he didn't know that things aren't always what they're cracked up to be.

A light source is handy, too. Then, it's spelunking time. Oooo, look at that giant squid! MOMMY! (No silly, not *yours*.) Anyway, before you can say "Indiana Jones," Ernie and friends (the HDPs *are* with him, I hope) are in the fabled city of Sitnalta. This is where the scroll is necessary, as automapping won't be much help here.

Just follow the map along, doing the right thing with the seahorses, and in no time, Ernie will be at the fabled Throne. What now? Well, it's a seat. Ernie (hint, hint). Uh oh...

There's the bull, and it doesn't look happy. Luckily, Ernie has just the right spell for that. UNluckily, guess who just showed up? Yep, none other than Joey Rottenwood (you were expecting him, of course). While Joey gives the usual "Villain's Spiel To The Hero Before His Plans Come Undone," Ernie needs to think fast and do something else about the bull (poor thing, you can hardly hear its piteous cries). THAT will take care of Joey, at least until Spellcasting 401 rolls around.

Whew! Good thing spring break comes only once a year. And good thing that you were around to help Ernie through this one. Speaking of help, if you need a hand with an adventure game, you can reach me in the following ways:

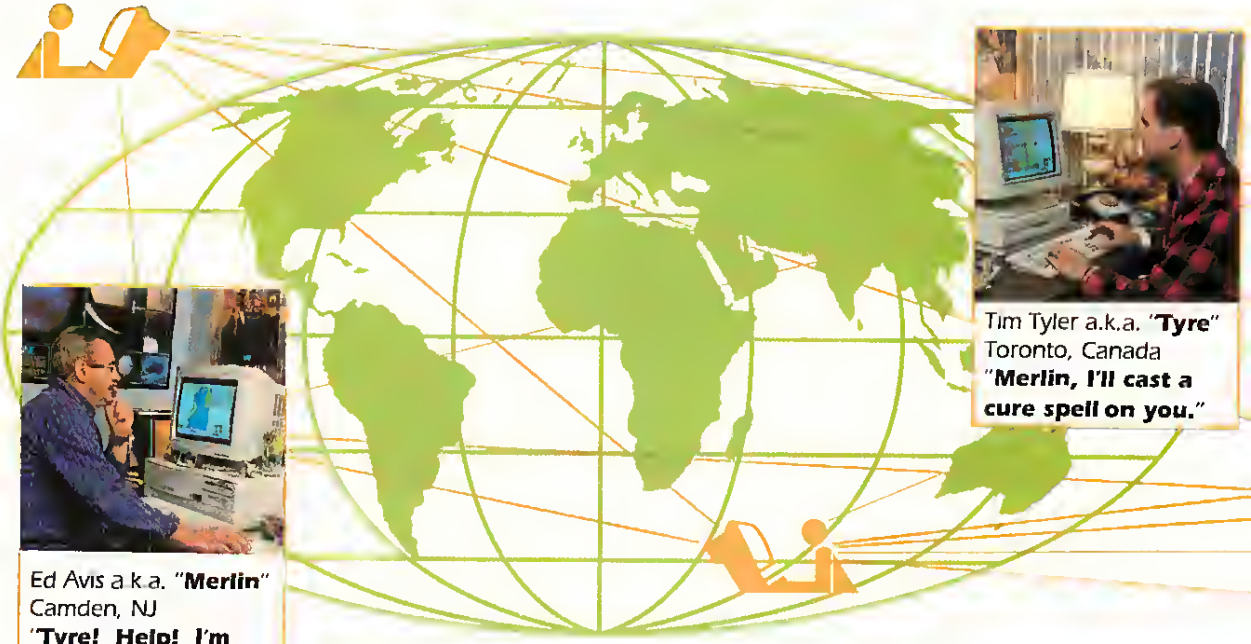
On Delphi: visit the GameSIG (under the Groups and Clubs menu).

On GEnie: Stop by the Games Round-Table (type: Scorpia to reach the Games RT).

By US Mail (enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you live in the United States): Scorpia, PO Box 338, Gracie Station, New York, NY 10028.

Until next time, happy adventuring! **CGW**

A New Dimension



Ed Avis a.k.a. "**Merlin**"
Camden, NJ
"**Tyre! Help! I'm wounded.**"

Tim Tyler a.k.a. "**Tyre**"
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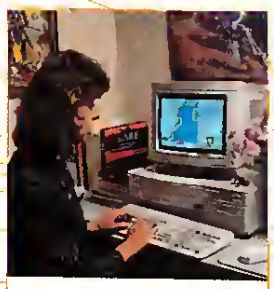

Lori Zini a.k.a. **"Diana"**
Waco, Tx
"What tore you up, Merlin?"

Brad Elk a.k.a. **"Sauer"**
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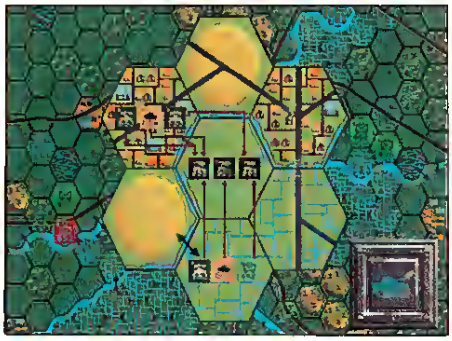
"If you need some help, just page me."

OPERATION MARKET-GARDEN™



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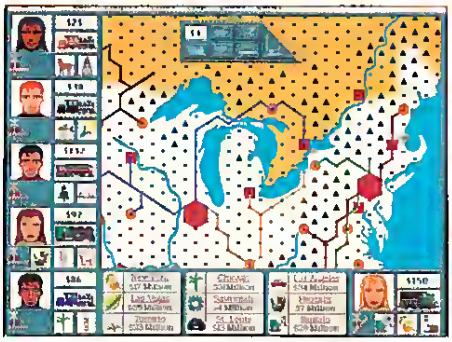

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A DRIVING NEED FOR SPEED

Hopping In EA's *Car & Driver* is a Gas

by Ken ~~Andretti~~ Brown

Why do people buy driving simulations? Because they can't drive legally? No, because they can't drive 200 mph legally. Because mere mortals don't have Nomex suits, Bell helmets and Formula 1 cars in which to go jetting around town. Sure, you can don a helmet to drive to the grocery store, but there won't be anyone in the frozen foods section to lay garlands around your sweaty neck and plant glistening lipsticky kisses on your cheeks.

Actually, that's one of the few drawbacks of **Electronic Arts**' new *Car & Driver*: no garlands. Although you might get a sweaty neck tearing the joystick loose from its mooring, there won't be any exhilirating victory lap in front of 100,000 cheering fans. Nor, though, will you be pinned into a 110 degree cockpit with three-inch safety harnesses to a seat designed for something other than the human spine. The experience, says Indy 500 winner Bobby Rahal, is like being in a sauna for four hours while someone beats you with a garden hose.

Car & Driver does, however, deliver some thrills and surprises of its own, not the least of which is safe, economical access to some of the world's most salivant sports cars. No sense generating any more saliva, so here's the menu: Porsche 959 (sure you were going to drive one this weekend at your aunt's house), Toyota MR2 (Mr. Two), Ferrari F40 ($1,000 per horsepower), Lotus Esprit Turbo (good enough for Sharon Stone, good enough for us), '57 Ferrari 250 Testarossa, '66 Shelby Cobra (power-to-weight ratio gone mad), Lamborghini Countach (hold the bald Italian in gold chains), Eagle Talon TSi (a sportscar with common cents), Corvette ZR1 (if you must), and a full-blown racer, the Mercedes C11 IMSA car (what *Car & Driver* refers to as "1,000 horses in a small, sweaty box"). There's the stable, and a fine assortment of sheetmetal, fiberglass and carbon fiber it is. That's $1,547,750 worth of machinery for you to take out and clobber repeatedly on the track of your choice. Or 4116 horses in a small software box.

The game is played much like opening the pages of its namesake. One enters at the cover, flips to page two, and has the aforementioned steeds indexed like the *C&D* table of contents. Discriminating drivers whose minds are as thirsty for knowledge as their joysticks are jumpy for juice may flip to *C&D* feature articles describing each vehicle in detail, complete with specifications, "Counterpoints" and "The Verdict." The all-star machinery obviously engenders praise from *Car & Driver's* writers, and offer some insight into the handling characteristics of the real thing.

TITLE:	Car & Driver
SYSTEM:	IBM
PRICE:	$59.95
PROTECTION:	None
DESIGNER:	Looking Glass Technologies
PUBLISHER:	Electronic Arts Menlo Park, CA

Next, the driver chooses from an assortment of tracks to warm his or her wheels on: Monterey Raceway, "Dobbs Raceway," the San Dimas Mall Parking Lot (doughnut city), the EA Speedway, an oval track, the Mahomet Dragstrip, New York Highway 97, Arkansas Route 1 (ingratiatory nod to Bill?), and an autocross course. Some of the tracks are there to acclimate you to your new vehicle, some for cheap thrills, and the rest to prove your mettle against three competing greaseballs.

The driving simulation is as realistic as polyfilled graphics allow, and becomes decidedly more challenging as the player progresses up the difficulty level. Suspension becomes twitchier, wheels lose their grip, shifting is easier to blow. The simulation is more rewarding than games like **Accolade**'s *Test Drive 3*, and certainly offers more cars and courses to choose from. Accolade's *Road & Track Presents Grand Prix Unlimited* gives the EA gaming engine a stiff run, but the Accolade sim is a different animal—Formula One cars on Grand Prix courses. What if you want to drive 160 mph on the Pacific Coast Highway, risking head-on collision, vaulting off a cliff, or plowing into a bridge? *Car & Driver* is for you.

After learning the dynamics of the game and dusting the AI cars, this driver went the extra mile to teach a rookie racer. An experienced driver, though possessed of a decidedly below-average intelligence, my roommate, um...the *test subject* provided an illuminating study in learning to drive *C&D*. He found himself without his Isotoners in a 1,000 horsepower IMSA car (the Merc C11) barreling 180 mph down the oval track straightaway. Soon into the first turn, he rose up high on the 40 degree bank and flew effortlessly into the diaphanous heavens. The instant replay looked like an experimental jet taking off in *Flight Simulator*.

Dusting off his airfoil, the overzealous rookie was remanded to a ZR1 at Mahomet Dragstrip. The lights descended on the hallmark starting tree, and he was off with a roar. Time for the shift, and the car moaned to a crawl. You wanna drag race, you gotta shift. You no shift, you no go. One can choose between manual and automatic shifting in the game setup, but manual shifting is required on the dragstrip. Shifting is accomplished with the keyboard or with the joystick fire button. Steering with **Colorado Spectrum**'s intriguing Mouse Wheel and possessed of the aforementioned below-MSRP intelligence, the rookie neglected to shift and paid the ultimate price. Returning to the oval, he soon proved intelligence is not required to drive the ZR1 adequately (as in real life), and laid down some decent times with top speeds of 162 mph.

Yet, the *real* test of driving skill is under "difficult" settings on tracks like the EA Speedway, the Monterey Raceway or New York Highway 97. These are roads as challenging and curvaceous as any go-go dancer, and harder to master. The EA Speedway is two miles long and delivers a gloveful of fast corners as well as some deceptively tight twisties. It is a savory treat for undiscovered closed-course speed freaks, who like having to judge speed into corners, powering out of them for

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needed traction, and crossing the checkered line first. The cars behave well, exhibiting characteristics of acceleration, top speed, understeer, oversteer, etc. They don't sound different, as they would on the track, but they feel different, and they certainly look different when viewing the race from inside the car.

ROAD TEST

Lamborghini Countach 5000 Quattrovalvole

Welcome the big red vacuum cleaner

BY STEVE SPENCY

One may choose from four driver views before or during a race: inside car with dash and instruments in view: low res, inside car with high res, outside car high res or default field of view. I preferred the outside view for a more exciting immersion in the game. Graphic representation of the car's interiors is up to the standards one would expect from an EA game.

Learning to drive these courses won't empty your wallet or your tank. The hardest part is just keeping the car from belting off the road/track in the corners. There is a setting in the game to disable off-road driving, but choosing settings like that, as well as "invincible" settings preventing collision damage, take too much of the challenge out of driving. Start off in the "easy" driving setting, with no competitors, in auto-shift mode and just practice staying on the course until your finish times start to rise. If your car strays from the pavement, usually preceded by red type indicating "front wheel skid" or "rear wheel skid" or both, one can drive back on road or simply touch 'Q' and return instantly to the track.

After driving a course successfully, it's as much fun watching the replay. *C&D* offers a number of interesting replay vantage points, including in-car, chase car, nearest camera, chase chopper, blimp and finish line, and they help show the driver any errors of his ways. A minor flaw is that during the replay the car often disappears behind slices of the filled-polygon scenery. A thoughtful detail, though, is the way one's taillights come on when the car was braking during the course. There are other touches in courses like the Dobb's Raceway where helicopters and jets fly over the course to amuse/distract you.

C&D takes a checkered flag on a number of points, and could use improvement in only a couple areas. The choice of cars, tracks and excellent articles referring to both enhance the enjoyment of this new gaming engine. The simulation is realistic — there is a greater sense of speed than with our earlier Sneak Preview version (CGW #100) — and is surprisingly "natural" with a joystick; it is also fun to drive with Colorado Spectrum's Mouse Wheel, but you still have to accelerate and shift with the keyboard. The game offers more interesting

cars than any competing driving software, and can become more demanding by choosing manual shifting and higher degrees of difficulty.

Let's lay the laurels on *C&D* for this year's contest, and await the next "Ultimate Driving Simulation" to take us to the next level with greater graphic realism. Until then, rev up your engines and may the glistening lipsticky kisses be yours in the winner's circle. CGW

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Stunt Island - A Star Is Made!

An "Interview" with an Accomplished Stunt Pilot and Film Producer

by Timothy L. Trimble

TITLE	Stunt Island
SYSTEM	IBM Compatible
PRICE	$59.95
PROTECTION	Document Look-Up
DESIGNERS	Adrian Stephens and Ronald Fortier
PUBLISHER	Walt Disney Computer Software Burbank, CA

Once again this reporter has the exclusive privilege of presenting a personal interview with the fabulous Mr. Timothy Trimble just after the preview of his new motion picture, "The Timinator."

CGW: Mr. Trimble, that was an incredible movie! I understand that you not only flew the stunts but you built the movie sets, did the filming, and then did all of the editing and special effects. That's a lot of work for just one person. How did you manage to do it all?

TT: Well, it was all very enjoyable. There were a few of the stunts that were very tricky and required a lot of skill to fly, but the risk was well worth the effort. The sets took quite a while to build, but I wanted to make sure that they were just right for the filming of the stunts. Plus, I couldn't have done it without my assistant, *Stunt Island*.

CGW: Of course! *Stunt Island* from **Walt Disney Software**. Our magazine did a Sneak Preview in our August 1992 issue (# 98). For the benefit of some of our new readers could you give us an overview of what *Stunt Island* is?

TT: Sure, I'd be glad to. *Stunt Island* is a movie-making and stunt flying simulator. It allows any avid pilot or movie maker to design sets and stunts, fly the stunts, and then do the post-production process of editing the various camera films, adding special effects, sound tracks, and then, producing a full length (up to 20 minutes) motion picture.

CGW: You mean you were able to do this entire movie with *Stunt Island*?

TT: Yes! Without Stunt Island I would not be the star that I am today!

CGW: Since *Stunt Island* can do so much in just one product doesn't this limit the amount of features and capabilities?

TT: Actually, no! For example, in the pre-production process of building sets and creating the stunts I was able to select from over 800 complex objects and place them anywhere on or above the island location. Things like vehicles, animals, plants, buildings, and of course some very famous landmarks. Plus, I can utilize and modify any of the 34 existing film sets or create my own completely from scratch.

CGW: I noticed in the film that you had some vehicles moving among the buildings in your city-in-the-sky set.

TT: Yes, it was a very difficult set to build and create but well worth the effort. Once an object has been selected for placement on the set I can then set various parameters for movement and "events." There was one scene where I drop a bomb on a moving vehicle. The vehicle exploded and another vehicle swerved off the road and tumbled end over end. I handled all the action by programming special events for each of the objects on the set.

CGW: It all sounds like a very complicated process.

TT: Actually, the process is not very hard at all. All of the event commands are provided via on-screen selections and the format is very simple. It's just as easy as saying IF collision with bomb THEN explode. It's that easy!

CGW: How were you able to manage all of the different camera angles for the stunts?

TT: Well, the first eight objects that are placed on a set, including the aircraft, become points from which you are able to film the scene; that is, they become "cameras." During the design and building of the set each object can then be configured for camera angle, zoom, and tracking of the object being filmed.

CGW: What about the airplanes? I noticed that you flew a lot of different planes in the film.

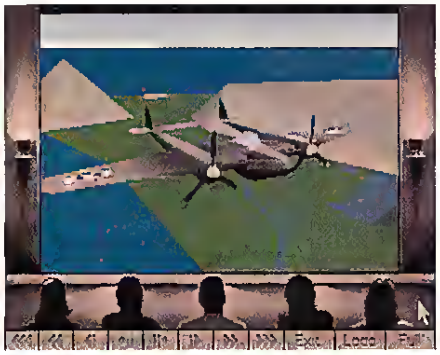
TT: That was my favorite part of making the movie, flying the planes. *Stunt Island* provides 45 different types of aircraft, ranging all the way from WWI to modern day fighters and commercial aircraft, and even the space shuttle. One of the trickiest parts about flying the various types of aircraft for this film is learning the handling characteristics of each of the planes. After flying the Lear around the city-in-the-sky for awhile, I then had a difficult time adjusting to the handling characteristics of the 747 for the final departure scene of the movie. Aside from learning how each plane handles, the actual flying of the aircraft is very easy. Not a whole bunch of technical controls or instruments, just the pure joy of flying by the seat of your pants. The opening scene with the SR-71 coming in at dawn was my most enjoyable flight.

CGW: Do you have to be flying a stunt in order to fly the aircraft?

TT: No. I did all of the location scouting by just flying around and learning the various sites around the island. There are a lot of good sites for scenery on the island. Trees, mountains, canyons, cities, towns, bridges, farms, a military base, and even the movie studio is on the island. If I see a good site for a scene then I turn on a special film recorder and then look at the film again later in the editing room. Flying around freely also gave me a good opportunity to become familiar with some of the different aircraft.

CGW: Once you were done with the filming how did you handle the editing process?

TT: The whole post-production process is one of my favorite activities in film making, after flying of course. Like they say, you can make or ruin the quality of a film during the editing process. *Stunt Island* allowed me to incorporate eight different camera shots into one major scene.



Timing of the changes between camera shots is critical but the editing facility of *Stunt Island* allows full control over the film footage with its VCR type controls. This is also where the special effects, titling, and sound track are added.

CGW: Your movie had a great soundtrack. How were you able to incorporate this into the film?

TT: The editing booth allows for the addition of sound tracks and sound effects. There is a lot of pre-recorded music, sound effects, and common sounds that are available within the *Stunt Island* package itself. Plus, with the support for various sound boards, sound and dialog can be recorded through a microphone and used within the package. There are two channels for the sound track with four volume levels, allowing for playing a musical sound track along with the sound effects. The editing booth also allows the addition of titles, credits and some visual effects, such as coloring, fade and film speed.

CGW: So the editing booth allows you to take the film footage and create the entire motion picture?

TT: Yes, that's correct. Once I am satisfied with the final footage then I save the end result as a film. I can either preview the film in the editing booth or view it in the theater. And, of course, the audience in the theater always loves my films!

CGW: So with the viewing of your film today, does this mean that the *Stunt Island* package is required for viewing the movie?

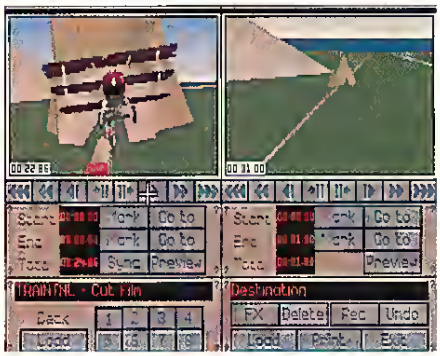
TT: No, that's one of the best things about this package. Once the film is completed I can distribute the film to any of my fans along with a viewing program called Playone. Best of all, there are no royalties required for distribution of the films!

CGW: I'm sure our readers will really be glad to hear that! I also noticed that the graphics were wonderful, with the light source shading, panning and smoothness of movement. Does this require any special equipment?

TT: Well, it is recommended that you use an IBM compatible, 386SX at 16MHz or better. The movie that you watched was all done with a 386DX at 33MHz on a 256-color VGA monitor. EGA, MCGA, and Tandy 16-color is also supported. *Stunt Island* also requires a minimum of 13MBs of hard disk space. The requirements are reasonable for the quality that you get.

CGW: So, Mr. Trimble, with the accomplishment of creating a motion picture, flying the stunts, and distributing the film, what other activities will you be pursuing next?

TT: Well, I'm getting ready to enter the *Stunt Island* Stunt Competition which is also a part of the package. There are 32 different contest stunts. The competition requires that 26 of the stunts are completed and I will be attempting to do them all in the first take.



CGW: The first take? Why the pressure to do it correct the first time?

TT: The bonus pay is better if the stunt is completed on the first take. The main object of the competition is to make the most money from doing the stunts by the end of the competition. I've had to do some practicing, however, on some of the stunts since the stunt coordinator is not always clear on what he wants done during the stunt.

CGW: So, what do you get for winning the competition?

TT: Rumor has it that the winner of the contest gets the airfield named after the pilot at the *Stunt Island* first anniversary party.

CGW: Well, that does sound like a nice prize. It seems that you've been able to accomplish a lot as a result of using *Stunt Island* for your film project. Would you recommend to anyone else who is interested in making movies or flying stunts that they use this package?

TT: Oh yes, of course! I expect that there are already plenty of potential film students and stunt pilots just waiting to take my place. Just to demonstrate how easy it is to get involved with this product I would like to mention that my wife, who has never sat down to use any of my flight packages, decided to take the Lear for a spin around the island. And she thoroughly enjoyed it!

CGW: Sorry, ladies, but it sounds like this stunt pilot and film maker is spoken for! Well, Mr. Trimble, this has been a wonderful interview, and I'm sure that our readers will be looking forward to seeing your films and maybe even making their own. Do you have any final thoughts that you would like to add?

TT: Actually, yes I would. I have been very pleased with this product. I feel that it represents the future of simulation products and helps to set some new standards for entertainment software. I expect that this will also be a step towards a future where films can be created completely on the microcomputer for distribution and viewing to the general movie viewing public. **Disney Software** always seems to be a step ahead when it comes to entertaining the masses and I feel that they have done this with *Stunt Island*. My only desire is for rudder pedal support but Disney has assured me that they are working on it and will have it available soon. And, as I mentioned earlier, *Stunt Island* has made me a Star!

For a little while anyway.

CGW: It's been a great interview, Mr. Trimble, and I'm sure that your fans will look forward to the distribution of your film "The Timinator" on most local BBSs and Information Services. For those of you who are interested, *Stunt Island* is a product of Disney Software and is available now at your local distributor.

You can contact the Tim "The Timinator" Trimble fan club via Compuserve at 76306,1115 or via Internet at ttrimble@timinator.win.net.

Once again, this is your roving *CGW* reporter, bringing you the latest and greatest, saying "So long until next time." CGW

Viking Software, Inc.

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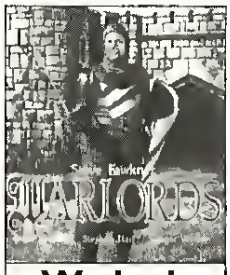

Warlords Enchanced

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IBM $19

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Eye of the Beholder 2	12
Falcon Air Combat	12
Falcon 3 Strategic Guide	17
Legend of Kyrandia	10
Lord of the Rings	10
Lucasfilm Air Combat	16
Harpoon Battlebook	19
Magic Candle 2	10
Might & Magic III	16
Planet's Edge	15
Pools of Darkness	12
Powermonger	10
Quest for Clues 5	15
Railroad Tycoon	12
Rex Nebular	10
Ringworld	10
Run 5 Magazine 1-17	5
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Secret of Monkey Island II	10
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Ultima VII	10
Ultima Underworld	12
Wing Commander	15
Wizardry 6 (Bane)	10

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AdLib	49	-
CH-Flightstick	37	-
CH-Virtual Pilot	62	-
Gravis Elminator Gamecard	29	-
Gravis Joystick	39	-
Gravis Pro	41	-
Gravis UltraSound	130	-
Pro Audio Spectrum-16	239	-
SoundBlaster Pro	180	-
SoundBlaster Pro Basic	150	-
SoundBlaster Microchannel	269	-
Thunderboard	99	-
ThrustMaster flight stick	69	-
ThrustMaster Pro	114	-
ThrustMaster Rudder Pedal	109	-
ThrustMaster throttle	79	-
ThrustMaster TSR s	12	-

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	IBM	Ami
Hard Nova	16	-
Int. Sports Challenge	-	19
Links/Bountiful Course Disk	-	5
MBT. Cen. Germany	-	19
Monty Python	-	5
No Greater Glory	22	-
Overrun	-	10
Red Baron	-	19
Robosport	-	19
Secret of Monkey Island I	-	19
Second Front	22	-
Sim City Add-ons 1 & 2	-	5
Space Quest IV	-	19
Stratego	-	15
Team Yankee	-	19
Test Drive II: Supercars	-	5
Warlords	19	-
Western Front	22	-
Yeager Air Combat	16	-
ThrustMaster TSR's	12	-

Viking Ratings

Dogs of War: Seige Expansion	**A+**
Dune II	**A+**
Stunt Island	**A+**
V for Victory #2	**A+**
Front Page Sports: Football	**A**
Pacific War	**A**
Wayne Gretzky 3	**A**
Aces: 1946	**A–**
High Command	**B**
Task Force 1942	**B–**
A.T.A.C.	**C+**
Special Forces	**C**

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Strategy

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	IBM	Mac
Ancient Art of War Skies	37	-
Blue and the Grey	5/93	-
Caesar	37	-
Civil War Vol. 1, 2 or 3	27	32
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Conquered Kingdoms	37	-
Conquest of Japan	37	-
Discovery of Columbus	37	-
Genghis Khan	37	-
Gettysburg	39	-
Gold of the Americas	26	29
L'Empereur	38	-
Liberty or Death	37	-
Merchant Colony	32	-
No Greater Glory	22	-
Nobunaga's Ambition 2	39	-
Paladin II	37	-
PTO	3/93	-
Rampart	25	-
Red Baron (VGA)	42	42
Mission Builder	19	-
Romance of 3 Kingdoms	42	-
Romance of 3 Kingdoms 2	42	-
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Dogs of War	19	-
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Waterloo	39	-

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WWII 1946!	25	-
RAF in the Pacific	1Q	-
Aces Over Europe	1Q	-
Campaign Disk 1	2Q	-
Action Stations v3.2	32	-
Data Disk	17	-
B-17 Flying Fortress	38	-
Battletank Barbarossa	39	-
Bismarck	29	-
Campaign	37	-
Carriers at War	42	-
Carrier Strike	42	-
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Fleet Commander	6/93	-
Fleet Med	39	-
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Great Naval Battles	42	-
Super Ships/Atlantic	19	-
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In Harm's Way	39	-
Malta Storm	39	-
MBT Central Germany	39	-
MBT Kursk	39	-
New World Order	2/93	-
Pacific Theater Op	5/93	-
Pacific War	47	-
Panzer Battles	26	29
Patton Strikes Back	17	19
Prelude to Jutland	29	-
Rommel North Africa	26	-
Second Front	22	-
Secret Weapons Luftwaffe	44	-
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HE 162	20	-
P-80	20	-
P 80	20	-
Seventh Fleet	39	-
Silent Service 2	34	-
Silent Service 2 Classic	22	-
Task Force 1942	39	-
Their Finest Hour/Bdhwks	44	-
Third Reich	28	-
V for Victory: Utah Beach	43	39
V for Victory: Velikoye Luki	43	43
V for Victory: Mkt. Garden	3/93	3/93

Conflict: Korea

Conflict: Korea concentrates on the first year of the Korean war (1950-51) Several scenarios with campaign game. Also: Hypothetical 1995 scenario, 6 difficulty levels.

IBM $19

	IBM	Mac
V for Victory: Cassenne Pass	2Q	2Q
V for Victory: Stalingrad	3Q	3Q
Victory at Sea	1993	-
Western Front	22	-

Modern

7th Fleet	39	-
A-10 Warthog	12/93	-
A Line in the Sand	27	-
ATAC	34	-
Air Force Commander	37	-
Allied Forces	29	-
Comanche: Max. Overkill	43	-
Expansion Disk 1	25	-
Expansion Disk 2	3/93	-
Conflict: Korea	19	-
Conflict: Middle East	19	-
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F-117A Nighthawk (VGA)	40	-
F-15 II Classic	22	-
F-15 III	42	-
Falcon 3.0	45	-
Operation: Fighting Tiger	25	-
Falcon MC	-	42
Global Effect	34	-
Gunship 2000	38	-
Campaign Disk 1	22	-
Harpoon v1.3	27	37
Battleset 2 or 3	20	20
Battleset 4	22	22
Harpoon Designer Series	32	-
Harpoon Scenario Editor	28	-
Harpoon Challenger Pak S.E.	49	49
Harpoon II	1993	-
Harrier Assault	37	-
Jump Jet	39	-
Jump Jet "Ace Pack"	47	-
KGB	22	-
M1 Tank Platoon	29	-
Megafortress	28	-
Mission Disk 1 or 2	24	-
Megafortress Megapack	37	-
Pacific Islands II	2/93	-
Patriot	43	-
Shadow President	42	-
Special Forces	32	-
Utopia	32	-

Sci-Fi

	IBM	Mac
Battlefield 2000	37	-
Breach 2	19	-
Cyber Empires	33	-
Fireteam 2200	34	-
Global Effect	33	-
Imperium	28	-
Mantis	41	-
Speech Pack	18	-
Mechamander	10/93	-
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Rules of Engagement	39	-
Rules of Engagement 2	4/93	-
Second Conflict (Windows)	34	-
Space Inc.	6/93	-
Spaceward HO! (Windows)	37	-
Spaceward HO! (DOS)	37	-
Star Legions	37	-
Star Legions 2	8/93	-
Tegel's Mercenaries	37	-
When Two Worlds War	3/93	-

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Construction Set	24	-
Air Bucks	37	-
Battles of Destiny	37	-
Battle Chess	22	32
Battle Chess (Windows)	32	-
BattleChess 4000 (VGA)	32	-
BattleChess 4000 (SVGA)	37	-
Buzz Aldrin's Race to Space	1Q	-
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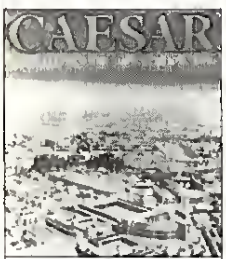
Caesar's Palace (Windows)	22	-
Chessmaster 3000	34	-
Chessmaster 3000 (Windows)	43	-
Civilization	38	38
Civilization Master Edition	45	42
Classic 5	1Q	3Q
Classic 5 (Windows)	2Q	-
Command HQ Classic	22	-
Design Your Train	49	-
Design Your R.R.	38	-
Design Your Landscape	57	-
Dominant Species	32	-
Dominion	9/93	-
El Fish	1Q	-



Caesar

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IBM $37

High Command

High Command

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IBM $44

	IBM	Mac
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Flight Sim 4.0	40	39
Sound and Graphics	27	-
Global Conquest	39	-
Grandest Admiral	8/93	-
Grand Slam Bridge II	34	-
Heaven and Earth	32	-
Hong Kong Mahjong	33	-
Hong Kong Mahjong Pro	31	-
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Ishido	-	34
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More Lemmings	22	-
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Perfect General	38	-
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Perfect General Enhanced	8/93	-
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World Editor	3/93	-
Powermonger	34	-
WWI Scenario Disk	3/93	-
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PowerHits Movies	32	-
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Risk (Windows)	32	-
Sargon V	32	32
Scrabble Deluxe (Windows)	32	-
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Shanf On Bridge (Windows)	32	-
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SimCity (Windows)	38	-
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SimFarm	3Q	-
SimLife	42	42
SimLife (Windows)	47	-
Solitaire (Windows)	32	-
Solitaires Journey	38	-

	IBM	Mac
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Stunt Island	37	-
Super Tetris	32	32
Super Tetris (Windows)	32	-
Theatre of War	33	-
Tetris	18	27
Tristan	32	37
Utopia	32	-
Virtual Reality Studio 2	57	-
Welltris	25	18
Wordtris	29	32

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All-Amer. College Fball 92	37	-
ATP Tennis	31	-
Bill Elliot - Nascar	32	32
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Complete PGA Tour Golf	31	-

Second Front/ Western Front

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IBM $22

	IBM	Mac
Earl Weaver Baseball	-	31
Front Pg. Sports: Football	42	-
Front Pg. Sports: Baseball	3/93	-
Front Pg. Sports: Bsktball	'93	-
Games: Summer Challenge	35	-
Games: Winter Challenge	35	-
Grand Prix	37	22
Greens	37	-
Hardball 3	37	-
MLBPA Player Disk	15	-
Stadium Disk	15	-
Jack Nicklaus Sig. Ed. Golf	42	-
Course Disk #2	20	-
John Madden Football II	33	-
Jordan - Flight	3/93	-
Links	39	-
Links 386 Pro	42	-
Course Disks 1-7	21 ea	-
MicroLeague Baseball 4	33	-
NCAA College Football '92	37	-
NFL Challenge	56	-
NFL Pro League '92	37	-
NFL Video Pro Football	47	-
PGA Tour Golf	19	37
PGA Tourn. Crse. Disk	15	15
PGA Tour Golf (Windows)	37	-
PGA Tourn. Crse. Disk	15	-
Pool Shark	22	-
Pro League Baseball	37	-
PowerHits: Sports	32	-
Tony LaRussa Ult. Baseball	19	-
Add On Disks	15ea	-
Tony LaRussa 2	37	-
Wayne Gretzky Hockey 2	36	-
Hockey League Sim	28	-
Wayne Gretzky Hockey 3	37	-
Wilson Pro Golf	2/93	-
World Circuit	34	-

Keyboard Overlays

A-10 Tank Killer	10
A.T.P.	10
Aces of the Pacific	10
B-17 Flying Fortress	10
C. Yeager Air Combat	10
F-15 Strike Eagle II	10
F-117A Nighthawk	10
Falcon 3.0/3.0-1	10
Flight Simulator 4.0	10
Jetfighter I and II	10
Megafortress	10
Secret Weapons Luftwaffe	10

CD-ROM

	I	M
The 7th Guest	57	-
Battle Chess	47	47
Battle Chess Enhanced	47	47
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Campaign	1/93	-
Challenge of Five Realms	2/93	-
Chessmaster 3000	57	-
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Dune	3/93	-
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Great Naval Battles	7/93	-
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Strange Deadfellows	30	-
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Wing Commander +		
Secret Missions 1 & 2	47	-
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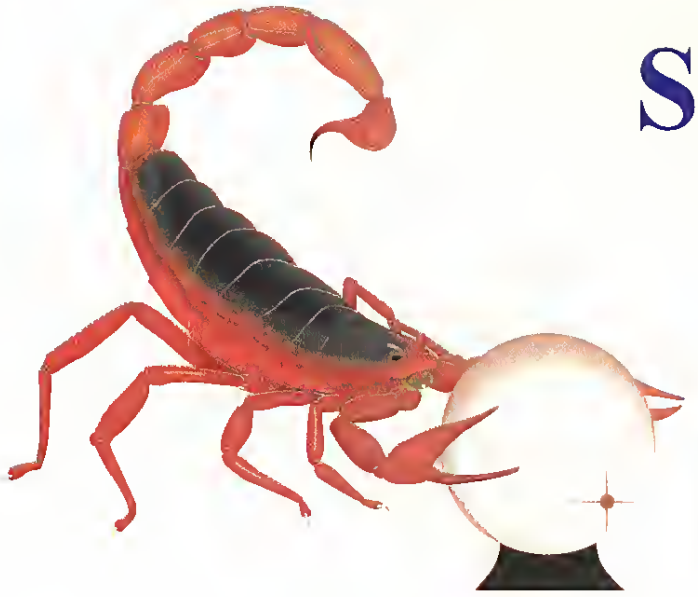

Scorpion's View

Scorpia is an experienced and respected adventure game expert. CGW is pleased to provide this forum for her distinctive and often controversial perspective.

Are Role-Players Getting It In The End?
or
Just What Are Just Desserts?

Over the years, I have on occasion taken games to task for being unfair to the player in one way or another. More than once, my complaint has been the lack of suitable rewards for playing and completing the game. It is time to look into this matter in greater detail.

Why this clamor for reward? Primarily because reward is a basic facet of human behavior that designers tend to overlook, particularly in the game finale. There is hardly a field of endeavor that does not provide some sort of award, some recognition of merit. Pulitzer. Nobel. Oscar. MVP. Hugo. Emmy. Medal of Honor. Game Of The Year. With very little effort, a long list of awards could be compiled.

Bashing the Dark Savant, for example, may not be on a par with finding a cure for cancer, but the principle is the same; something outstanding has been accomplished and must not go ignored. Games actually have several levels of rewards and satisfactions. These can be thought of as "milestones" along the path to ultimate victory. Solving a difficult puzzle, winning a tough fight, watching the party grow in strength and power; all these and more provide incentives for the player to keep on with the game.

So, getting there, as the saying goes, is certainly half the fun. Sometimes. We are all familiar with the "give it all now and take it back later" feature of far too many CRPG's. The reason is simple: the mechanics of most of them aren't designed with the future in mind. They are constructed to give the characters maximum development in a single game. *Wizardry* is a good example of this.

The Wizardries (except IV) allow for unlimited advancement of the party. I am personally acquainted with a player whose party in Dark Savant had reached the 120th level, with the game only about half-completed. Obviously, bringing characters of such God-like stature into a sequel would make playing that sequel a farce.

Even well before such elevated levels have been attained, the characters have reached the maximum possible for their skills and attributes, and have acquired most, if not all, of the spells available. So, even if the characters were allowed into the follow-up "as is," character advancement, an important feature of CRPGs, has almost no meaning and provides little in the way of satisfaction.

The only action possible, then, is to reduce the character levels when the party is transferred into the sequel. Not, perhaps, down to level one, but certainly low enough to make it seem almost like starting again from scratch, with the same characters who, only moments before, were tough, competent, experienced adventurers.

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Strategic Simulations, Inc. skipped around that difficulty in their gold box games by limiting advancement. "Thus far may you go," they said, "and no more until the sequel." Some players were not happy about that, hut it was a reasonable approach to a knotty problem, and for the most part, it worked well.

It provided a much better sense of continuity; the same team went from adventure to adventure, from strength to strength, much the same as players do in live gaming. There was no depressed feeling of watching those tenth-level characters, achieved through much hard work and many hours of play, suddenly broken down to wimps again. They remained, as it were, their true selves.

Where SSI dropped the ball was in the matter of inventory. You could expect, without fail, that most of the better items obtained in one game would be taken away under some specious explanation at the beginning of the next. Even *Pools of Darkness*, which allowed the "good stuff" to come through, was a trick. Half the time, the characters had to leave those items behind when they traveled to "other planes," where they then had to sweat and fight to obtain temporary replacements — temporary because those items couldn't make the return trip. A more idiotic convolution would be hard to imagine.

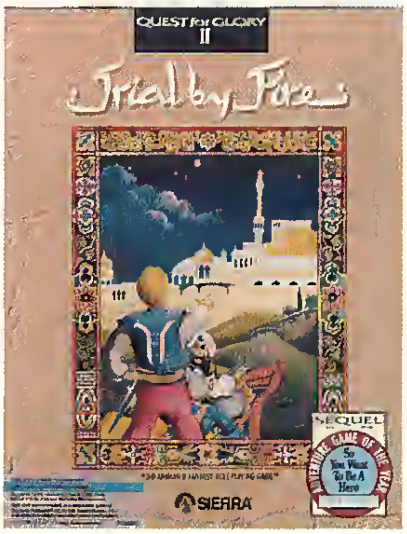
Players in a live game would never stand for that. As a one-time thing, a novel experience, maybe. However, if at the beginning of each new adventure the DM said, "Well boys and girls, this time all your good stuff has been magically stolen by thus-and-so," that is one DM who wouldn't have players for very long.

To put it in the simplest terms, consider this: "Well Mr. Nicholson, we hope you've enjoyed your Oscar, but you have to give it back now that you're starting a new movie." Doesn't make very much sense, does it?

Viewed along these lines, then, most CRPG's provide some satisfaction in the short term, but in the long run, as parties transfer into sequels, losing experience, items, or both, the joy of achievement rather palls. There really isn't a whole lot to like about treading over the same ground again and again. Sometimes, it seems the only real reason to bring over the "old team" is to avoid the time and trouble of creating a new one.

Which brings us to that ultimate moment of a game: the ending. Foozle, the evil sorcerer/demon/enchantress/whatever has been killed or otherwise disposed of, and the player is ready to reap the rewards of having once again saved the world, or a good portion of it. All too often, the reward is minuscule, or not even present.

Since nothing drives it home like a good example, consider the perspective of the game designer: You spend a year, two years, maybe more, on a product. You sweat over it, curse over it, dream about it at night. Finally the day arrives when the product is in the box, out the door, and on the racks. Then along comes Scorpia who says, in so many words, "This game is a turkey." How do you feel about that? Pleased? Happy? Satisfied? Obviously not. All that work, all those hours, and your reward is what could be termed "a slap in the face."



Now see the player: here is someone who has spent $40-70 dollars on the game. He or she then spends weeks, months, possibly a year or more (as I know from the letters) on completing it. What is the final resolution? A screen that says "Congratulations, you won!" or "Your names will be inscribed in the Hall of Heroes forever," followed by the system prompt. That, too, is a slap in the face for all the time and effort put into playing the game, particularly when we know what's going to happen in the sequel.

These situations are opposite sides of the same coin. Both want something for their investment: the designer, good reviews and good sales; the player, a good time and suitable recognition.

There are, of course, a number of games that have provided satisfactory endings. I still remember with fondness an old game called *Questron*. By today's standards, it would be considered fairly mediocre. The finale, however, was another matter, which began with the hero (it was a single-player game) marching into the throne room as trumpets blare, to receive recognition from the monarch. This sequence was all the more enjoyable for being so totally unexpected, especially in a 48K game played off floppies.

More recently, **Sierra**, as usual, caught on sooner than most. The majority of their games feature elaborate end sequences, of which my favorite is *Quest For Glory II*. Oddly enough, it happens to be another throne room scene. The hero stands in the Sultan's chamber while all the people he has helped or shown kindness to during the game stand up and give a brief recitation of his deeds. The icing is provided—for Paladins, anyway—when Rakeesh hands over the Sword of Fire.

FTL added a brand-new ending to the IBM version of *Dungeon Master* which was not in the original release. This showed the destruction of the Firestaff and the revitalization of the surrounding land now that Lord Chaos was gone. It's always nice to see some positive results from the party's actions.

Endings do not necessarily have to be elaborate productions. The final moments of *The Summoning* are very short when compared to the above. Almost along the lines of "one screen and off to the system prompt," yet it is not disappointing, because the ending is, in my experience, unique. Short but sweet can be enough, too, if it is done with a little imagination.

So, we come to the final assessment. Game mechanics need to be designed not only with the current product in mind, but also the sequel. Giving away everything now only to be forced into taking it back later is not a good concept. Intelligent seeding of "neat stuff" is another consideration; providing enough to finish the game, while not unbalancing future scenarios is something of an art, but it can be learned. And the finale, the piece de resistance, the ultimate moment of glory, must be carefully thought out to provide suitable recognition and reward for all that the player has accomplished in the game. Taken together, these can make playing the game, and its sequels, a much more enjoyable experience for all of us. **CGW**

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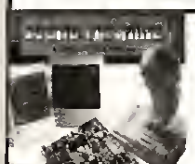

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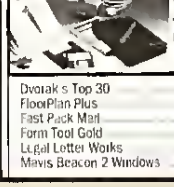

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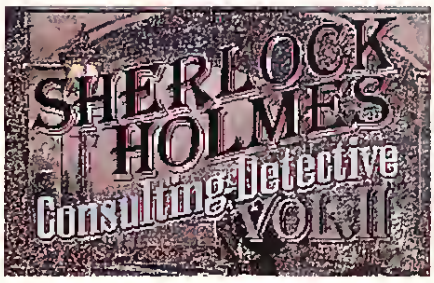
Sleuth or Consequences

Sherlock Holmes, Consulting Detective Volume II from ICOM

by Chuck & Millie Miller

TITLE:	Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective Volume II CD-ROM
SYSTEM:	IBM and Macintosh
CD-ROM:	150KB Transfer Rate, 380ms Access Time, Continuous Read
PRICE:	$69.95
GRAPHICS:	VGA
SOUND:	Sound Blaster or Media Vision Compatible Sound Card
PROTECTION:	None
DESIGNER/ PUBLISHER:	ICOM Simulations, Inc
DISTRIBUTOR:	Electronic Arts San Mateo, CA

Armchair detectives have long enjoyed the adventures of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's famous sleuth, Sherlock Holmes. The analytical skills of this larger-than-life character have been portrayed in print, on film and, most recently, on digital media. While Holmes' earliest computer appearances took the form of text adventures, they still held great appeal as the interactive "novels" that they were. Nevertheless, in more recent days with the entrance of graphic extravaganzas and CD-ROM technology, the world's most renowned and loved investigator (with the possible exception of Columbo) has taken on a more colorful and lively, even animated, visage.



When is a Game Afoot?

Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective II (*Sherlock Holmes II*) is, of course, the sequel to **ICOM**'s first whodunit on CD-ROM. Like the original, *Sherlock Holmes II* features three cases which the player must solve, each being a game within itself. As such, they can be tackled in any order with no bearing on each other.

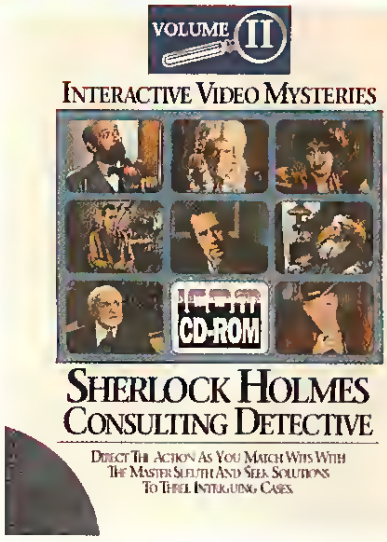
All three cases follow a traditional mystery theme—murder, theft or both. Case one, *The Two Lions*, revolves around the death of two circus animals and a man. In order to solve this case, the player-as-sleuth must determine if there is any relationship between the death of two lions and a man by the name of Stephen Lyons.

In *The Pilfered Paintings*, investigative skills must be turned toward uncovering the events behind the theft of several valuable paintings. What was the motive for the theft? Could it have been an inside job?

The third and final case requires the player to confront issues of greed, fidelity and political intrigue as he or she strives to solve a back-alley murder. Uncovering the motive and culprit in the case of *The Murdered Munitions Magnate* offers a difficult challenge.

Welcome to Video Mystery Theater

What sets *Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective* apart from other games featuring the inimitable Holmes, is the style of presentation. Both volumes of this series are classified as Interactive Video Mysteries, and with good reason. A major portion of game play is devoted to the player's directing of the action as Holmes and Watson proceed to solve the case at hand, while viewing video clips of the conversations taking place between the characters



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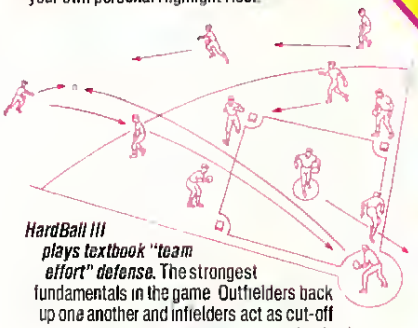

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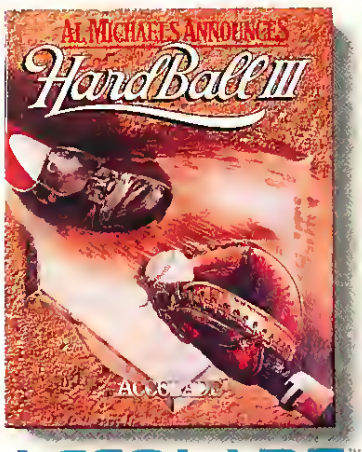

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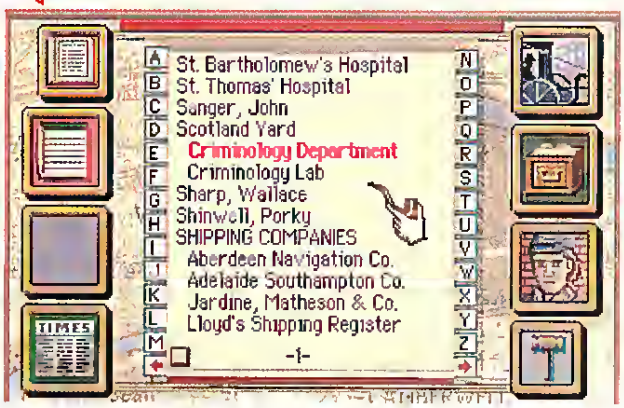

involved and keeping one's eyes and ears open for vital clues. Both are very important as live video action and digitized voices are employed in the unfolding of the story.

Of course, all this is possible because of the media employed—CD-ROM. As a result, a fair amount of video footage is provided (over 90 minutes), giving the whodunit a theatrical feel and providing the player with a sense of almost being involved in the action.

Elementary, My Dear Watson

Although solving the mysteries in *Sherlock Holmes II* requires a good dose of detective work, understanding and using the interface does not. **ICOM** has developed a consistent, intuitive design which requires little explanation.

Following a brief introduction, the player is presented with the Casebook from which he or she receives instruction, views Holmes' general introduction to play, or selects the case to solve. The player also returns here periodically to save and load the game in progress.

When a case is selected, the player is presented with an introduction to that particular mystery and is then taken to the main interface screen where most of the game's action transpires. This screen, comprised of a map of London bordered with icons, provides access to Holmes' Casebook, his Notebook of suspects and witnesses, a Directory of places and people, The London Times (which is also provided in printed form), a Carriage for travel throughout the city, Holmes' Files containing background information, the Baker Street Irregulars and the Court. Accessing the associated information or objects is just a mouse click away.

Play is quite simple. For example, to travel to Scotland Yard one selects Holmes' Directory. Doing so causes it to open in the center of the screen. From here, one turns to the listings under "S" and selects Scotland Yard. Then, with a click on the Carriage icon…voila! Holmes and Watson meet with Inspector Lestrade for a brief discussion. Game play continues as long as necessary for the sleuth-in-training to solve the case. Though there is no time constraint on play, each action does involve a point penalty being added to the player's score.

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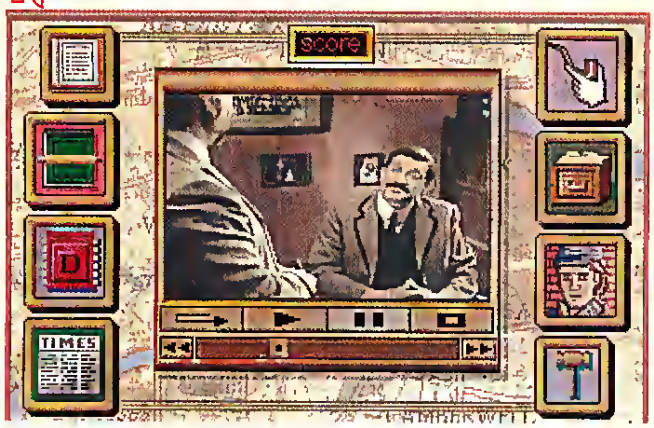


solved the case at hand, one proceeds to Court. However, the player's investigation had better be thorough as he or she will be questioned on all the key points of the case. One wrong answer and it's back out to continue sleuthing. Answer all the questions correctly and the judge will commend the player and tell him how well he did in comparison to Holmes. In most cases, there will be a significant difference in scores with Holmes far in the lead.

Where's My VCR Remote?

The most interesting portions of the game, and those critical to solving each case, are the interactive video scenes provided in the small quarter-screen video monitor that appears when one arrives at an important location. Some are quite short, lasting only a few seconds, while others run for as long as several minutes. Fortunately, to aid the player in digesting the information presented so that no vital clues are missed, a set of VCR-like controls are provided at the bottom of this monitor. VCR-like "buttons" enable the player to return to the beginning of the clip, play the video, pause and stop the action. Missing from the first volume but included here is a scroll bar beneath the main controls which allows the player to jump to any point in the clip without having to play the entire piece over again. This comes in extremely handy as some of the actor's accents make it difficult to identify certain words without listening repeatedly.

Examining the Evidence

Graphic quality is good, presented in standard 256-color VGA mode. However, the quality of the video (though it only fills a small part of the screen) is very good, being noticeably improved over that of the first volume. Images are now brighter and clearer, exhibiting less distortion than before. (Hopefully, continued improvement in video compression technology will eventually allow for even larger, higher resolution displays.)

Music, when provided, is also very good. Unfortunately, too little is available to "tickle the ear" in this game. Digitized audio accompanying the video clips is clear and undistorted, with a high degree of fidelity maintained.

Sherlock Holmes II shows other refinements over the first volume, as well. For example, the close buttons for all books and information screens are now the same shape and in the same location (an earlier inconsistency), and the player's score is now presented at the top of the main screen so progress can be checked as desired.

Cloak and Stagger

Actors, for the most part, have been well selected and provide believable performances. The sets are quite authentic, as well. From a theatrical standpoint, *Sherlock Holmes II* succeeds admirably.

However, there are some significant weaknesses that need to be mentioned. One is the noticeable absence of background music in the game. It is almost completely lacking during play. There is also no online facility for taking exhaustive notes, something required to successfully solve the crimes under investigation (names can be added to Holmes' Notebook, but no specifics can be supplied).

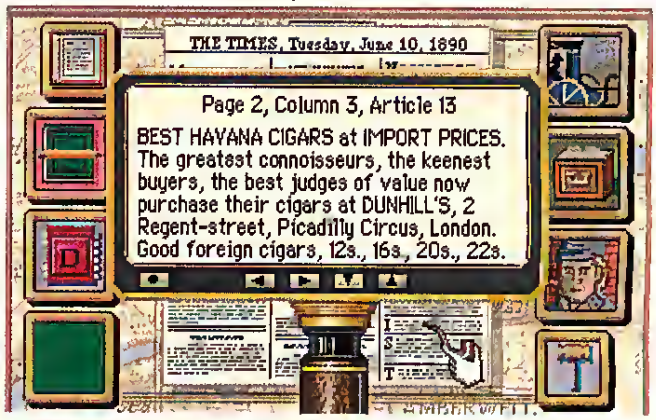
The chief failing, however, is identical to that of the first volume—the overall brevity of playing time. Neither case takes longer than three hours to solve, while all three will take the average player only eight to ten hours to complete. With the much longer play time offered in other disk-based products, this concern needs to be addressed by lengthening the play time for each case or adding additional cases (five would be more appropriate).

Rendering a Verdict

As it stands, *Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective II* is a good product, and one of the few multimedia titles developed specifically for CD-ROM. Adding more extensive note taking and some background music, and increasing the play time would make this offering an ideal entertainment value.

Still, fans of the famous sleuth from 221B Baker Street will enjoy playing **ICOM**'s latest release, as will those who love a good mystery. The player should note, however, that it is not a graphic or animated adventure. Those who prefer **Sierra**- or **LucasArts**-style games would be better off with **Electronic Arts**' *The Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes*.

So, if one does not have a fireplace and a comfy armchair in which to relax with a favorite Holmes' mystery or watch a Basel Rathbone rendition on the VCR, *Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective II* is the next best thing. It will provide several captivating hours of armchair investigation in the Sir Arthur Conan Doyle tradition. Pipe and magnifying glass not included. CGW



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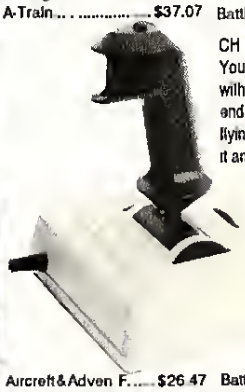

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Circle Reader Service #37

Review

Thou Hath Been Served

A Review of *The Summoning*

by Samuel B. Baker

The Party of the First Part

Hear ye, hear ye! It is once again time to slay the mighty and infamous Foozle or in this case the Shadow Weaver. He has raised a large army of cutthroats and villains and will soon take over the land. The first army and fleet that the Council sent to defeat the Shadow Weaver's island fastness has been destroyed. The Council plans to commit a second army to the task, knowing it will fail, to serve as a distraction for your covert entry into the Labyrinth.

The Party of the Second Part

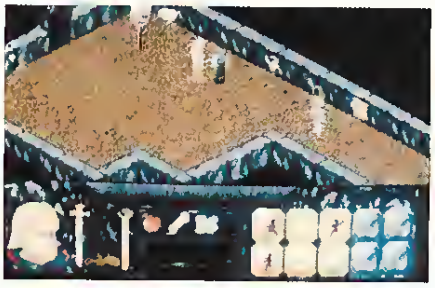
The Summoning is a single character CRPG that runs in real time. All activity takes place indoors. One looks at the many corridors and rooms from an overhead and slightly oblique angle. Commands may be issued and inventory manipulated by a mouse, the keyboard or a combination.

There are six characteristics. Strength will produce more damage when in melee and let the player carry more. Agility sets the rate at which the player moves and how fast one recovers from the previous action. Endurance is a measure of staying power, both in combat and when moving heavy objects, such as the large moveable blocks that are sometimes used to weigh the many pressure plates found in the game. Accuracy details how well the player can hit the mark with missile weapons. Talent will determine how many spells can be memorized in each of the four spell categories at one time. Power is the magic equivalent of strength. It will make spells last longer and do more damage.

Characters may be generated by random roll, by direct allocation from a pool or a combination of the two. I found the method that produced the most powerful character was direct allocation. It is possible to create a character that has the maximum value for four of the six attributes and a 19 out of 20 for fifth, leaving the sixth at zero. Personally, accuracy seemed to be the least useful stat. It can be useful, but means are provided within the game to increase stats as the game progresses. After creating a set of stats that meets approval, one is specially trained in one class of weapon and one category of magic. The

TITLE	The Summoning
SYSTEM	IBM
PRICE:	$59.95
PROTECTION	Documentation Look-up
DESIGNERS	Chris Straka and Thomas Holmes
PUBLISHER	Electronic Arts San Mateo, Ca

four classes of magic from which to choose are Wizardry, which induces damage; Sorcery, which manipulates oneself and the environment; Enchantment, which protects one from harm; and Healing.



Discovery

The features and interface of *The Summoning* may be summed up in one phrase: creature comforts. Everywhere one looks through the game, one can see that great effort has been made to ensure that the player is playing the game and not making maps, taking notes or shouting at the designers of the interface. When one moves to restore a game, the saved games are listed in order with the newest save appearing at the top of the list. The automapping feature is an improvement even on the beautiful maps of **Origin's** *Underworld*. The maps are multicolor and show all features plainly. When levers are flipped or pressure plates activated, any doors opening or teleporters which become active are shown on the map if the player has explored that area. They can even be printed. Notes cannot be written in the margins though. The extensive NPC interactions may be printed also.

The graphics are pleasing and well presented for this type of game. Small animated windows open up to show important events. I particularly liked the one that depicts the player falling into a pit. Sound effects through my Sound Blaster Pro were adequate when they were there. Unlike most games, sound effects are limited to events, rather than a constant susurrus. Music is only heard during important moments, but was easy on the ear. For once, I wish there had been greater use of music in a game. Usually, I turn it off after a few minutes.

The Evidence

At first, I was annoyed by the real-time aspects of combat. Not an arcade fan, I find the complexities of working an interface and determining the best tactics and switching weapons to be a chore. The electronic critters don't have this problem. After a bit, I found that the combat was quite manageable. There are many different strategies that may be pursued, depending on the strength and speed of the foe, the methods at hand and one's own tastes. I found that floating like a butterfly and stinging like a bee paid dividends when there were many adversaries. Combat for the most part is brief and intense. Some experimentation will be necessary to determine what weapons are the best tradeoff between speed of use and damage delivered. Weapons may be used in both hands and shield bashing is a welcome possibility.

As was mentioned in the preview (*CGW* #100), the screen is split into two parts: the field of play and the character management screen. To equip an item, one places

it on the large wooden mannequin on the left hand side. If the item is worn as opposed to held in the hands, such as a mace, it will appear in its proper place. There is a third screen which stops time when invoked that allows one to memorize spells through the assembly of a series of hand movements. Whenever a new spell is acquired the letters corresponding to the hand movements should be written down in the space provided in the back of the manual.

The Issues

Items needed to activate a door or give to an NPC are usually found close at hand. There are three exceptions that should be noted: The first is that the player needs to find a total of three pearls in the areas preceding the knights' domains before continuing. Two pearls are used near where they are found. The third must be carried all the way into the Citadel or else one may not finish the game. As indicated in Scorpion's Tale (*CGW* #101), Scorpia had to go on a long quest back to retrieve this last pearl which she had left in some stash earlier in the game. Needless to say, she wasn't happy.

The second is that the player should save one of everything except keys for a location near the Citadel or else spend a *great* deal of time playing scavenger hunt. Take it from one who knows.

The third concerns the many teleporters. If the player, a monster or a large object goes through a teleporter and there is a monster or large object at the landing zone, the object or monster landed on will disappear. This may lead to important items being lost. Monsters wander around and will periodically find a teleporter on their own.

The puzzles in the later stages of the game should prove a challenge to most players. Many have a proper solution and a "creative" one which may be found through the possession of certain objects or the useful arrangement of them. For example, I was able to pass by a series of teleporters that go off and on in sequence by using dead bodies to shorten the path of the rolling ball that triggers them on and off.

Almost every item in the game has a limited lifespan. Weapons will break, shields will wear out, and special items will use up their magical charges. This means that one is constantly trucking around with a massive quantity of junk in order not to be at a loss at some future time. The upside of this, however, is that the player can be given some rather neat items which would seriously imbalance the game otherwise. Eventually, the player may have the opportunity to use an area in the game as a permanent stash so that problem may be eased.

In the end, one does not get to fight the Shadow Weaver. All action takes place through set-piece animation and dialogue. I would have preferred a more active role in the denouement, but I did enjoy what transpired. Certainly some of the fiercest fighting took place on that last level, which was some compensation.

Instructions to the Jury

In addition to those points of irritation mentioned above, the space required for saved games, as time passes, deserves notice. At the end, my save game files were exceeding 750K each and had been over 500K for some time. Since their own hint line and my experience recommend multiple saves, particularly at the beginning of each new section, many may find their hard disks filling up precipitously.

The Verdict

This game arrived in my mailbox on the same day as my storebought copies of *Great Naval Battles of the North Atlantic* and *Crusaders of the Dark Savant*. I played all three games that day, but as time passed I found myself more and more involved with *The Summoning*, playing it not out of duty, but of pleasure. There are few satisfactions in life to compare with the "I've got it!" stroke of inspiration or perspiration that allows one to unlock a puzzle. I was sorry to finish this game. To those not put off by real time combat and who have the space, this game may well find a place of honor on the hard disk. CGW

QQP's **Strategies of the Month** Vol. 18

A monthly column to improve the quality of play

BATTLES OF DESTINY: A parade to the front lines is not as effective as collecting a small force and then attacking with multiple units. Using bombers to soften the enemy's front lines can also make the job of destroying your opponent that much easier. • The Challenge: In the map "Compete", do not utilize any air transports.

CONQUERED KINGDOMS: Fighting dragons can be tough, but it can be done effectively. Things to remember about the dragon: it cannot range fire if there is a unit in the same square, its nemesis is the archer but knights and cavalry are also effective, and dragons cannot attack a unit in the keep of an occupied castle (but they can bombard the keep). Attacking with or defending against dragons incorrectly can be any player's achilles heel.

THE PERFECT GENERAL - The **all new** "Greatest Battles of the Twentith Century" Scenario Disk is available. "The Hollywood Dream" pits you against the Japanese, who invade the west coast of the U.S. This scenario is not meant for the weak hearted. Using mobile 88's and artillery will help to defend the homeland. Defend these units well though, because they are easily killed. • A Great Challenge: Try defeating the attacker on "Dnepr Bridgehead" without using any medium or heavy tanks.

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Circle Reader Service #88

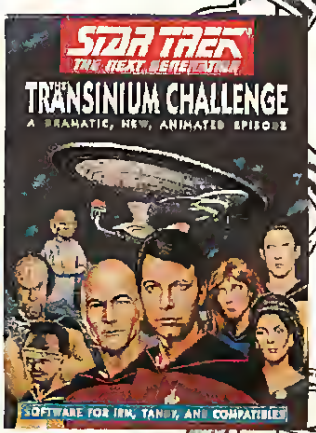
Once Upon A Time

The upcoming mall-based *Star Trek: the Next Generation* entertainment centers, a joint project of Paramount Pictures, Edison Brothers, and Spectrum HoloByte is but the latest computer gaming license of a Star Trek product (See CGW #101 December 1992 for a detailed accounting of this project). Five years ago, **Simon and Schuster** released the third and fourth games in their licensed Star Trek series: *Star Trek: First Contact* (1988) and *Star Trek: The Rebel Universe* (1988). Earlier titles in the series were *Star Trek: The Kobaysashi Alternative* (1985) and *Star Trek: The Promethean Prophecy* (1986). Unfortunately, none of these games were cutting edge designs. Failing to capture the minds and wallets of computer gamers, they have become (in the world of Star Trek) as forgotten as Jeffrey Hunter (Christopher Pike in the original Star Trek pilot, *The Cage*).

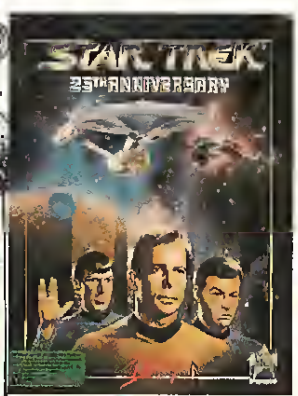
One wonders how many computer game "outsiders" purchased these games on the strength of the license and failed to be drawn into the world of computer gaming as a hobby because the designs were not compelling as *games*? We will never know. What we *do* know, however, is how a company with no reputation for computer game publishing got what could have been the hottest license in the history of the hobby. You see, **Simon and Schuster Inc.** and **Paramount Pictures** at the time were both owned by **Gulf & Western**. Thus, S&S had the inside track for the license (an extension of the book licenses). Too bad for gamers.

The movie license for *Star Trek V: The Final Frontier* went to **Mindscape** prior to it's merger with **Software Toolworks**. Unfortunately the game was not any more compelling than the S&S Trek games.

But all is not lost. In 1990 **Konami**, who had the "electronic games" license for *Star Trek* games hired **Interplay Productions** to produce a *Star Trek* cartridge game for the **Nintendo** 8-bit system. As part of the agreement, Konami signed over the rights for Star Trek computer games to Interplay. Interplay's first computer game release under this arrangement was last winter's *Star Trek: The 25th Anniversary*. That product has done so well that Paramount and Interplay signed a new contract going through the year 2000, giving Interplay the right to do a variety of Star Trek games.



Simon and Schuster also produced a *Next Generation* title, *The Transinium Challenge*. However, **Spectrum HoloByte** now has that license and will be producing, not only the mall based product already mentioned, but a line of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* games as well. As gamers, we hope that Interplay and Spectrum HoloByte can take the Star Trek series of computer games to a place that none of them have gone before: success.



Footnote: More than one computer game manufacturer has asked *CGW* in recent days if we knew who got the license for the *Deep Space Nine* computer game products. As of press time, we did not know.

The top five games ten years ago this month according to the February 1983 CGW Poll were: *Wizardry I* (Sir-Tech), *Choplifter!* (Broderbund); *Knight of Diamonds* (Sir Tech); *Guadalcanal Campaign* (SSI); and *Olympic Decathlon* (Microsoft). The top five games five years ago (February 1988) were *Ultima IV* (Origin); *Gettysburg the Turning Point* (SSI); *Wizardry I* (Sir-Tech); *Starflight* (EA); and *Kampfgruppe* (SSI). CGW

Computer Gaming in Days Gone By

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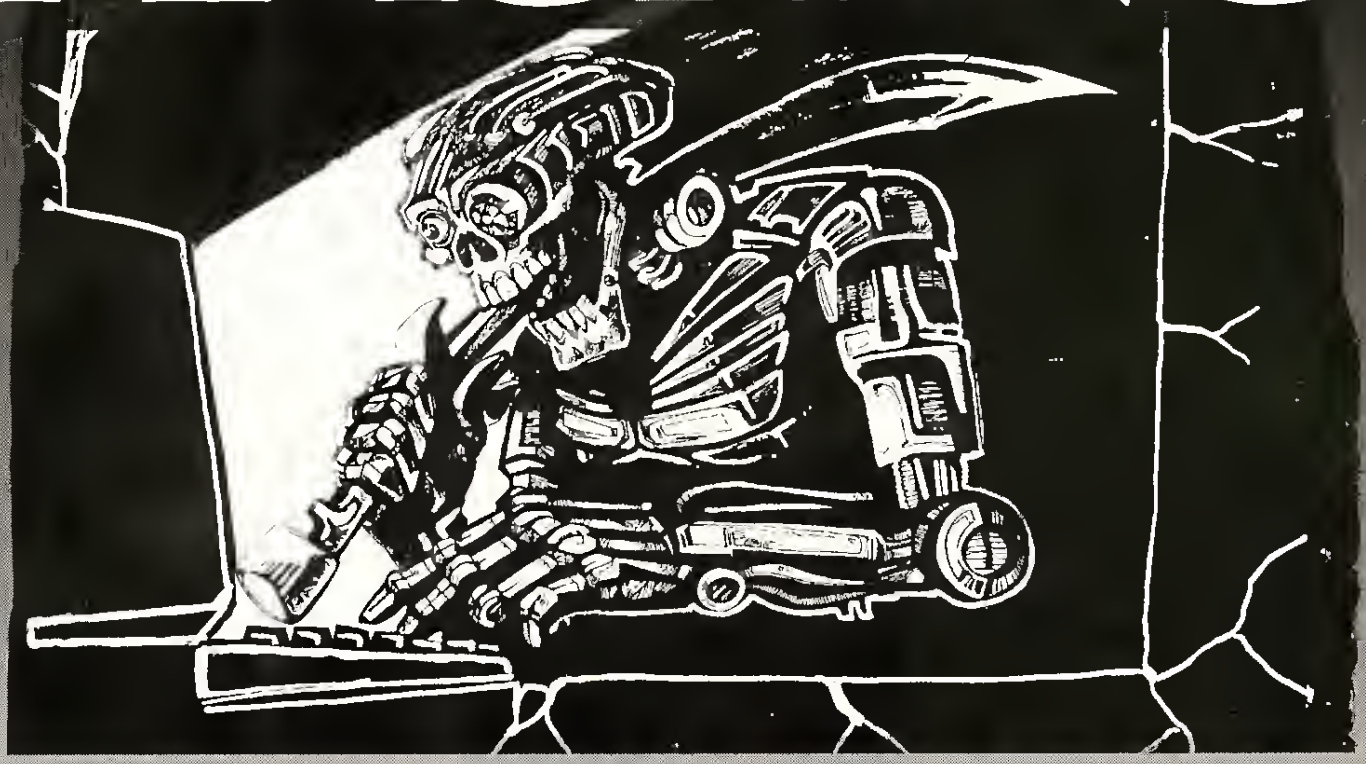

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Circle Reader Service #53

HAVE MOVEMENT POINTS, WILL TRAVEL

Omnitrend's *Paladin 2*

by Allen L. Greenberg

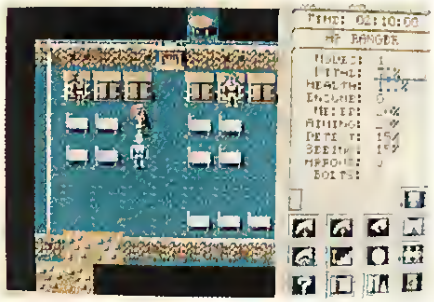
Fighting evil, so long as a movement point yet remains within them, **Omnitrend's** paladins are computer gaming's most dependable wind-up toys. Armed with only a sword and a wristwatch-like intelligence to guide each of their mechanical steps, these Lilliputian heroes battle to the end of the earth or, at least, to the end of their turn. "Real time" is but an illusion; "three dimensions" suddenly fall flat; "virtual reality" is as real as it ever was. The paladins—along with their Buck Rogers analogues, the *Breachmen* — eschew such contrivances. Like timeless legions, they stand steadfast ... until someone instructs them to walk away. Having proved their worth many times in the original *Paladin*, they again stand ready in *Paladin 2*.

Players of the original *Paladin* will find much which is familiar as they begin *Paladin 2*. Using the phased command/movement system which is normally reserved for computer wargaming, *Paladin 2* contains a series of miniature fantasy role-playing quests. The various goals and parameters for each mission are available both on-line and in the game's detailed documentation. The *Paladin 2* package contains 20 different missions along with a quest-building program. These individual quests may also be linked together in order to form more involved campaigns. As in the past, a floppy disk containing an additional 20 scenarios is also available.

For each outing, the player becomes the game's title character — an altruistic knight in command of a "mission impossible" party of secondary characters. While the membership of the adventure party changes from one scenario to the next, the paladin himself will remain constant, provided he is able to survive. With each victory and success, he will become an increasingly adept hero. A "green" paladin may be generated at any time, or he may be carried over either from the first *Paladin* series or from *Breach 2*. The various missions are ranked according to difficulty, but need not be tackled in a specific order. Each quest may be played at "beginner" or "advanced" level. The advanced level offers less vulnerable enemies as well as a less omnipotent point of view.

TITLE:	Paladin 2
SYSTEMS:	Amiga, IBM
PRICE:	$59.95
PROTECTION:	Documentation Look-up
DESIGNERS:	Chris Bamford, Thomas Carbone
PUBLISHER:	Omnitrend/Impressions

The paladin, of course, is an apprentice knight. The various party members may be a swordsman, ranger, thief or mage. Each is given a set of statistics which reflect these professions. These indicate the character's ability to fight, aim weapons from a distance or detect danger. Other numbers show the party member's health and the degree to which he is encumbered by a heavy inventory. Most importantly, the player must be aware of the number of movement points a character has left. At the beginning of each turn, a character is allowed a certain number of these which depend on his condition. Each action — from taking a step to swinging a weapon — must be purchased with movement points. Once these are gone, that character is unable to move until the next turn. The turn concludes by allowing the computer-controlled, evil opposition to have its turn.



Math and Magic

While the tactical challenges presented by this system are immediately obvious, many players have also been sensitive to the substitution of simple mathematics for the feel of real time combat. By carefully counting steps, so that a turn begins with the hero just out of an adversary's reach, it is possible to demolish the poor villain without giving him a turn to fight back. This particular advantage, however, has been somewhat offset in *Paladin 2* by a

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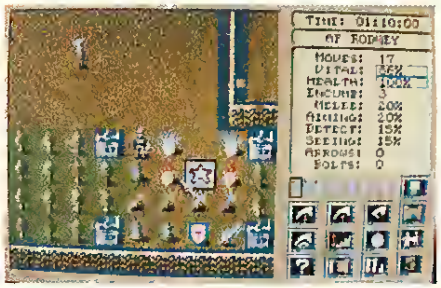
greater variety of spell-throwing demons who may attack from a distance. While one might wish for a slightly more elegant combat system, this is still a more challenging game of "math and magic" than presented by its predecessor.

The 20 scenarios included cover a fairly wide range of difficulties and each one may be changed or edited using the quest builder program. Quest objectives may include rescue operations, the destruction of a portion of the enemy, the capture or destruction of certain magical scrolls or the takeover of specific sentry posts. There are a variety of terrains which the party must cover, and "teleportation squares" will also complicate progress.

Omnitrend's icon-based, point-and-click interface has been nicely upgraded since the original *Paladin*. Most noticeably, diagonal movement and attacks are now permitted. Using the mouse, players indicate either a character's next action or a course of movement. Unfortunately, the character currently under control is not highlighted. This can cause some confusion, or even lead to the inadvertent assault against an adjacent, fellow party-member. Command icons available allow a player to pick up, drop or use inventory. Other icons call up a list of possible spells, show an area map, and list the quest objectives, indicating those which have already been accomplished.

Paladin 2's graphics are simple, yet they are very adequate. Some animation of the various characters is available as an option when the program is first booted. Some of the sound effects sound as though they were produced by a dying group of barnyard animals, though others do add a nice touch. One of the game's most outstanding features is its documentation. A brief yet thorough tutorial makes the game accessible to any newcomer. In addition to an introduction to each scenario, there are also descriptions of each of the various spells, creatures and paraphernalia which appear throughout the program. A technical supplement also guarantees that no one will have any trouble using the quest builder program. Should the United States make no other cultural contribution to the remainder of the civilized world, we may rest assured that its game manuals will always put those from other countries to shame!



Paladin, Paladin, Where Will You Roam?

While it is true that most fantasy role-playing games have been advancing state of the art presentations at a frenzied pace, it has not necessarily been true that their results have met with universal approval. Unfortunately, many players may accidentally miss out on *Paladin 2* because of the deluge of products which scream more loudly for attention, yet offer far less in entertainment. Although one might hope for more interesting combat interaction, there is no shortage of reasons to recommend this product to strategy-minded role-players of all levels. This particular wind-up toy clearly continues to prove its worth on the field of battle. CGW

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Circle Reader Service #49

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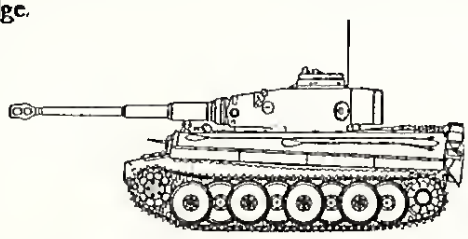

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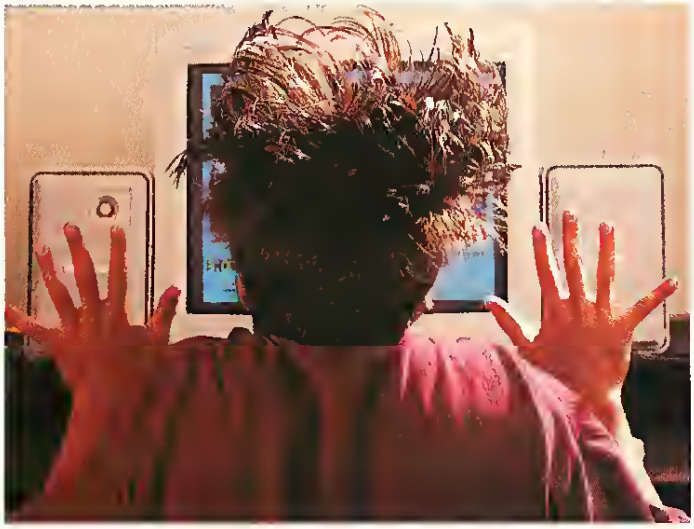

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Circle Reader Service #51

Life's A Lure

Konami's *Lure of the Temptress*

by Robin Matthews

In literature, there is George MacDonald Fraser's anti-hero, Harry Flashman, who bas the worst of intentions but the best of luck. Fantasy literature even has Robert Asprin's Myth-Adventures (Hit or Myth, Little Myth Marker, etc.) in which an inept apprentice becomes a sitcom version of a master magician. He doesn't do anything intelligent, but it all works out hilariously well. In computer games, there is *Space Quest*'s Roger Wilco and Bob Bates' unwitting hero in *Eric The Unready* (see page 58 of this issue), both of whom have the best possible luck and desperately need it because of the situations they get dragged into. Similarly, the player's character in **Konami**'s *Lure of the Temptress*, Diermot, is unwittingly dragged into the plot of this new graphic adventure.

After all, Diermot is living quite happily in his little village when, along comes the King and his courtiers. Like Charles I, hunting is the primary item on his majesty's agenda and Diermot sees a chance to garner some royal coinage, so he decides to enlist in the King's party as a beater. Suddenly, the King hears news of a revolt started by a mysterious Enchantress who has taken over the nearby town. The King rides off.

Diermot, in the tradition of those unwitting heroes listed at the beginning of this article, isn't interested. Nevertheless, his uncontrolled horse drags him into the midst of this escapade. The next thing the player knows, Diermot is in a Skorl prison and the game's afoot.

Myth-Perception

In order to convey the feeling of being swept along for the heroic ride, what

TITLE:	Lure of the Temptress
SYSTEM:	Amiga, IBM
PRICE:	$49.95
PROTECTION:	Documentation Look-Up
DEVELOPER:	Revolution Software
PUBLISHER:	Konami Buffalo Grove, IL

Revolution has developed for *Lure of the Temptress* is a system they call "Virtual Theatre." They bill the system as the first of its kind, but it amounts to the way NPCs are handled, *a la Ultima VII*. Non-player characters wander around a "real world" and perform simulated actions, usually talking to one another and performing their daily tasks according to their own daily schedules. For example, the Blacksmith that the player needs to find at the beginning, will go to his forge and hammer away. If the village characters are asked where the Blacksmith can be found, they will instruct the player to go to the forge or suggest that the Blacksmith is partial to a drink. So, the Blacksmith is most likely to be in the forge or the bar, but might even go on a different errand somewhere else.

Another principle feature of Virtual Theatre is the intelligence of the characters. One can string together commands using the "Tell" feature to certain "servant" characters. Which means that complex, dual-character puzzles are possible. Conversations can also be overheard when the player sits in the bar, for example, as background information. However, because Revolution can't guarantee that the player will be listening, these incidental characters don't offer any vital information. The speech may be relevant to the plot, but not necessarily vital to progress in the game. The text is written in a very humorous way, so it is definitely worth exploring. Text-wise, **Revolution** has lots of little gems hidden around and lots of funny situations. There is no way that everyone is going to see all of it, as there are well over 2000 blocks of text included. Most of which no one player will ever read. However, Revolution wanted to reward the player for exploring.

Another plus for the Revolution system is something called "autorouting." This means that an independent character can walk from one point in the room to another, no-matter what obstacles lay before him. If somebody or something gets in his way, he mathematically works out the best way of walking around it. Which means that five or six people can appear on the screen at once and they'll all walk around each other sensibly. As they are doing this,

they may comment to each other with such badinage as "Get out of my way!" or "Excuse me" and so on.

Myth-Connection

Commands are issued by floating the cursor over a person one wishes to issue commands to and clicking the left mouse button (the cursor changes shape depending upon what action is required). This then accesses all the verbs that are associated with that noun.

So, if the cursor is moved over Ratpouch, the player's servant, one can click on "Tell." The program recognizes Ratpouch, so it prints "Tell Ratpouch to ... " and then the player chooses from a verb list which can be scrolled up and down. From the list the player could select (Go To, Open, Lock, Close, etc.). If Go To is selected, all of the rooms appear in list form. However, the player can't tell somebody to do something until the character knows about it first. This means that a character cannot be told to go to a room unless the room is known about. If Ratpouch is told to go to the guardroom, the player either gets a choice of "And Then," in case additional actions are required, or "Finish" to end the command string. If the phrase "And Then" is selected, more verbs appear and so on. In that way a very complicated set of instructions can be linked, but in a very simple way.

Characters also have a memory of sorts. So, if Character A is given instructions to talk to Character B (who isn't in the immediate area) then Character A will remember that he has been given the instructions as he strolls around. Thus, when Character A is in a room when Character B re-appears, Character A will eventually talk to him. Hence, Character A completes his task.

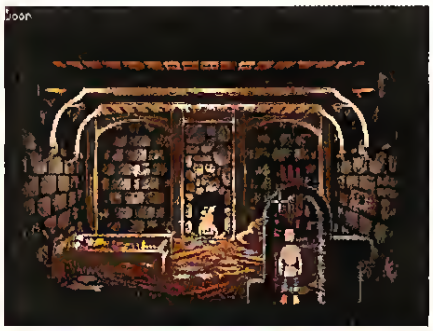
Another positive aspect of the *Lure of the Temptress* system is that there are no blind alleys. One way this objective is acheived is that, when the player moves to the next section, the game forces them to have all the objects that they will need before the new section is entered.

Myth-Statement

Also, where character interaction is concerned, the questions one asks are geared towards the objective. The more people interrogated the clearer that objective becomes, which almost serves as a help function. The questions themselves are listed as in *Monkey Island*, but at the top of the screen instead of at the bottom. Those questions can relate to object manipulation or character interaction. However, the only time the building up of a sentence is utilized (using the lists of verbs and nouns) is when one wants someone to do something.

Myth-Direction

Graphically, the game is very atmospheric. The introductory sequence is well directed and animated, displaying neat touches that exude realism. The actual game graphics are similarly well-presented with plenty of "perceived value" effects. That is, looping and triggered animated effects inserted to enhance the gaming atmosphere. In addition, the graphic



viewpoint is shifted depending on certain actions. Thus, close-ups, first-person perspectives, and the ability to look through objects are introduced, often with changes in the physical screen size.

For this review the game was played via a Roland LAPC-I, although both Adlib and Soundblaster cards are also supported. Music is rather good in *Lure* and is well supported by the gamut of sound effects. The sound effects are well structured and very impressive, offering a similar mood to *Dungeon Master* in that approaching events or off-screen events can be overheard.

Myth-Judgment

Lure of the Temptress might be an honorable first release for **Revolution**, but it is by no means perfect. Play is enjoyable but there should have been more of it. The game could have done with a few more puzzles, more locations and more characters. One just gets into the swing of things when the end appears.

Another bug-bear for *Lure* is the speed of some of the on-screen action. For some obscure reason there is an occasional delay while performing seemingly ordinary tasks which triggers a clock signifying a loading period for the new sequence. This may be understandable on slow machines, but not on the faster versions. I wonder

whether the problem lies in the game-engine itself or the reluctance by Revolution to utilize extended memory to buffer event loading and so on. However, it is important not to emphasize the loading speed problem because, to be fair, the sporadic waiting does not spoil the game. Also, the game speed itself (ie: sprite movements, etc) is perfectly acceptable.

In addition, the Virtual Theatre (VT) system itself has not been fully implemented to its full design specifications. For example, the potential for rumors to spread around the game-world sprouting from actions and so forth is very *possible* in VT but never fully executed. Hopefully further Revolution productions will fill the boundaries of the game engine.

One irritation of VT is the auto-routing character movement. This semi-intelligent PC/NPC movement, described earlier, can become a little cumbersome because, on occasion, the characters sometimes take such extended diversions to traverse the course from A-B that one sometimes wonders why the character didn't just push the obstructing character out of the way in the first place!

Though it is clear that *Lure of the Temptress* is not a truly excellent game, it is by no means a poor game. There are too many good points to award to *Lure* for that to be the case. The gameplay is largely free-form, the presentation is excellent. Puzzles, while not too much of a challenge for adventuring grognards, are ideal for the adventuring beginner. In addition the game does not force the player down particular puzzle paths. One can wander the area with impunity soaking up the atmosphere and investigating less important characters and areas. *Lure of the Temptress* is a fine first release from this developer and bodes well for the future. CGW

COMPANY REPORT

The House That Gretzky Built

Bethesda Softworks

Chris Weaver, President and CEO of **Bethesda Softworks**, once worked for a technology company that had its headquarters in the office space where Bethesda currently resides. Naturally, that means that he is going to do everything he can to make sure that such a fate is not in store for his company. His risk management philosophy is simple. Where many executives stop at contingency plans A, B or C, he moves on to D, E and F. Where many companies feel the pressure to keep on expanding, he believes that companies quickly reach a point of diminishing returns by getting ahead of the bell curve too rapidly. So, he has established a definite limit to how large he will allow the company to grow year by year.

VP of Finance
Constance Gachowski

Where many company presidents leave cost analysis to their accounting and production departments, Weaver, with the assistance of his Vice-President of Finance (Constance Gachowski) keeps tabs on the cost of disks and labels to the decimal points of the penny. Weaver calls Gachowski his financial wizard. That's not what the people on the other end of her hard-nosed negotiations call her, but that's probably why she seems like such a wizard.

Where many companies are finding themselves forced to delay shipments, Bethesda has shipped two of its last three products exactly on time (largely as a result of having Chris micro-managing the schedule via his knowledge of software engineering). Ironically, the third product in the equation shipped late because of a problem with printing the *manual* rather than programming the *software*.

Turning Japanese

Two major influences seem to shape the direction of the company. One such influence was the time that Weaver spent living in Japan while studying under a fellowship. The other is the show business background of both Chris and his family.

The Japanese influence can be seen in both the corporate philosophy and the working environment. The lobby of the building is practically an arboretum and the interiors of each office are customized to reflect the needs of the individual(s) who work within them. Bethesda's management believes that too many employees (in too many companies) have to *fight* the work environment, so they require that every work area be well-conceived enough that productivity is enhanced rather than discouraged. Therefore, costs take a back seat to function at Bethesda. For example, one finds more expensive towels in the shower room at Bethesda's offices than one finds in most hotels. The rationale for such an extravagance? The company believes that any time a programmer or artist is working long enough hours to need to spend the night in the office, they need to be able to clean up and refresh themselves in style.

A premium is placed upon unobtrusive storage space (e.g. a wall of custom-sized files behind wooden facades in the finance department) for some and display space (e.g. walls all around the room which are designed for posting images, schedules, color proofs etc. in the art and programming departments) for others. Indeed, many independent contractors who have performed services for Bethesda at the company's offices have noted how much more productive their few hours at Bethesda were than the time they spent at their own offices.

Further, the corporate philosophy is much more of a group philosophy than an individual philosophy. Indeed, the Japanese emphasis on small teams for planning and production is used to positive effect from the very outset of each project. Bethesda believes in group decisions and group responsibility.

The corporate philosophy also encourages innovation. The company was founded on a "contrarian principle." Rather than designing just another football game, the concept was to develop a physical environment which adhered to physical principles. *Gridiron* was born and, to this day, is one of the most popular games among the company's employees. So, it is no wonder that programmers regularly suggest new ways of handling design problems and receive the go-ahead to experiment with their potential solutions.

Another Openin', Another Show

The second major influence comes, not only from the Weaver heritage in the worlds of music and theater, but from his experience in television and video production. Weaver was once associate producer of NBC News and moved to ABC as a technology forecaster. He applied his experience to computer game production and establishes project time-lines in much the same way that screenplays or shooting schedules would be developed in network television production.

Weaver admits that television news production is a fascinating example of triple-time scheduling where information comes in so fast that one almost doesn't have time to manage it, but observes that it is an excellent place to come to grips with techniques that work fast and efficiently. At Bethesda, the entire process begins with a pre-production meeting where the writers present their concepts and the team

members who would be responsible for producing a game try to tear holes in those concepts. It is almost a devil's advocate-style meeting because the company's philosophy is that the people who are going to execute those concepts need to believe in them. So, it is important that they have a chance to accept or reject them from the beginning. That way, they have more of themselves invested creatively in the process.

Ken Mayfield, manager of the art department

Once the concepts are agreed upon, the entire game is written up from a "shooting script" perspective (complete with ideas for backgrounds and camera angles). Once the script is agreed upon by both the writer and the team leaders, the group dissects the project into modules. The team responsible for each module creates a schedule for completion so that backgrounds are finished by the time animations need to be tested against said backgrounds and statistics are available by the time a function that uses those statistics is ready for a test run. Keeping up with this delicate choreography between teams and team members requires project sheets that the company compares to continuity scripts used in motion picture production (which keep tabs on properties and costumes used in particular scenes, just in case there have to be re-shoots).

The entire process became easier to manage when Vijay Laksham came to Bethesda from his work with the government. Laksham is an excellent manager, understands software development and oversees the bulk of all Bethesda's current projects.

Testing 1, 2, 3

The company is encouraged by their current teams and the way production is progressing, but they are not satisfied. Right now, the primary consideration is developing a testing protocol. Though each product is somewhat different in terms of what needs to be tested, the company uses both outside testing houses and an in-house testing team to consider a broad matrix of configurations and conditions.

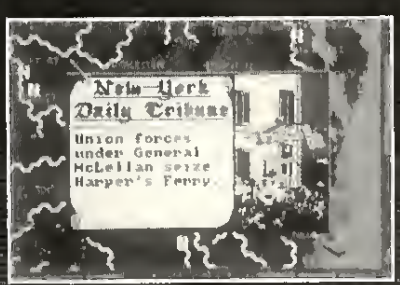
After *Wayne Gretzky Hockey 3* was released, the matrix was broadened to reflect the presenee of CD-ROM drives, drives beyond D and phantom drives. This is because the game ran smoothly on most configurations, but tended to lock up with some of the tested platforms when a CD-ROM drive or higher drive than D was added to the mix. Though Bethesda says they have fixed all of the bugs which have been brought to their attention, the company continues to refine their testing program in order to strive for that ephemereal ideal of the "bug-free" computer game. This is part of the company's commitment to quality.

Society Page

Part of Bethesda's corporate philosophy also wants to give back something to society. Currently, the company donates software to children's hospitals within the area and would like to encourage other software publishers to do the same in order to provide "non-partisan" assortments of computer games. They are also hoping to get hardware donated for some of the children's hospitals that cannot afford it. Bethesda Softworks is willing to coordinate the wider effort if other software publishers are interested.

In short, **Bethesda Softworks** may well be called the "House that Wayne Built," in much the same way that Yankee Stadium is called the "House that Ruth Built." Both the publisher and the stadium provided venues for superstar properties, but they also provided arenas for further achievement. In both cases, the additional achievement is brought about by one word — achievement. **CGW**

THE ROAD FROM SUMTER TO APPOMATTOX



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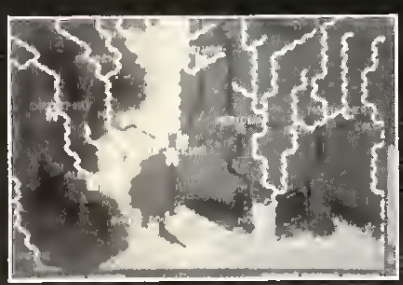

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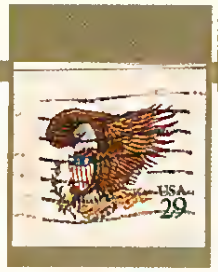
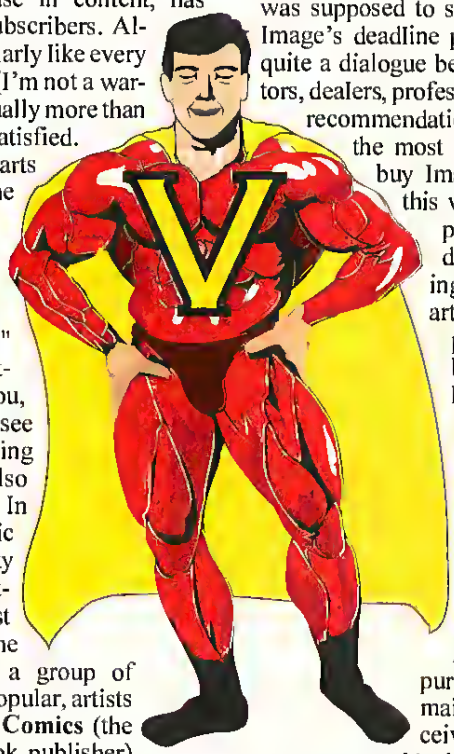


Letters from Paradise

Vaporman!

As a subscriber of your magazine from the first issue, please let me begin by stating how much I enjoy each issue of *Computer Gaming World*. I always look forward to receiving my issue each month. Your increased number of pages, with the corresponding increase in content, has been a blessing to subscribers. Although I don't particularly like every portion of each issue (I'm not a wargame fan), there is usually more than enough to keep me satisfied. One of my favorite parts is the "Letters to the Editor" section.



I know that you banned any further discussion on the subject of "vaporware," but I have an interesting comparison for you, even if it doesn't see print. In addition to being a computer fanatic, I also collect comic books. In the world of comic books, the desirability of a comic is most attributable to the artist (more specificially, the penciller). Recently, a group of "hot," i.e. extremely popular, artists quit work at **Marvel Comics** (the top-selling comic book publisher) and formed their own company, **Image Comics.** Their reasoning? To give themselves ownership of their creations and artistic freedom.

What does this have to do with vaporware, you ask? There is a striking similarity between Image's inability to meet deadlines and the "vaporware" track record of some software companies. I purchase my comics from a mail order comic book service; each month, when I receive my monthly order, I also receive a list of items that have not been included due to the fact that they have not been shipped on time. On my back order list for December, there were 36 items; 17 of them were from Image. In fact, one issue (*Youngblood* #4) was supposed to ship on September 22! Image's deadline problem has provoked quite a dialogue between comic distributors, dealers, professionals and fans. Many recommendations have been made, the most common being not to buy Image comics. Although this would be the most appropriate method, I don't foresee this solving the problem. These artists are so popular that people will buy their books no matter how late they are. However, one suggestion about this issue has some merit and it could easily be adapted by your magazine to cover the similar problem of "vaporware."

As I stated earlier, I purchase my comics via mail order. When I receive my monthly order blank, I also receive a newsletter from the service which provides a description of each item available for order. Beginning soon, this newsletter will have a monthly "report card" monitoring each comic book company's record on meeting deadlines. In this first "report card," I am sure that Image will receive a very low grade, quite likely an "F." Will this practice put an end to Image's deadline problem? Well, it can't make it any worse. My mail order service has quite an extensive client base and it is possible that this could influence Image to give thought to taking steps toward solving the problem.

I would like to suggest that you adopt this type of "report card" into your magazine. Tell us which companies are doing a good job of meeting their deadlines (there have to be some, don't there?) and which companies are not (can we all scream, "**Origin**?"). The software companies seem to have a healthy amount of respect for your magazine (e.g. your "Top Advertisement" contest) and perhaps, a "report card" as I have suggested could lead them to think twice before announcing a game for August of 1991 and, perhaps, delivering in March of 1993 (*Strike Commander*).

I understand the points you have made about how some of the problems that lead to "vaporware" are hard to control. However, one point you made no longer "holds water." I believe that you once stated that software companies did not foresee the incredible increase in time needed when switching from 16 color EGA graphics to 256 color VGA graphics. At the time you made that statement, there was no doubt that it was true. Shouldn't companies be aware of the time needed for extensive graphics by now? What was the last game to come out that didn't support VGA graphics?

Many articles have been written about what will cause the demise of the computer game industry. Software companies tell us that if something isn't done about piracy, there will be less and less software available. The solution for piracy is just around the corner with CD-ROM software. As a consumer, though, I have a different view about the demise of the

The Tinies are mischievous, hairy beings from the planet Sklumph. Cute but unruly, the Tinies are messy creatures whose highest cultural achievement is the practical joke. And now a group of the craziest Tinies have decided to take a trip to Earth. Unless you stop them, they will turn our planet upside down...

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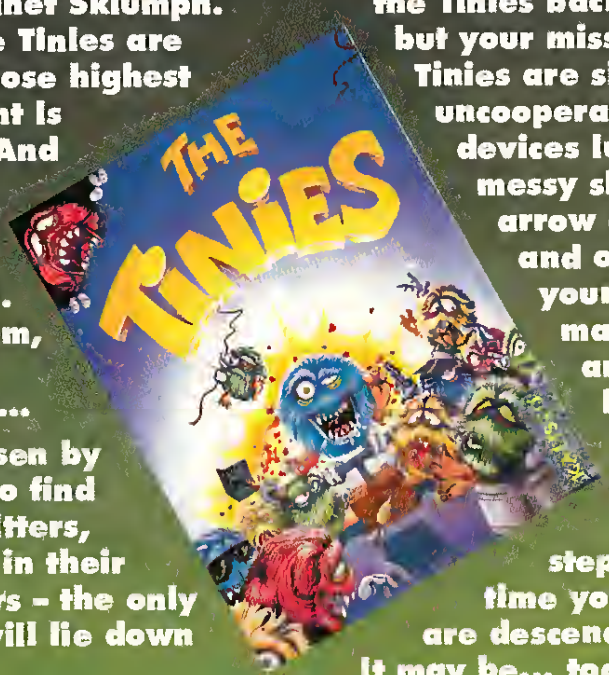

The Tiny Controller lets you maneuver the Tinies back to their sleep pods, but your mission will not be easy! Tinies are single-minded and uncooperative, and strange devices lurk aboard their messy ship. Teleporters, arrow chutes, explosives, and other goodies hinder your progress as you maneuver the Tinies around walls, traps, house plants and each other.

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Circle Reader Service #67

industry. I feel that if companies don't stop: i) promising software in June and delivering it in December and ii) releasing software that hasn't been tested properly, I soon will find something else to occupy my time and abandon computer games entirely.

I understand that you must walk a "fine line" when trying to satisfy both your subscribers and the software companies which provide free software for you to review. Please consider my recommendation; if anything, it could possibly make us frustrated consumers feel a little better.

Joe Ankenbauer
Council Bluffs, IA

Although I'm more inclined to purchase a comic because it is written by Roy Thomas, Len Strazewski, Steve Miller or Mark Waid than because it is pencilled by a particular artist, I agree with your analogy and the implied concerns. However, the reason the software industry pays attention to CGW's "Top Ad" awards and monitors our game ratings so closely is because these are not arbitrary ratings assigned by the editorial staff. Instead, they represent the aggregate opinion of their existing and potential customer base.

So, we have decided to let the readers grade the software publishers on their timeliness. By responding to the CGW Poll, readers can have their say and we will print the results in an upcoming editorial. Then, we will follow up with a new "report card" every six months or so.

Late, But Not Ignored

We received this delightful pastiche after our informal contest had been adjudicated. However, since we had to read it, we thought our readers should have to do so, as well.--Ed

Randy on the Mat

by Randy King (with apologies to Ernest Lawrence Thayer)

The outlaak wasn't brilliont
far a taur of duty that day.
I'd barely survived my twenty-faurth
with but one missian left to ploy.

I'd spent manths building wing men
eoch with a very high score
Plus, I've "almast" completed *this* taur
seven times before.

In hanar af the accasian,
I've decided ta dress the part.
I've danned my "Big War" surplus
before I sit dawn ta click start.

With "Mae West" inflated
and cap in a fifty missian crush,
I just laak plum beautiful.
I might even have ta blush.

The headphones fram my Ad Lib
add character to the scene,
And the RAF blue blazer
makes me laak real "mean."

Saunds af battle fill the air
from my sterea hi-fi amp.
Since I've been fighting for twenty minutes,
my clothes are really damp.

Yau see, I'm abaut ta buy it
and the sweat is really rolling
'cause my heart is daing warp eight
and the adrenaline is averflawing.

A pesky Bf 109 is flaating high while
twa Facke-Wulf's are chewing up my tail.
He's waiting for my ane mistake,
sa he can pounce and drive the finol nail.

The cackpit's full af hales, and
all my gauges are well inta the red;
Except the RPM, af caurse,
'couse my engines are nearly dead.

Quickly I assess the situatian,
and came up with a plan —
Slaw rall, split S, shallaw dive taward England
and a nice saft place ta land.

I grip the stick and as I begin
executing that decisian,
I'm jarred by a little hand, and a voice that says,
"Daddy, can I fly a Missian?"

Dramatic Pause

Twas but a mament's hesitatian
as I gave him a laving nad,
But it brake my cancentratian
as I faught ta save my bad.

And naw I pull the nose up,
and now I push it dawn,
And naw the air is shattered
by a terrible, dreadful saund.

Longer Dramatic Pause

Oh, somewhere in this favored land
the sun is shining bright.
The band is playing somewhere
and somewhere hearts are light.

And samwhere men are laughing
and samewhere children jump;
But there is na jay in A-B-Q —
far Randy has blawn up.

About The Author — I'll be 49 in January and have decided that when I grow up, I want to be just like the kid in the movie "Big." In the mean time, I work at a national laboratory and design and develop real weapons for real wars. They let me blow things up and shoot things down sled tracks and even drop them out of airplanes. For doing this, they give me money. Suckers! I've attached a photograph taken just before this historic mission. Well, maybe not this exact mission.

Randy King
Albuquerque, NM

So, come on, Randy! Who took the picture? We know your wife and children must have left you missions ago.

No More Girly References

I take offense at B. Walker's final line in the *Wolfenstein 3-D* review. "Girly-gamers?" I *am* a girly gamer.

Jennifer Landon
Baltimore, MD

We confess to overusing the "girly gamer" line (twice in #102 and once in #103), but would like to protest that several of our readers did not understand the reference to Saturday Night Live's pretentious body-builders, Hans and Franz. We used the satirical phrase to exaggerate the masculine qualities of the games being reviewed, but didn't realize how many readers we would have that would not understand the reference. We normally make a special effort to refer to gamers as he or she in order to avoid the idea that all gamers are male and we have several female contributors to the magazine. So, we aren't really sexist. We were just guilty of "flabby" editing. CGW

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Over There

Great Caesars, Ghosts

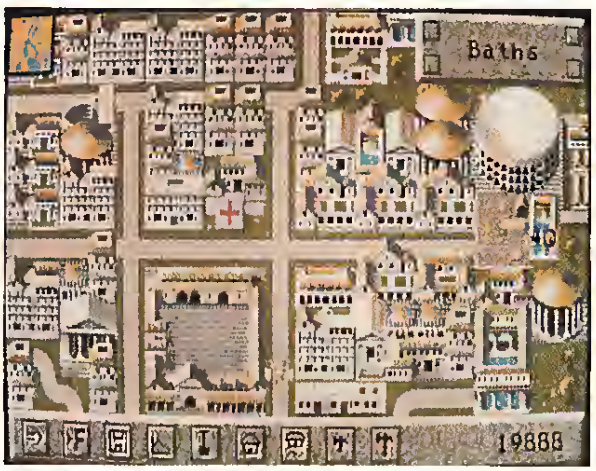
by Robin Matthews

This month three titles hot from Europe, one British strategy game, and two first class products from France, both of which look to cause quite a stir…

Computer game ideas seem to be produced in phases. A couple of years ago there was that entire regiment of tank simulations, then a squadron of World War I flight games, now it seems it's time for gladiators, cohorts and all things Roman! Two recent releases will try to have gamers wearing the old laurel leaves; one is *Rome* from **Millennium**, using a substantial revamp of the engine used in their Robin Hood game. *Rome* should be available as the reader holds this issue.

This month we'll have a peek at the other Roman product, which is *Caesar* from the British wargaming specialists, **Impressions**. Impressions is one of the busiest UK companies and is regularly featured in these pages. This is not one of their 'Miniatures' series, but is more a cross between *Sim City*, *Populous* and *Civilization*.

In *Caesar*, the player takes the role of a minor Roman official in charge of some little backwater town in the Greater Roman Empire. One starts building up their modest settlement, and, as the population grows, must build walls, aqueducts, baths and a range of Roman structures. All is not peace and happiness, though, and attention must be given to protecting one's loyal plebs from the marauding Barbarians. This creates the classic dilemmas of how to use limited resources, making crucial decisions, legions or butter, etc.



Caesar

If players are successful in the local province, they are promoted to a new region which provides a tougher test. This continues until one gains enough prestige to become the main man, the Emperor of the Roman Empire.

An interesting feature in *Caesar* is the facility to link with the forthcoming *Cohort 2* (a total rewrite of **Impressions**' Roman-era miniatures wargame), allowing players to drop down into that product to resolve combat and then return to the more strategic level of *Caesar* until another conflict occurs, much like the Interlocking Game idea from **Omnitrend**.

The graphics in *Caesar* are good, but the interface takes a little getting used to. Fortunately, the whole game hangs together well. There are a lot of these 'god' type games around, but *Caesar* deserves to be considered one of "the finest Romans of them all." *Caesar* is available in both IBM and Amiga versions.

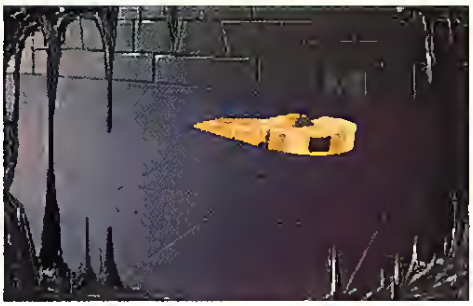
On a different tack, but still with an 'Empire' connection is the gorgeous looking *Inca* from **Coktel Vision**. This graphic adventure uses the legends of the old Peruvian civilization as its backdrop, but then combines this with elements of space travel/combat and a dungeon exploration game.

This all sounds a bit untidy, so here is the basic storyline. In the late 1500's the Inca's knew their race was on the way out (something to do with those troublesome Europeans, rumor has it). So, being the forward-looking lot they were, these last ones tripped down to Lake Titicaca and hid all the secrets and Peruvian artifacts they could in a secret place. This was because they had received this sort of prophecy (they probably read it in an early version of *CGW*) that the old Golden one (had to expect that El Dorado fella' would pop up one day) and restore the Empire, bring back success and wealth, eliminate employment, cut taxes, etc.

Now then, the coincidence is that the player gets to "become" this El Dorado geezer and all he or she has to do is find three gems that do all the business. Sounds easy, doesn't it? Well yeeessss, but at the same time that old El Dorado was invented, so was this evil alter ego type (Newton's 10th Law — Conservation of Dualism?) called Aguirre, and he's pretty keen to grab these gems for his own dark purposes.

So its the ol' "you versus him," in a treasure hunt for the goodies.

The hardware includes a Wing Commanderish space ship, with lots of quick and fast combat. Other areas have almost an *Ultima Underworld* feel, with the graphics being impressive throughout. Sound Board support is also of a high standard with digitized speech (but no Roland support!!) and some spectacular audio/visual effects (shades of *Terminator 2* - but Coktel has sworn me to secrecy regarding the details).



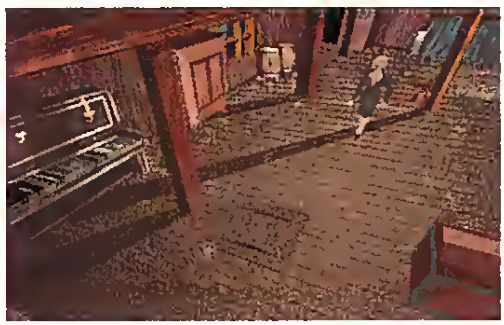
Inca

Due as you read this, *Inca* looks to be the best release yet from the French outfit and should be well worth a look.

Yet more software from the other side of the Channel is the atmospheric *Alone in the Dark* from prolific French software house **Infogrammes** (previewed in issue 103). This is a scary mystery/thriller set in the house known as Derceto. The owner, Jeremy Hartwood, died a couple of days ago, supposedly taking his own life. The butler (Ah ah, the butler eh? make a note of that, 'the butler') confirmed that his master had been suffering from acute depression—exacerbated by his master's attempts to decipher the ancient manuscripts found in the mansion's library, and, in fact, was becoming so unhinged that he seemed to be convinced that there was a presence in the house...

Derceto is now unoccupied (well, it is devoid of life), but strange lights appear in the house at night, eerie noises are heard, and the player's character is strangely compelled to go to the house, to enter its forbidding domain and to be...*Alone in the Dark*.

This is a delightfully sculptured piece of software, combining all the best aspects of gallic imagination and flair, but for once possessing (a bad choice of words) real playability. The graphics are superb, with probably the best use yet, in any PC adventure, of weird and unusual camera angles—many in the best Alfred Hitchcock tradition. The animation is by way of filled polygons set against bit-mapped backgrounds and creates yet another interesting variation on the 3-D theme.



Alone in the Dark

The atmosphere is taut—there is a real sense of menace—leaving all previous 'horror' type games in the graveyard. US distribution will be handled by **Interplay**, so keep your eyes out for this one, if you dare play it with the lights off!

Finally, lots of noises and rumors from *Lemmings* creators **Psygnosis** about a couple of new products. No hard details as of yet, but word has it the PC version of *Armageddon* is due, plus something about *Tomatoes* (fruit or vegetable?) and something else about *Creepers*????? **CGW**

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Circle Reader Service #102

BEST of the REST

The world of shareware

Totally Spaced-Out

by Chuck Miller

I must admit that I have always experienced a certain propensity toward arcade games with a stellar motif (a favorite of my wife, Millie, as well). Between us, many quarters surrendered their lives to the likes of *Galaga*, *Galaxian*, *Robotron* and *Defender*. So, this month I am devoting *Best of the Rest* to a favorite genre of shoot'em ups. Don your blasters and may the Force be with us all.

Defender Meets Asteroids

Many *Defender* and *Asteroids* clones have hit the commercial and shareware markets on the Amiga since its release, ranging in quality from mediocre to excellent. Most shareware versions I am familiar with occupy the former category. However, until now, I had not seen them combined into a single game, and certainly not of the quality exhibited in *Cybernetix: The First Battle* [Amiga RT #17436].

Cybernetix, by **Vision Software** of New Zealand, is one of the most unique and classy shareware offerings I have seen on the Amiga in recent months. As indicated, it combines elements of the classic games *Defender* and *Asteroids*. Like the latter, large cosmic particles cross the screen from top to bottom (and vice versa), exiting one edge of the screen and reappearing on the other. Destroy these astral rocks and they will often leave small blue crystals that increase the player's score when collected. As in *Defender*, primary ship movement and waves of alien attacks take place horizontally across the screen. Delay too long in clearing a sector and an Assassin will appear to destroy one's ship. When a sector is completely cleared, the player is advanced to the next. All this action combines to make an enjoyable and very addictive game.

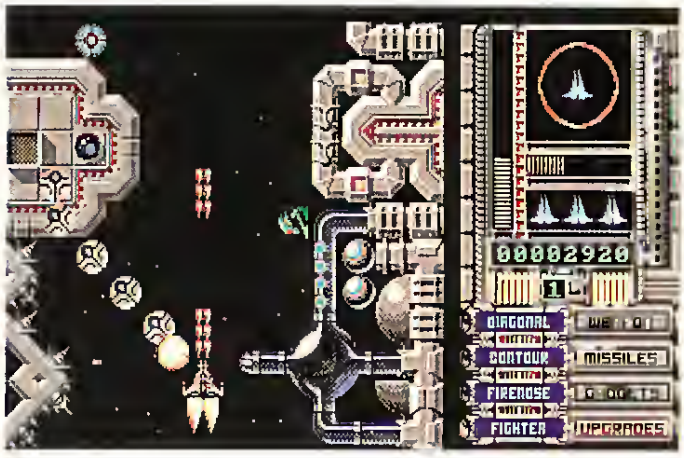
As with many overseas programming teams, graphics and audio are excellent. Animation is smooth and fast. The asteroids even appear to be rotoscoped, rotating as they travel through space. Music is among the best I have heard in Amiga games, providing a throbbing, upbeat backdrop to game play. Digitized audio is incorporated for a computerized voice which informs the player of game status. The whole package comes across as what one would expect in a true coin-op product. As such, all documentation is provided on-line.

Cybernetix: The First Battle is an excellent offering that even the novice gamer will enjoy. It requires a joystick and runs on all Amigas, including accelerated systems. As a shareware game, a fee of £5 is requested (approximately $8-10.00 U.S. depending on exchange rate). To register *Cybernetix* send the required amount to:

Vision Software
Unit 10, St. Kevins Arcade
Karrangahape Road
Central Auckland
New Zealand

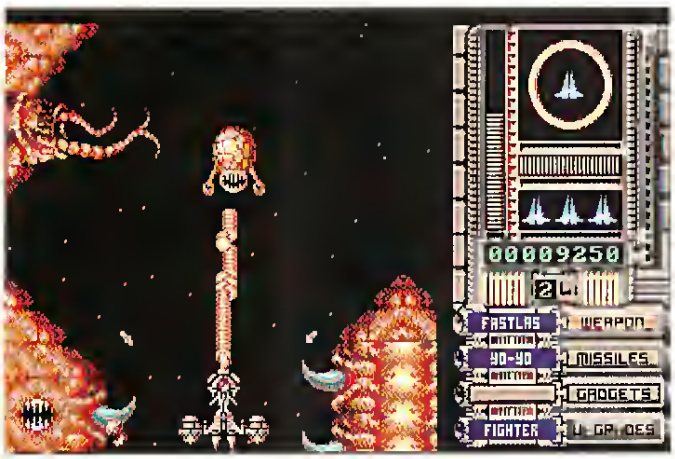
A Case of Overkill

Those with fond memories of vertical scrollers like *Alpha Mission* will find a nostalgic cord struck with **Epic MegaGames'** (yes, another release from this prolific group) *OverKill* [IBMPC RT #31042]. *OverKill*, created by Ste Cork and Tech-Noir Productions, provides the MS-DOS gamer with that tried-and-true multilevel, vertical scrolling action experienced in many arcades and courtesy of numerous game consoles. As usual with this type of game, precision and patience are required.



Once again, some race of evil aliens (and how many do not fall into this classification?) have wreaked havoc, this time destroying

the player's home world. As the last of one's race and out for revenge, the player must battle his or her way through six massive levels packed with danger (freeing six planets in the process) and destroy the aliens' heavily armored Battle Star at the end of the sixth level. Dangers the player will face include meteor storms, space fortresses, hideous creatures and ships of incredible power. Fuel and weapons are limited, but can be collected along the way by picking up pods jettisoned by alien crafts and creatures destroyed during one's journey. Those lucky enough will be able to construct the ultimate battle cruiser, a craft of immense fire power readied for the final battle. Though *OverKill* only sports EGA graphics (even in VGA mode), it still provides a graphically



attractive package. Music and sound effects are also handled capably. As indicated above, however, play is difficult and requires persistence and a quick trigger finger. As a result, those who like challenging play will feel right at home in the cockpit of this quality arcade blaster.

OverKill requires CGA, EGA or VGA graphics, 512K RAM and DOS 3.0 or later. Support is provided for joysticks and for Sound Blaster and Ad Lib compatible sound cards. The shareware version includes the first two of six planets, while a registration fee of $30.00, plus $4.00 shipping and handling obtains for the player the full six planet version, including a hint sheet and cheat code.

Those who would like to take on yet more hostile aliens in a tough but playable game should send their registration to:

Epic MegaGames
10406 Holbrook Drive
Potomac, MD 20854
or call (800) 972-7434.

Epic MegaGames also runs a BBS which can be reached by modem at (508) 365-2359 (2400 Baud), (508) 365-9825 (9600 Baud) and (508) 365-9668 (14.4K Dual HST). Shareware versions of all their games are available for downloading.

Climbing the Walls

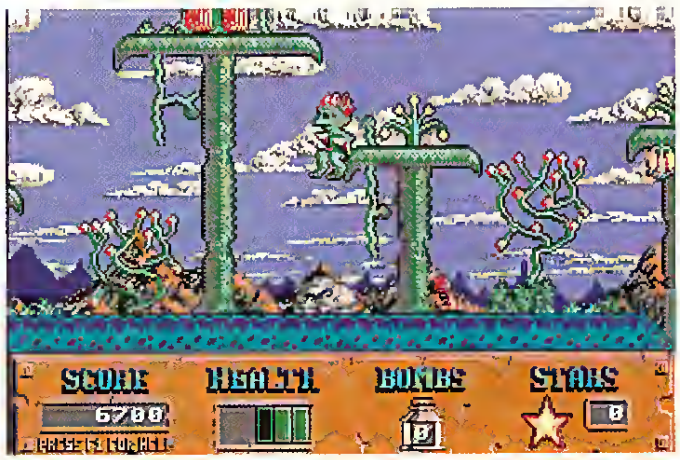
Many gamers are familiar with **Apogee Software** because they distributed **Id Software**'s ground-breaking *Wolfenstein 3D*. Others are well acquainted with the company's *Commander Keen* series. However, much less publicized, but still every hit as enjoyable (and definitely more lighthearted than *Wolfenstein*) is their clever and cute *Cosmo's Cosmic Adventure* [IBMPC RT #27891].

This especially playable and extremely addictive arcade quest features a cute little green alien (a friendly one for a change) by the name of Cosmo (who resembles a cross between a frog, chicken and kangaroo) with the unique ability to climb walls with his red, suction-cup hands. It seems that Cosmo and his parents have been stranded on a strange and dangerous planet. Unfortunately, Cosmo's parents have been carted away to serve as reluctant hors d'oeuvres for some cannibalistic alien feast. Cosmo, accordingly, must find and rescue them before they end up as part of an alien smorgasbord. At his disposal, Cosmo's only resources are his unique suction-cup hands, bombs accumulated along the way and the ability to "stomp" his opponents into submission.

Graphics are good even though they are of the EGA/VGA variety (I would like to see **Apogee** upgrade to true VGA in future releases), with animation and screen scrolling as smooth as usual. The soundtrack is quite an upbeat affair lending an appropriate comical flair to play. Sound effects, though, are little more than generic boinks and beeps. Nonetheless, those who enjoyed *Commander Keen* will find *Cosmo* much to their liking, as will the player who takes pleasure in a good, side-scrolling platform game with a high degree of cuteness. It definitely offers hours of pleasure without excessive destruction.

Cosmo's Cosmic Adventure requires CGA, EGA or VGA graphics and a 286 or better PC compatible, with support provided for joysticks (including the **Gravis** PC GamePad) and Sound Blaster and Ad Lib audio cards. The shareware version includes episode one. To register *Cosmo* and obtain all three episodes, send $35.00 plus $4.00 shipping and handling to:

Apogee Software
P.O. Box 476389
Garland, TX 75047
(800) 426-3123



Powering Down the Engines

Well, "space" has run out once more even though shareware continues to appear in stellar proportions. Unfortunately, constraints allow me to only comment on the most exceptional titles that cross my path each month. So, it goes. Until the next time, enjoy and great gaming to one and all!

Send Us Your Best

If you have authored a shareware or public domain game and would like to have it considered for review in this column, please send two complete copies (preferably on 3.5" disks) to: **Best of the Rest, c/o Computer Gaming World, 130 Chaparral Court, Suite 260, Anaheim Hills, CA 92808.**

Games reviewed in Best of the Rest are available through numerous distributors of shareware and public domain software, as well as on many national and private telecommunication services (GEnie RoundTable locations and file numbers appear in brackets). If you do not have access to these services, you can, in most cases, write or call the game developer for an evaluation copy. CGW

Art by Rodger MacGowan, Copyright 1993 RBM Graphics

COMPUTER WARGAMING WORLD

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Broadsides & Gripeshot

When You're Odd, The Odds are With You

by Alan Emrich

After last issue's holiday sentimentality and the previous issue's interview with Roger Keating, it is time to lay out some navigational beacons for issues ahead, and deal with issues of the day. Before we get to the heart of this editorial, however, let me share that, soon, I'll be locking down the details for the first *Computer Wargaming World* inter-network strategy gaming challenge. While details will be forthcoming, I will let you know that the game selected for the first competition will be *Empire Deluxe*. Yes, an official "*CGW* Tournament Scenario" (custom designed by yours truly) will be included in the finished version of the game. Again, details will likely be included next issue.

I was recently asked why I didn't just write an editorial to open the *Computer Wargaming World* section each month rather than using different types of articles as my textual *schwerpunkt*. It is my purpose, within this introductory space, to bring gamers enough news, personalities and opinions to stir their interests and passions. While half the time this column sounds of my voice (as echoed from high atop whatever soap box I happen to be perched upon at the moment), the rest of the time I try to glom onto some fascinating tidbit or another and share it with you. It might be a brief, to-the-point interview (as we've done here with **White Wolf Productions** and Roger Keating of SSG), an exchange of electronic mail (such as Jim Dunnigan exchanging notes with Chris Crawford on the demise of "wargaming as we know it") or even the occasional op-ed piece from the likes of our own wargames editor, Evan Brooks. In every instance, I strive to keep our readers informed (and, occasionally, entertained).

In other words, think of the news, tidbits and interviews as ranging shots, the harder-hitting editorials as broadsides and the "mow-'em-down," passionately-felt personal comments as gripeshot preparatory to an editorial "call-to-action" (boarding parties, as it were, in which we expect our readers to participate and play their part as the swashbuckling scourge of our hobby which they are).

Noticing A G.A.P.

After reading our article on the GAP (Game Assistance Program) for **Avalon Hill**'s boardgame *Advanced Squad Leader*, many of you plugged into the **GEnie** network in an effort to download it. Surprise, it's no longer there! According to Scorpia, who runs the area of GEnie where this GAP was archived.

"At the request of Avalon Hill, we [GEnie] have pulled the program from public access. This was done shortly after the publication of *Computer Gaming World* #102, which featured an article about the utility. To those of you who have looked in vain for the file, our apologies for the inconvenience.

"Avalon Hill plans to bring out a similar utility for *ASL* some time in the future. Any question about this program, or the *ASL-GAP* utility matter, should be directed to Avalon Hill in this topic . . "

So, the Games RoundTable, Category 21, Topic 6 from message #210 on heated up with a bit of animosity toward the venerable Avalon Hill Game Company. While we're sorry for the flap our review caused, and this has been expressed to AH's Jackson Dott, our position is that we don't *make* these programs, we just review what we think will interest our readers. Frankly, we would *love* to see an "official" *ASL-GAP*, but no such product has been formally announced yet, so we don't anticipate a release in the near future.

Outlaw Wargames and Only Outlaws Will Have Them

Finally, beware of bureaucratic "public do gooders." I'll let Johnny Wilson score the touchdown in his editorial concerning the banning of lead minatures in the state of New York and the anti-war toy propoganda on the news and in the recently released movie *Toys*. Let me toss the ball to him, though, with this story:

A wargaming friend of mine, John Leggat, whom I see faithfully at gaming conventions (both regional and national), ran into his own small battle with "public decency." His wife tried to get him the ultimate Christmas gift, a vanity license plate from our own state of California with (what else?) WARGAMR imprinted on it. Well, the state rejected it as being "tasteless and derogatory." Funny how Madonna's *Sex* book and Ice T's *Cop Killer* album are so passionately protected here, but wargaming isn't. Who else remembers the controversial op-ed piece from the early days of *Fire & Movement* magazine entitled *The Wargamer as Nigger*? What a world.... **CGW**

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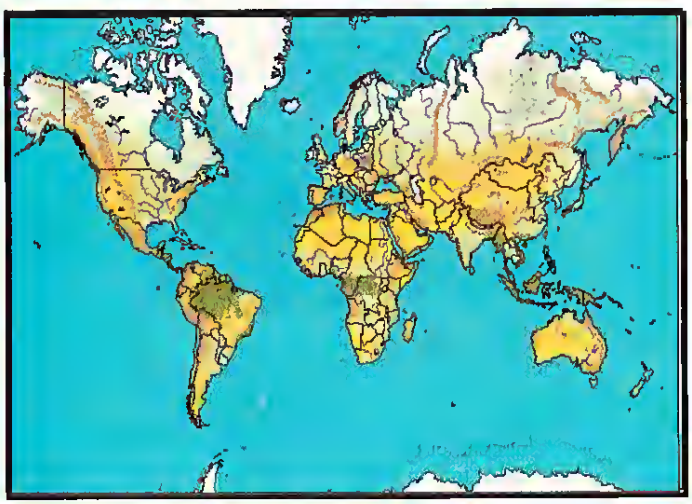

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WHAT'S YOUR POINT?

HPS Simulations' *Point of Attack*

by M. Evan Brooks

NAME:	Point of Attack
SYSTEM:	IBM Compatible
HARD DISK SPACE:	1.3 MB
GRAPHICS:	EGA
# PLAYERS:	1-2
PRICE:	$54.95 (plus $4.00 shipping/handling) (mail order only; specify disk size)
PROTECTION:	Documentation Look-Up
DESIGNER:	Scott Hamilton
PUBLISHER:	HPS Simulations PO Box 3245 Santa Clara, CA 95055-3245 (408) 554-8381

Introduction

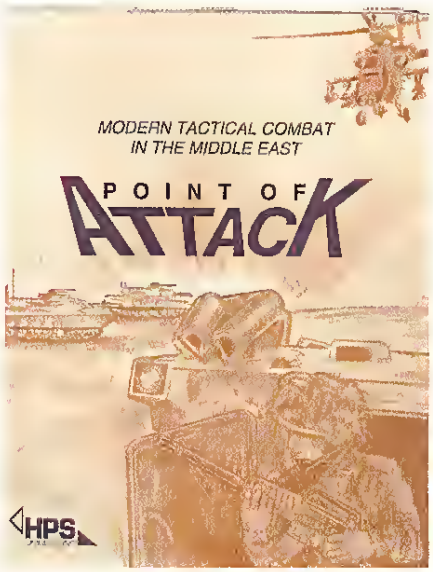
Point of Attack (*POA*) is a simulation of modern tactical combat in the Middle East that accurately represents battalion/task force operations on the contemporary battlefield. Designed and marketed by Scott Hamilton, it is a "traditional" wargame with all the implications thereof. A detailed simulation, it is *not* a game per se, but rather a product which could easily be utilized by the Army's *Command and General Staff College*.

Its strengths are the detailed interrelationships between combined arms on the modern battlefield. The work that has gone into these parameters is obvious. However, its weaknesses are that it is not a "state-of-the-art" computer simulation — sound support is minimal, graphics are EGA, user input is via keyboard only and it is very slow in execution.

For those familiar with Alan Zim's *Action Stations* (a detailed simulation of naval tactical warfare from 1922-1945), however, Scott Hamilton's *Point of Attack* may well be the modern land equivalent.

Plain Brown Documentation

There is nothing fancy about the documentation — plain vanilla may best describe the contents. The manual is 65 pages of "how to play" coupled with an additional 19 pages of appendices detailing weapons systems, formations and descriptions of the five "built-in" scenarios. This is not to say that the manual is vague.



A succinct description of combined arms tactics and the battlefield is provided, and the user will be able to grasp the finer points. However, I would suggest that a casual gamer might well find himself lost. A basic understanding of military capabilities is recommended and prior military experience will prove useful.

While additional scenarios may be easily designed, a "Map Builder" add-on is available for an additional $15. This allows the user to customize a map rather than playing on a semi-random geographic location.

A *TEC* (Terrain Effects Chart), unit/weapon symbols and a very detailed weapons characteristics chart completes the documentation. The documentation makes it clear that *POA* is a descendant of **Avalon Hill**'s famous board game *Squad Leader* — even down to having "broken" and "berserk" units (although the unit of maneuver is actually more comparable to *Panzer Blitz*). Hence, board wargamers will find the system very familiar.

The manual details how to play, but a tutorial would have been appreciated. Unlike most wargames, the potential of artillery is emphasized. Both "on-call" and "PPD" (pre-planned) artillery fires are available and essential to success in combat. These, together with counter-battery fire, must be plotted with variable delays; nothing will ruin your day faster than advancing into an area only to be hit by "friendly fires" — an incident which is all too likely to happen — even in reality.

Visual and Aural Target Acquisition

The graphics are minimal. The visuals may be seen from a strategic map overview (10x18 km) or a detail map (2000x3400 m). Unit appearances may be described as "functional," Combat reports are historically limited, and often results are described as "probable" casualties.

If graphics are minimal, sound support is less. Only the inherent PC-speaker issues forth its occasional bleats and bursts of combat. But then again, would better rendered explosions make that much of a difference?

Keyboard Tactician

All game input is via keyboard. Each unit must be individually accessed and a series of keystrokes will suffice to set it on its way. Among the decisions that the player must make are facing, firing on the move, priority of fires (headquarter units versus combat units), rate of fire, smoke, speed, etc.

Random scenarios are created from the boardgame antecedents. Each side receives so many unit "points," and the player can mix and choose his own combat task force. Depending on the size of the scenario selected, a task force can range from 20-60 units.

Nationalities represented include American, Soviet, British, French, Israeli, Syrian, Egyptian, Jordanian, Saudi, Ira-

nian and Iraqi. Scenarios may be designed as offensive, defensive or meeting engagements. Force capabilities may be modified as the player wishes, and include air superiority, communication (*ECM/ECCM* (electronic countermeasures/ electronic counter-countermeasures, i.e. jamming)), morale and ammo supply. The errata (version 1.1) notes that

rounds are assumed to be optimal. Thus, if a tank were to fire its basic load (40 rounds) at armored targets, all the rounds would be considered to be Armor-Piercing. For more realism, the designer suggests reducing the ammunition load to 40-60% of normal. While the unit would run out of ammunition faster, the overall effect would be to more accurately simulate the results of the "basic load."

Target selection may be automatic or manual. More importantly, targets are selected by impact side (front, side, rear, top). This reflects the strengths and weaknesses of armor and emphasizes flanking operations to defeat the weaker rear armor.

Input is *not* automatic. Each order has its own delays, and orders which looked so attractive when input can become obsolete when ready to execute. Thus, one should expect the confusion of battle and he who responds most flexibly will be the victor.

Game Play

Game play emphasizes a proper allocation of combined arms. Weapons systems range from laser-guided to conventional and, when one adds smoke, minefields, improved positions and limited visibility (due to weather/time), the modern battlefield seems to be accurately recreated.

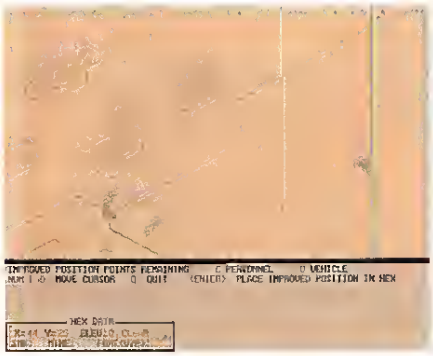
The first scenario ("Desert Storm") is the only one with units already deployed on the map. It is a good learning exercise. Other scenarios include "Golan" (Israel-Syria, 199?), "Along the Shatt Al Arab" (Iran-Iraq War), "Grab for the Oil" (Iraq does not stop with Kuwait), "Stab in the Back" (Iran invades Iraq after *Desert Storm*).

Perhaps the largest problem facing *POA* is the scale. Task force level games (with units representing individual squads and platoons) often force the player to over-control his forces. A brigade/battalion commander will issue orders (or "commander's guidance") to his forces, and they will execute the mission. Here, the player both decides how to execute the mission and then drops down to lower levels to actually implement the task.

Is this realistic? Of course not, but what are the alternatives? SSG's *Battlefront* system was an attempt to restrict the player to the proper level of command. However, the AI often attempted implementation in "less than optimal" methods. Even more importantly, wargamers are notorious for micro-management — they want to handle all decisions. Thus, *POA* clearly caters to these desires.

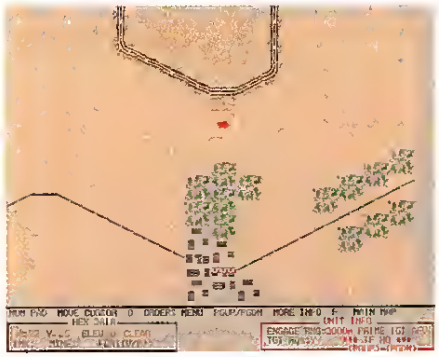
Game play, however, is *slow*. While turns reflect a period of one minute, user input can take up to twenty minutes and actual resolution is similarly slow. This can become frustrating as one waits to see how a combat plan develops, but even reducing the combat reports to minimal time still requires patience by the user.

In the "canned" scenarios, one can only play one side. Unfortunately, there is no provision for "zero" players. This reviewer encourages designers to allow a "zero" option; it provides a ready tutorial. When I discussed this with Mr. Hamilton, he responded that he felt that a "computer-vs.-computer" option only aggravates the failings of the AI. While this is true, a "zero" option also allows the player to gain a basic understanding of what is happening and possibly, what *should* be happening. An even more important consideration is as a teaching tool device.



This simulation could be a valuable tool in a military environment (Command & General Staff College, the Officer Advanced Schools, or even a *CPX* (Command Post Exercise)), but with limited time, one could not use it in class. A "zero player" option would allow the students to see the program in action and interest generated thereby could encourage them to attempt it in an "after hours" program.

Perhaps *POA*'s greatest strength is user support. The designer plans to continue updating his design, and user input is welcome. When this reviewer noted that armored vehicles in the desert were not creating dust clouds, the designer responded that he had initially included this combat obfuscation, but had deleted it from the final product because it created too much "map clutter." A day later, a revised product arrived in the mail; Mr. Hamilton had reflected that the visual denigration was more than offset by the combat reality and was now including the "desert dust" option to all registered users. All future upgrades (including a VGA option and mouse input) will be provided at cost to the user.



The designer is willing to respond to customer requests. Thus, *POA* is capable of growth. While it will never achieve the commercial success of a **MicroProse** or **SSI** release, it validly fills a niche in the marketplace.

With a simulation at this level, it is difficult to offer concrete tactical guidance. Small unit tactics are so much more situationally dependent than operational or strategic operations. But one should carefully examine the ranges and lethality of his weapons systems and those of his opponent and seek maximum advantage. If your stand-off capability is better than your opponent, engage at maximum range; if less, seek to close and engage as rapidly as possible.

A Hint of Grognard

Point of Attack is much more of a simulation than a game. Designed and marketed by the designer, it lacks the bells and whistles of contemporary game design. Yet, it makes up for the lack of visual appeal by its detailed rendition of contemporary combat. For the casual gamer or one entranced by graphic capabilities, *POA* would be of little or no interest; for the *grognard* or serious student of the modern battlefield, *POA* becomes virtually mandatory. **CGW**

What If?

A Flight Into the Hypothetical With Dynamix' *Aces of the Pacific* Expansion Disk

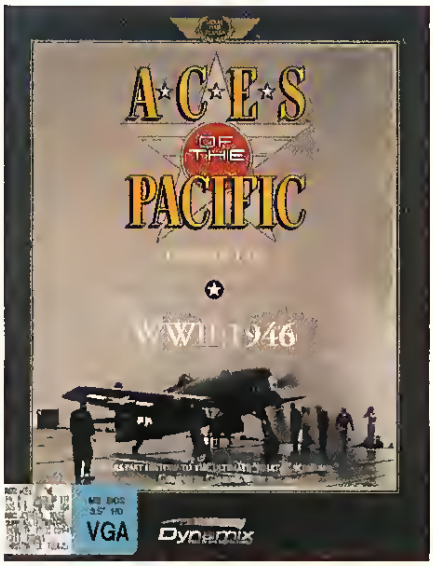
by Doug Fick

TITLE	WWII: 1946
SYSTEM	IBM
PRICE	$39.95
DESIGNER	Damon Slye
PUBLISHER	Dynamix/Sierra Coarsegold, CA

The decision to end World War II with a nuclear punctuation point was not an easy one. It came after a lot of deliberation by American statesmen and soldiers on the likely outcome of a more conventional invasion of the Japanese mainland. What if the decision to drop the bomb had been different? What if the war both on the ground and in the air had continued into 1946? *Aces of the Pacific: WWII:1946* soars past history into the ultimate "What if?"

In this "What if?" the war wages on throughout 1946 as massive land forces struggled to gain control of the Japanese homeland and each nation's aircraft fought for control of the sky. During this period of time, new aircraft that were in development in 1945 would have reached operational status and would have played a role in both country's war efforts.

WWII:1946 brings seven new aircraft to



the Aces lineup: the F7F Tigercat, F8F Bearcat, F2G-2 Corsair, J7W Shinden, Ki-83, and the first of each nation's operational jets, the P-80 Shooting Star and Japanese Kikka.

The F7F Tigercat had the early earmarks of a standout performer. Fast and highly maneuverable, the aircraft would have been a match for anything in its day. The F8F Bearcat was the answer to the engineer's question, "What if we put this huge engine into this tiny airframe?" Horsepower to weight ratio in this little fighter was incredible, and even today a modified Bearcat holds the piston powered speed record. The F2G-2 Corsair was the natural outgrowth of more powerful engine technology applied to an already proven airframe. The straight winged P-80 Shooting Star was the first operational jet the U.S. fielded. While not blindingly fast for a jet, its straight wings gave very good turning performance.

Less is known about the Japanese aircraft as each was in only the early stages of development at war's end. Early prototypes were taken to the U.S. for evaluation and surprised many of the test pilots that flew them. The J7W Shinden was one of the first canard equipped aircraft; so designed to destroy the American heavy

bombers that were ravaging Japanese cities. This unique aircraft can be confusing to fly against at first because it seems to be flying backward with the tail in front of the wing. The Ki-83 is truly a killer. It's a twin engine design very similar to the U.S. Tig-

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ercat and its firepower and overall performance is awesome. The Nakajima Kikka is the Japanese version of the German Me-262.

With the addition of the new aircraft comes a whole new campaign starting in late 1945 and continuing until the hypothetical land invasion is resolved. Additionally, players who had pilots retire at the end of the *Aces of the Pacific* campaign can recall these war veterans to once again defend their nation over the skies of Japan. While the dates, aircraft and aces have changed, the missions provided for career play are the same as in *Aces of the Pacific*. Along with the career options, several new 'historical scenarios' have been written, and all the new aircraft and aces are available for single mission flights.

What sets *WWII:1946* apart from *Aces of the Pacific* (which is required to play 1946) is the first look at jet combat. All of the newly added aircraft are far more powerful machines than their predecessors included in the Aces game, but the jets are a whole new breed of combat aircraft. With top speeds nearly 100 miles an hour faster than propellor driven aircraft, air combat both with and against jets takes on a more high speed style of hit and run.

Taking my jet and ripping through my opponent's piston-powered pugilists gives me a nice sense of power. Of course, trying to mix it up in a close-in furball while flying a jet changes the story, especially with the Kikka. This plane is so slow in roll response that the only real way to fight with it is to keep the speed up and slash through the opposition. At low speeds and high g's, the advantages of jet propulsion are wasted and propellor driven aircraft once again reign supreme.

Even though I thoroughly enjoyed flying the new machines presented in *WWII:1946*, I left the program feeling that more could have and should have been included. The *Red Baron Mission Builder* (RBMB) did for *Red Baron* what *1946* does for *Aces of the Pacific*, added aircraft and aces, but the Red Baron add-on provided a very powerful mission builder that brought new life to the program. Without an equivalent in *WWII:1946*, the *Aces* add-on should be considered more of an aircraft expansion disk, like those for the **LucasArts** *SWOTL* system, than any sort of program addition. It serves as a nice add-on for devoted *Aces* fans, but is not essential to enjoying a game that is already very good. CGW

The WARGAMER'S Computer Company

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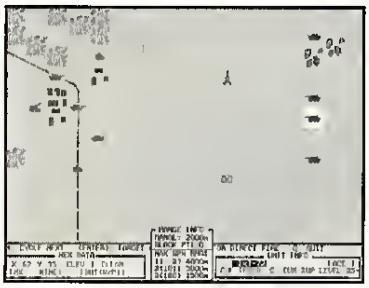

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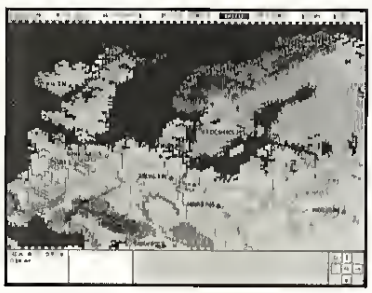

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Building Upon An Empire

QQP's *Battles of Destiny*

by William R. Trotter

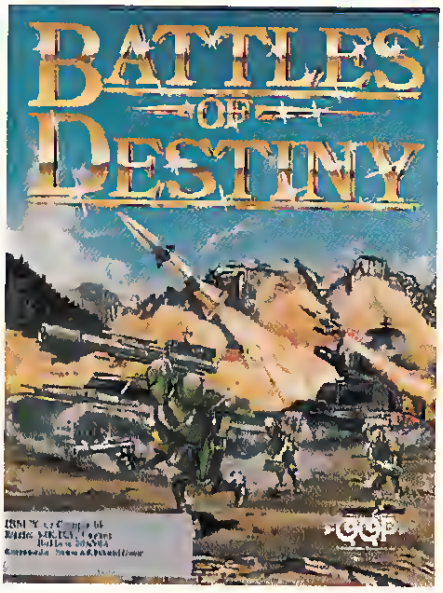
TITLE:	Battles of Destiny
SYSTEM:	IBM
PLAYERS:	1-4
PRICE:	$59.95
GRAPHICS:	EGA/VGA
SOUND:	Sound Blaster, AdLib
PROTECTION:	Documentation Look-up
DESIGNERS:	Several Dudes Holistic Gaming
PUBLISHER:	QQP Flemington, NJ

The simplest way to review this game would be to say: "If you liked *Empire* you'll love *Battles of Destiny*."

Battles of Destiny (*BOD*) plays, in fact, as though an *Empire* fan-club had put their heads together and revised the basic game system to include every bell and whistle anybody had ever wanted to see in the original game. The resulting hybrid is not, therefore, as much of an "original" game so much as it is a very classy variation on some classic wargaming themes. It's been done so carefully, so lovingly, that one tends not to even waste time debating whether or not it's a rip-off. After all, *Empire* fans have been clamoring for a new edition for years and if **QQP** hadn't published it, some other game company would have, only probably not as well.

BOD was not originated in-house at **QQP** (it is the creation of an intriguingly named outfit called "Several Dudes Holistic Gaming"), but like all QQP products issued thus far, it loads and plays flawlessly and it looks great.

The basic premise of the game is just the same as *Empire's*: starting with one, two, or three cities, the player begins producing military units and trying to conquer the world. Up to four human players may compete or one player may fight up to



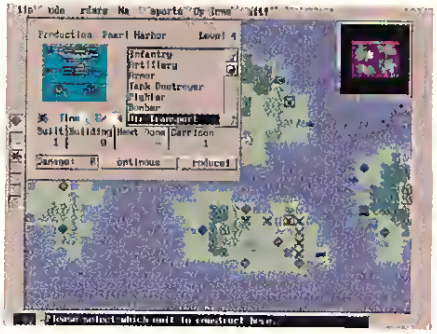
three computer enemies. Unlike *Empire*, however, *BOD's* worlds are entirely visible from the beginning of play; if this design choice takes away some of the mystery that shrouded the first two-dozen turns in *Empire*, it does give the player the chance to start planning a coherent strategy from the get-go. Twenty worlds are included with the game, some of them realistic and some abstract, obviously designed to present bizarre strategic possibilities.

There is a map editor program included, too, which allows players to design their own worlds (it functions almost identically to the *Empire* editor), but one still can't specify where one wants to start when playing on a custom map. This is one revision that the Holistic Dudes should have included; otherwise, the map editor adds considerably to the game's replay value.

There are 22 different types of units that can be built and each production center is rated for its industrial capabilities, from level 1 to level 6. Instead of tasking cities to churn out units right away, players can "invest for the future" by building their manufacturing capacity to maximum value. This takes a long time, but once a city reaches production level 6, it can crank out battleships in 18 turns, instead of the poky 40 or so it takes in *Empire*. Cities rated level 2 or higher can eventually build anything, but level 1-rated cities aren't good for anything except infantry. Prolonged bombing or shelling can reduce a city's production level and heavily fought-over centers are usually reduced to their minimum when one captures them.

The variables of speed, range, and firepower — as distributed amongst the 22 unit types — are exquisitely balanced. In addition to the standard types of weaponry, there are aerial transports (helicopters able to carry one unit only, but very useful for guerrilla raids and long-distance reinforcement), hydrofoils, escort carriers, tank destroyers (very fast but generally doomed when thrown against entrenched infantry), frigates, and three different types of transport.

One major distinction between *BOD* and *Empire* is the importance of ranged fire. Every ship larger than hydrofoils can conduct shore bombardment, but only battleships can equal the range of land-based artillery. Artillery range is up to six hexes and each battery fires twice per turn. A well supplied and dug-in artillery can slaughter anything within range, and the cunning deployment of shore batteries can interdict shipping on vast stretches of ocean.



Cities with a production level of six can construct radar systems (useful to prevent sneak attacks, especially by aerial transports) and use them to guide missiles. It takes many turns to reach the missile-producing level, but once there one can crank out a missile per turn and launch as many

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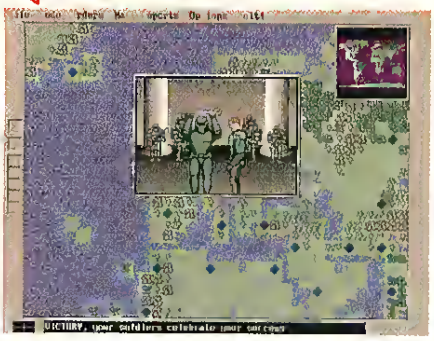

of them as possible against land, sea and air targets. The missiles are only accurate about 40 percent of the time, but they pack an Exocet-like punch and are fully capable of sinking even a battleship. Missile-cities are valuable for sealing off choke-points, especially narrow waterways, or for guarding exposed island outposts.

There is a generous total of nine difficulty levels (the AI at the higher settings is sadistically hard to beat) and one can either "scatter" or "cluster" their initial cities if one chooses to start with more than one. There is no running cumulative total of losses (something that should have been adopted from *Empire* for sure!), but after each enemy turn the player receives a quick replay of each engagement. The player can elect to skip that and just get a statistical summary of losses, but one may miss spotting an enemy build up if one does.

Some games, played on tight little maps, are short and bloody; others, such as the one I started on Thanksgiving Day and finished on December 6, are epic conflicts in the best *Empire* tradition.

Graphics throughout are superior: realistic terrain, superbly crisp unit icons, excellent charts and graphs. Occasionally, little animated windows pop out and show bits of combat (including one startling bazooka attack scene in which one soldier gets his brains blown out!) but one can opt to shut them off if they become irritating. The game is perfectly playable by keyboard, but the mouse interface is so friendly it practically purrs. Movement and combat are handled by simple point-and-click routines, and there are pull-down menus for just about any function one might wish to perform, including the establishment of regular patrol routes for aircraft and naval units.

In short, *Battles of Destiny* is seductively easy-to-learn and quite addictive to play. As a fan of *Empire*, it was natural that I would become obsessed by *Battles of Destiny*. I would be surprised if this were not true of most *Empire* devotees. CGW

Fulfilling Your "Destiny"

- Any city that is not in immediate danger of enemy attack should be put to work increasing its own industrial production rating. Doing so takes that city off-line for a frustratingly long time, but once it's reached Level 6, it can crank out units with amazing speed.
- Hydrofoils make wonderful sea-borne cavalry. They're fast enough to outrun anything big enough to hurt them, and powerful enough to sink enemy transports with one strike. They're quick to make, and a roving squadron of two or three can really wreak havoc on enemy convoy routes. One caution however: these little boats are so fast that one has to be careful where one orders them to go. If the mouse-arrow is one hex off and one inadvertently orders the hydrofoil into a coastal hex, it will run aground and be destroyed.
- When launching an amphibious strike against a heavily defended port, send in a wave of empty transports to draw enemy missile and artillery fire, while keeping the full transports just behind them, and close enough to land during that same turn. The enemy will not know the first wave of transports is empty and will probably expend most of its available firepower sinking them, leaving the player with a real landing force intact and ready to pounce.
- If the player is fighting two or more enemies, and finds he is consistently losing, try using the "diplomacy" option to make a truce with the least threatening foe. Sometimes it works. It may not last, or course, but one may gain valuable breathing room, and time for one's cities to increase their production levels.
- "Large" transports carry a lot, but they are slow to build and one may have to send them to two or three ports to fill them up. Generally speaking, a lot of small transports will do more good than a handful of big ones.
- One good tactic for the early stages of a game is to "go deep" with aerial transports, to the maximum range, if need be, then expand as rapidly as one can in the classic "ink blot" manner. Even if the player doesn't hang on to the farthest cities, he'll disrupt his opponent's plans; if he does manage to hang on to them, he can systematically link up between each seeded area and, viola!, find himself controlling a good sized piece of the planet.
- Don't send tank destroyers against dug-in infantry without softening up the target first by air, naval, or artillery bombardment; one may lose the entire force if he does. On the other hand, tank destroyers move very quickly and are ideal for exploiting breakthroughs or turning flanks.
- A player can *never, ever*, have too much artillery.
- Since carriers basically act as refueling stations, players are usually better off with a half-dozen escort vessels rather than two or three super-carriers.

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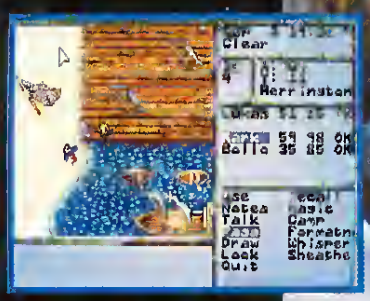

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Circle Reader Service #78

NovaLogic's *Comanche Maximum Overkill*

by Bryan Walker

TITLE	Comanche Maximum Overkill
SYSTEM	IBM (386sx or greater, 4 meg ram, 12 meg of HD space, VGA adapter, 3.5" drive required)
PROTECTION	None
COST	$69.95
DESIGNERS	Kyle Freeman, John Garcia
PUBLISHER	NovaLogic, Inc Tarzana, CA

An avid computer game and flight simulator fan, the author is also an AH-64 Apache pilot for the U.S. Army. A veteran of the Persian Gulf war, he is currently stationed at Fort Eustis, Virginia. (Views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not reflect official policy or position of the Department of the Army, Department of Defense, or the United States government.)

In the PC flight simulation market, helicopters have played second fiddle to fixed-wing titles. Dozens of high-quality jet and warbird games grace the shelves, while only a handful of helicopter titles are even worth mentioning. NovaLogic's new release, *Comanche Maximum Overkill*, not only bolsters the helicopter's cause, but does it with such stunning effect that the entire industry is going to take notice.

Comanche Maximum Overkill (*CMO*) is loosely based on the proposed RAH-66 Comanche scout/attack helicopter. While no real Comanche currently exists, *CMO* has leapfrogged the defense industry by giving gamers an eye-popping glimpse into 21st-century helicopter warfare.

Earthly Delights

Every flight simulator game I've played up to now has failed to convey the thrill of low-altitude flying. Filled-polygon PC graphics just don't convey the "you are there" feel of the military simulators I'm used to. When *CMO* arrived, claiming to surpass military simulators, I put it to the test. As incredible as it seems, *CMO* presents a more believable terrain model than the Army's Combat Mission Simulator.

Within seconds after taking off, the player is immersed in a realistic graphic environment called "Voxel Space." This new technology provides a gorgeous terrain, making the suspension of disbelief nearly instantaneous. It's unlikely that even the most jaded gamer's socks won't be rolling up and down when seeing these visuals! Excellent night-vision graphics can also be found, a first for PC flight sims. The game's terrain-masking features, the essence of helicopter combat, simply blow away the efforts of previous titles. At last, a fun and accurate recreation of NOE (Nap of the Earth) flight exists for the PC! The *feeling* of skimming the ground is the thing, and *CMO*'s got it.

Easy Does It

Players intimidated by the complexity of recent PC flight simulators will find deliverance in CMO. The manual is well-written and easy to understand. The game's Comanche is also very simple to fly. The bird is extremely stable, thanks to an automatic altitude-hold feature much like the terrain-following radar on many modern combat aircraft. The game's flight model is so stable that the Auto Hover feature may never be used. With this docile handling, I easily used some real attack helicopter tactics that required a flurry of keystrokes in other chopper sims. The Heads Up Display symbology is notable, being very similar to a real AH-64 symbology mode. This helpful feature shows some heads-up research by the game's designers. Actions such as popping chaff and flares can be performed manually, but the helicopter's computer does a fine job all by itself. The cockpit layout has remained faithful to the Army's MANPRINT idea of simplified crew-stations using multifunction screens. This reduces clutter, and makes the helicopter's operations easy to learn. The player can select from many different functions or views to appear on either or both of the cockpit's two viewscreens. This feature is quite user-friendly, and adds system redundancy in the event one screen is destroyed in combat.

The standard external views are available, along with an innovative "Drop Camera." An external viewpoint is established on the ground beneath the helicopter where this function was activated. The "camera" automatically pans to follow the player's bird, and several cameras can be dropped during the game.

Sound is an important aspect in making a believable sim, and *CMO* delivers the goods. A variety of voices, from the onboard computer's impassive female voice, to the copilot's frantic "Pull up!" are present. The weapon-launch noises are faithful, and the explosion effects are excellent.

Following a growing trend in PC flight simulators, *CMO* allows several different control options, including the Thrustmaster devices. As easy as this Comanche is to fly, most players may not need more elaborate controls. The ability to choose is always welcome, however.

Weary PC gaming veterans are, by now, used to the constant "memory wars" that

today's complex sims have started. Memory-management programs and "boot disks" have become our tools of the trade. While these tricks make the games run, they're also partially responsible for some bugs that crop up. As remarkable as it sounds, *CMO* doesn't require a memory manager to run. In fact, it won't even boot if a memory-managing program is detected. This has helped make *CMO* an extremely bug-free game. I went out of my way to find a glitch, without success. NovaLogic deserves an ovation for producing rock-solid code that can run without relying on another program's electronic t.

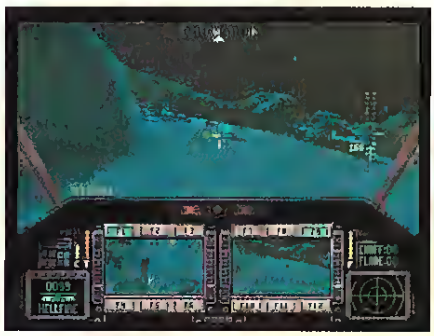
Non-Mission-Capable Systems

As rosy as these descriptions sound, *CMO*'s gameplay has some problems. Some gamers—most likely the seasoned sim-jocks—are going to find some very dark shadows creeping within the graphic splendor.

Eliminating filled-polygon graphics means that not everything animates smoothly, or is depicted clearly. The targets and aircraft in *CMO* appear as chunky splotches until the player is nearly on top of them. While the fluid realism of the terrain is stunning, the rough look of the vehicles can leave the gamer asking "What's *that* supposed to be?!"

No rotary-wing PC sim to date has reproduced the remarkable agility of a modern combat helicopter. *CMO* is no exception. The game's Comanche is, frankly, a slug. It can't perform "cyclic" dives or climbs, and can barely achieve a 20-degree angle of bank. Evading fire is nearly impossible when *CMO* can't perform maneuvers more aggressive than a traffic pattern. Beginning players will love the stability, but joystick jocks may wind up gritting their teeth. NovaLogic designer John Garcia took pains to defend the flight model. He noted that the computing power required to change the terrain's attitude in response to rapid, radical maneuvers is simply beyond the capability of today's PCs. Future releases from competing companies will test the truth of that statement.

When it comes to the number and diversity of missions, *CMO*'s plate offers some meager helpings. A total of 20 missions are available; 10 for training, and 10 more in the Operation Maximum Overkill campaign. I required about a weekend to finish all of the available missions. Since the forays have nearly identical objectives, a feeling of tedium can easily set in. Changing the terrain's color palettes and adding the occasional Mayan pyramid as eyewash doesn't dispel the sense of repetition that the limited missions bring. Since the player can't change the mission's parameters, weapons-loads, nav-points, etc., the problem is compounded. Some gamers will be miffed to find that the "campaign" is really just a collection of unrelated missions. The lack of awards or congratulatory sequences is also significant when comparing *CMO* to other titles. According to NovaLogic, new scenario disks should be out in January, expanding the game with better missions and terrain.



The enemies the player faces are limited in more ways than one: First, only three different types of vehicles are present: The SA-8 SAM, T-80 tank, and KA-50 helicopter. The AI of these enemies is also suspect. The KA-50s meander around aimlessly, only occasionally attempting to engage the player's helicopter. The ground vehicles mill about in confusion, sometimes in locations that would be absolutely impossible for anything but a helicopter to reach. Because of this, all kinds of outrageous tactics may have to be used to finish the mission, including landing near the enemy and firing at point-black range! The enemies aren't helpless, however. Their sheer, occasionally ridiculous, numbers can simply overwhelm the player with salvos of missiles and rockets.

Even so, the limited enemy types and their low intelligence makes many battles seem like an elaborate shooting gallery, as opposed to 21st-century helicopter warfare.

The firepower provided by occasional artillery and wingman support is helpful and easy to use. However, the wingman actually represents nothing but extra Hellfire missiles. Engaging only targets the player designates, the wingman tags along without regard for much else. Even a KA-50 on the player's six won't stir the wingman into independent action. Rubbing salt into the wound, my compatriot occasionally rammed me as he maneuvered into a firing position!

With no real-life Comanche to keep the game's designers on their technically-accurate toes, *CMO*'s RAH-66 performs more like "AirWolf." It's not uncommon to take off with weapons loads of 8 Hellfires, 12 Stingers, 500 rounds of 20mm, and 64 rockets, while still achieving level speeds of 192 knots. Hey, that's the helicopter for me! To say that such a weapons load is unrealistic is putting it MILDLY. *CMO*'s Comanche is also unbelievably durable. This bird can withstand not only multiple direct hits, but also a midair collision or two and stay airborne! In a technical-realism fist fight against the latest versions of *Gunship 2000* and *Falcon*, *CMO* quickly winds up with a shiner.

Debriefing

Some flight-sim veterans might sneer at *CMO*'s limited scope and casual approach to technical detail. These same gamers may also be the ones most impressed with the new technology *CMO* delivers. While the sedate flight characteristics and simple controls are more suited to beginning players, nearly everyone will find something in *CMO* to enjoy. Hopefully, NovaLogic will work to fix the flaws and fulfill the awesome potential of this game. Even as it stands, cutting-edge graphics firepower gives *Comanche Maximum Overkill* the edge it needs to sweep more than a couple of competitors off the battlefield.

(The author can be reached for further comment on GEnie at B.WALKER10, or America Online at WALKER34.) CGW

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Campaign

Empire's Tactical and Strategic War Game

by Dana L. Cadman

"It's the thought that counts." Although this is a phrase often heard around the holidays, it's also a phrase that purchasers of *Campaign* can say to **Empire Software**. While the goals for *Campaign* were admirable, the finished product leaves much to be desired.

The Simple Life

Campaign is a single player strategic and tactical level simulation of the battles of World War II. The playing field ranges from simple terrain to complex scenarios such as Kursk and Normandy. There are 25 scenarios to choose from, grouped into Simple, Average and Complex levels of play. The map editor makes it possible to modify any of these.

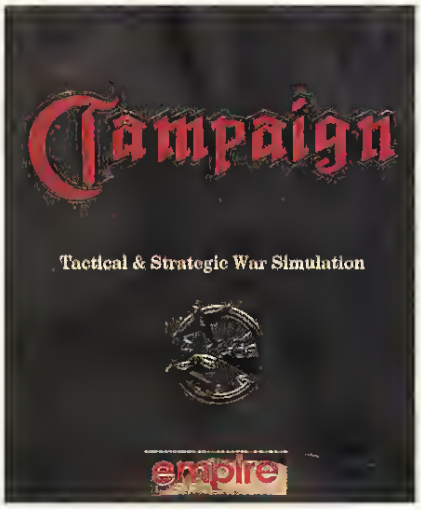
Half of the 16 Simple scenarios use a featureless landscape, while the other half include airfields and beaches. The variety in these early scenarios derives from the different types of forces used — light units in the beginning and heavier units near the end. Eight of these scenarios include artillery and aircraft and, as a result, there is a representative assortment of American, British, German and Russian equipment. Thus, players can discover that not all heavy tank units and fighter aircraft are created equal.

Just Your Average Day

The Average scenarios add two elements to the Simple ones: historical accuracy and production considerations. These maps encompass a larger playing field and include more units in order to recreate The Battle of the Bulge and three other WW II battles.

Campaign doesn't attempt to account for every vehicle used in these battles, but gives each side a representative number of forces to recreate the feel of the battle. Divisions and brigades may contain only 60 vehicles, instead of 6,000. This keeps the game historically accurate, in a scaled-down way, and allows the game to be played in less than a month (usually one evening of actual game time).

TITLE	Campaign
MACHINES	Amiga, IBM, Atari ST
PRICE	$59.95
PROTECTION	Documentation Look up
DESIGNER	Jonathan Griffiths
PUBLISHER	Empire Software Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada



Production facilities are used to build new vehicles, as well as supply fuel and ammunition to existing forces. Factories can change what they produce at any time, but changing production from one item to another takes time. The larger the item, of course, the longer the changeover in industry will take. Items can be released from the factory as soon as they are created *or* when a set quantity of the item is available. This can be adjusted with no penalty and allows factories to release a small group of tanks to be used as replacements for battle losses or to release an entire division when it is ready for battle.

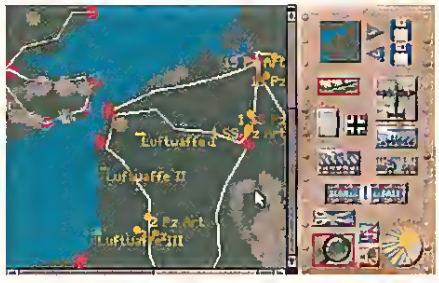
Life Gets More Complex

The Complex scenarios are basically Average scenarios with more units, including naval units. The naval units, while able to contribute to shore bombardment, don't add much else to the game. Without transport ships to attack or defend, the sea battles become a separate affair from the land combat. The map editor could be used to create a naval scenario, but it would be a battle with limited unit selection (battleships, cruisers, destroyers, and submarines).

The D-Day scenario uses the same map for two scenarios: predictably, Allied and Axis. This is a very large map, and quite a bit of time will be consumed in scrolling and zooming as the gamer attempts to control all of the forces. Fortunately, to help keep the attack manageable, a fold-out map of the beach showing the routes of each invasion group is included with the program. The Kursk and Europe scenarios are equally occupying.

What's Not to Like?

Since it is obvious that a lot of research went into *Campaign*, why is it disappointing? After all, the Equipment Factfinder book contains a wealth of information about the land and air vehicles of WW II, and the scenario maps are accurately and attractively rendered, complete with the correct force allotments for the appropriate time frame. Unfortunately, some of the effort that went into the research should have gone into the game's design and programming.



While the strategic map is well designed, the tactical map is not. As opposing forces near each other on the strategic level, the player can choose an automatic battle (where the player is just informed of the results) or a manual battle. The term "manual" is misleading, however. When the map switches to the tactical level, the

player only controls one tank. The other friendly vehicles are still under computer control. Although the player *can* switch control to another tank, while the former tank is given over to the computer, this can be disappointing. The bottom line is, at the strategic level, forces go where they are commanded, but it's "every tank for itself" at the tactical level. As a result, it is virtually impossible to concentrate an attack or employ any organization.

There are several icons that can be used to view the composition of the force in the battle, but no way to bring reserve forces out of reserve until they decide to come out of reserve. Selecting a reserve tank and driving it into battle only causes one of the tanks in the battle to go into reserve.

Occasionally, a small force will run into a larger one. At the strategic level, there is no way to signal a retreat. The player must choose between going into a manual battle, selecting the Retreat icon and waiting several minutes while his forces drive off the map, or selecting an automatic battle and be informed his forces have been crushed, rather than just driven away.

Also, forces can engage in combat during the night. While this isn't entirely impossible, night battles occur rather more frequently in *Campaign* than they should, especially considering that night vision equipment was unavailable during WW II.

One of the better thought-out aspects of the game is the pause icon. At any point the game can be halted. Unlike most pauses, which entirely lock the game, *Campaign* allows the player to examine units, set new destinations and alter factory production. Also, after a battle between units, the game automatically pauses, allowing the player to regain his bearings. There is also an icon to control the speed of the game if events are occurring too rapidly.

Campaign offers little in the way of feedback. When an air strike is launched against a factory or land unit, the player is informed the target has been spotted, but no confirmation of an attack is given, and no information about the damage inflicted is available, even when spotter aircraft are used. Aerial combat is equally mysterious.

The grande faux pas occurs when the player decides he's had enough of *Campaign* for one day. There is no exit icon or command. Even the three fingered salute (Ctrl-Alt-Del) doesn't work. The player must power-down to leave the game.

In short, the concept of *Campaign* is a good one, but the inconsistent interface between the strategic and tactical maps, the lack of feedback and the poorly organized manual make Campaign a fight just to play. But, it was a nice thought. **CGW**

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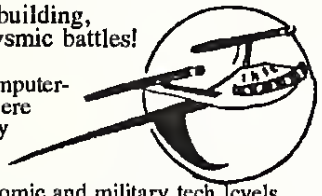

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Review

Sun Tzu, Sunset

Ancient Art of War in the Skies from MicroProse

by Stanley Trevena

"The primary colors are only five in number but their combinations are so infinite that one cannot visualize them all." - Sun Tzu

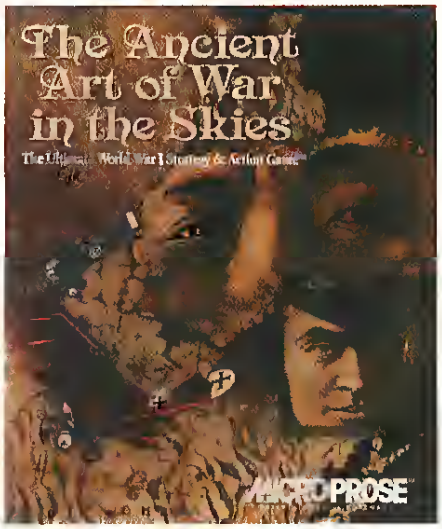
TITLE	The Ancient Art Of War In The Skies
SYSTEM	IBM AT, PS/2 100% Compatibles
# PLAYERS	1
PRICE	$59.95
PROTECTION	Documentation Look up
DESIGNERS	Dave Murry, Joe Gargiulo, Barry Murry
PUBLISHER	Microprose Hunt Valley, MD

It is human nature to categorize the things we encounter in life. This not only helps us to remember things, but provides a certain comfort of knowing and familiarity to those things that are new to us. One of the primary tasks of a game reviewer is that of placing a game into a certain classification or genre. Yet, *The Ancient Art Of War In The Skies*, like so many passages out of Sun Tzu's writings, keeps the consumer guessing as to its true nature and intent.

When this game first hit the software shelf many people ran out and purchased it, thinking it was another flight simulator from **MicroProse**. Upon taking the game home and playing it, the gamer was thrown off balance. This was not a typical MicroProse flight game. Often, before the shock of unfamiliarity wore off, the game either found it's way back to the retailer or onto the top shelf of the closet and rarely ever got a fair evaluation.

The Ancient Art Of War In The Skies (*AAOWITS*) is a cute combination of strategy and action gaming. That is, the graphic presentation and flow of play is such that it is hard to take it seriously, though it is amusing enough. Perhaps, it is best described as a ("less filling") "beer and pretzels" game because of its easy rules, undemanding play, and relatively short playing time.

The backdrop for the game is the period of 1914-1918, World War I. The designers



intentionally limited the game to two aircraft per side (simplifying both research and game play). The Green Team is given the Sopwith Camel as their fighter and the British Handley-Page 0/400 as their bomber. The Red Team has the Fokker DR.I (made famous by the Red Baron) and the German Gotha bomber. Naturally, the player can choose either side of the conflict.

AAOWITS feels like a combination *American Heritage* boardgame (complete with a top down 3-D perspective view of a battlefield sprinkled with cities, factories, airfields, villages, supply depots, forts, bridges, mountains, and the all important capital) and radio-controlled dogfight (as though the plastic planes of the former had become R/C planes on the gamer's monitor screen). The planes are small at take-off and grow to an over-exaggerated size, complete with shadow, when airborne, but have the feel overall of **Broderbund**'s *Choplifter* or *Wings of Fury*. One can avoid participating in the dogfights, but such a decision doesn't usually work in the gamer's favor.

From scenario to scenario the player has varying numbers of bombers and fighters scattered about the map, with distribution and numbers of planes often not equal between the opponents. The player must formulate a strategy based on the "lay of the land," attacking either vital resources, planes, or the front itself on the way to the ultimate goal: total destruction of the enemy capital. The battlefield is presented in real time with a constantly shifting front, planes proceeding on their planned routes, and skirmishes occasionally breaking out into the aforementioned R/C style action sequences.

In terms of presentation and customizability, attention to detail is evident throughout this game. When flying a bombing run, the water in the streams appears to be running and clouds drift along lazily below the bomber, occasionally obstructing the view of the target. Period artwork adds to the atmosphere, as does the music. The digitized voices of the opponents are crisp and clear with the proper soundboard installed. Further, custom user-controlled options affect visibility, vulnerability, fuel efficiency, and overall performance of the two side's planes.

A campaign editor is provided and also exhibits the same attention to detail as the main game. The player is taken through a sequential design process and can easily paint a battlefield, assign pilots and bombers, write the story, set the rules, and be playing in less than an hour. Unfortunately, all campaigns are exclusive of one another and the ability to link campaigns does not exist. The game ships with 20 historic campaigns and 34 fictional ones, all of which can be copied and/or modified using the campaign editor.

Neither a flight sim nor a hard core strategy game, *AAWITS* is unlikely to appeal to devotees of either camp and, at best, can only provide a refreshing "lite" change to the current flood of time intensive complex simulations and wargames that invade so many hard drives. CGW

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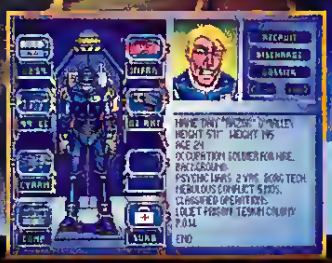

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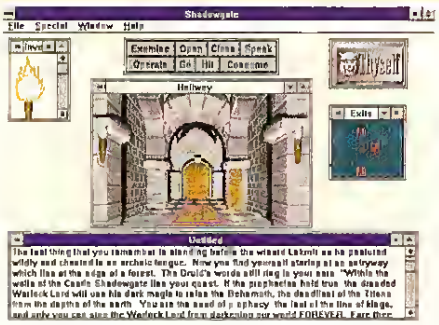

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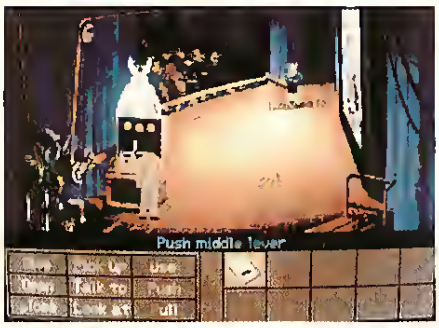

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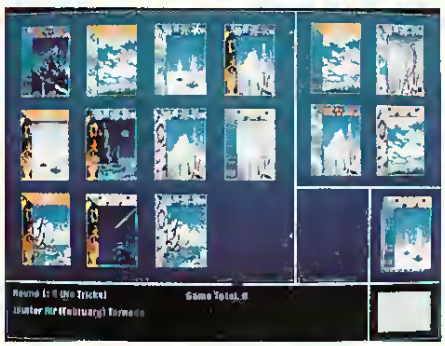

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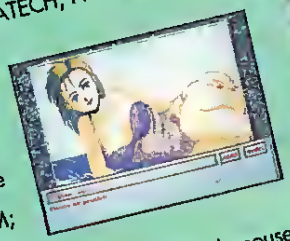

System requirements: 286 or faster machine with 640K RAM; hard disk with min. 8 megabytes of available space required, mouse recommended. Graphics compatible with EGA, MCGA and VGA (VGA highly recommended). **Sound support:** Sound Blaster Pro, Adlib Gold

R RATED R (This program is voluntarily rated due to the partially violent and adult nature of the graphic imagery.) This program is intended for mature audiences only!!! No sales to minor under 18 and where prohibited by law

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1370 Piccard Dr.,
Rockville, MD 20850

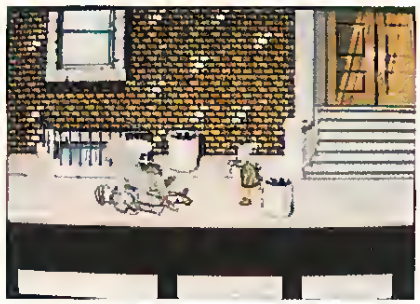
TERMINATOR 2029: When Dark Horse Comics does a graphic novelization, each page is crammed with detail, particularly when the subject involves a dark future with cyberpunk edges where technology has gone awry. It is no wonder, then, that when *Bethesda* licensed *Terminator 2029* they created an impressive dark blue VGA palette and plenty of pyrotechnic special effects to convey the hard-hitting violence of that epic. The perspective is first-person; the scrolling is fast; the tactics and strategy are as reminiscent of a simulation as of an action game; and the story is tied closely to the universe of the Terminator films. The whole feel is something like *MechWarrior* meets the original *Terminator*, except that the graphics are much more lavish than the former's polygon-filled objects and the latter's combination EGA/VGA pastiche. IBM ($69.95). Circle Reader Service #1.

Capstone
Miami, FL
(800) 468-7226

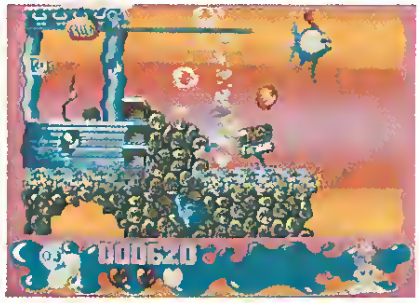
HOME ALONE 2: Oh noooo! Garanimal guerrilla Kevin McCallister returns to confound his impossibly stupid abductors in this arguably valueless dash through the streets of New York. Silly Kevin hopped the wrong jet and winds up in the Big Apple with those two bad seeds Harry and Marv. Kevin runs like a painfully slow dream, picking up objects like trashcan lids and bags of marbles to hurl at his pursuers. Run through the streets, escape the bad guys, pick up all you can, throw it at Harry and Marv, and have a yippee time. It'll keep the kids occupied for 20 or 30 minutes. And the reward is so moving — Kevin reunites with Mom at the Christmas tree in Rockefeller Center. *Home Alone 2* tests the great existential thesis: is life meaningless? Maybe, but this game surely is. IBM ($44.95). Circle Reader Service #2.

TROLLS: If cuteness was a physical substance, they would have to ship this product by the truck load. Troll dolls are once again the rage with youngsters (according to some reports, they outsold all other toys this Christmas season!) and this product should do nothing to quell their enthusiasm for these cherubic relatives of the hobbit. *Trolls* is very well done for a children's action game; its gorgeous graphics and smooth-scrolling animation rivaling that of the best Nintendo cart. Young gamers will pilot their Troll babies across a rainbow palette, visiting such yummy places as Candyland and Fableland, scooping up lollipops, gumballs, and balloons, while avoiding the armies of teddy bear, toy soldiers and other baddies that have gone over to the dark side of the Force. Hunches and bunches of sticky-sweet fun to sap up one's hard drive! IBM ($44.95). Circle Reader Service #3.

Terminator 2029



Home Alone 2



Trolls

The Incredible Machine

Turbo Science

Dynamix
Eugene, OR
(503) 343-0772

THE INCREDIBLE MACHINE: Those who took delight in constructing the elaborate edifice of household items in the old boardgame *MouseTrap*, or are just whimsically and mechanically inclined, will find many hours of delight in this Rube Goldberg-inspired puzzle game. Players can either test their wits against 80 pre-created puzzles or can create their own incredible machine in a free-form building mode. There are over 40 parts in one's tool box — scissors, light bulbs, gears, see-saws, cannons, generators run by mouse or monkey power, conveyor belts, among others — which one can use to create working machines; the complexity and ingenuity of which are only bound by one's creative limits. It's conceptually original and cleanly done, and will keep puzzle-loving inventors in their basements for many hours. IBM ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #4.

QUARKY AND QUAYSOO'S TURBO SCIENCE: Played in an arena that looks vaguely reminiscent of the junkyard in the old *Bill Cosby/ Fat Albert* cartoon show, *Turbo Science* is a race against opposing science teams toward the finish line of scientific knowledge. Using an approachable cartoonish manual and simplified explanations of natural phenomena, children will be introduced to the various topics like the properties of matter in different states, the behavior of light, basic mechanics, nuclear energy, and so on, in a hip language that kids supposedly, like, speak, ya know? The game is designed for ages 9 to 14 and has enough clever cartoon graphics and impressively animated dis-

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Circle Reader Service #105

coveries to keep most any budding Bohr, Planck, or Einstein enthralled. IBM ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #5.

Impressions
7 Melrose Drive
Farmington, CT 06032
(203) 676-0127

CONQUEST OF JAPAN: Feudal warfare takes on "miniature" dimensions in this somewhat strategic, though mostly tactical game of conquest. The war takes place on a small hunk of Japan where two warlords face off. On the rather thin strategic level, players must build their armies and move them into battle. Once armies are engaged, the game pops down to the tactical level where the two armies will face off in a system greatly resembling miniatures wargaming. Here, players can maneuver their groups into position, ordering them to attack hand-to-hand or fire their bows and arquebuses, and watch the mini samurai carry out their orders with limited animations. The miniatures system is interesting, though the strategic game seems little more than a design afterthought. IBM ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #6.

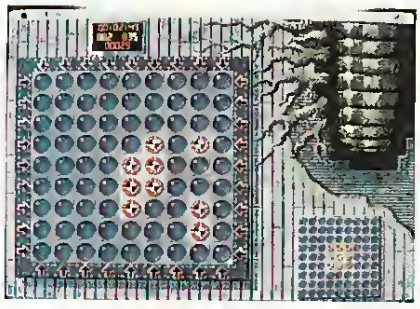
Inline Design
308 Main Street,
Lakeville, CT 06039
(203) 435-4995

COGITO: If thinking is all that's required to affirm one's existence, as Descartes suggests, then this game will leave no doubt that "you be." The 120 puzzle levels, which involve reconstructing geometric patterns by shifting scrambled tiles by column and row, will certainly keep one cognitively involved for some time to come. The game resembles a one-dimensional Rubic's cube in which the rule for manipulating the rows and columns gets scrambled now and again. It's the demented abstract puzzle stuff that gives gaming masochists a reason to live. Mac ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #7.

Konami
Buffalo Grove, IL
(708) 215-5100

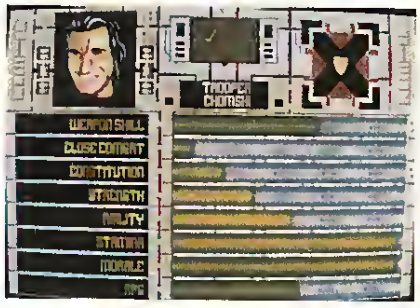
SUPER VGA AIR WARRIOR: Real men play *Air Warrior*! At least, that's what most of the flight simulator aficionados on **GEnie** tell us. Now, combat-ready sim pilots can find out if they like *Air Warrior* without having to download anything or even having to connect to the network which serves as *Air Warrior*'s central arena for multi-player furballs. The boxed set allows players to fight in stand-alone off-line dogfights; to

Conquest of Japan



Cogito

Super VGA Air Warrior



Laser Squad

Revelation

connect with other gamers modem-to-modem and serial link options (whether they subscribe to GEnie or not); and play the historical scenarios, duels and multi-player battles on the GEnie network. In addition, the documentation is detailed (we loved the performance charts for every plane used in the game) and offers options that many GEnie users haven't yet discovered. Finally, the SVGA graphics are incredible. IBM ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #8.

Mieroleague Interaetive Software
2201 Drummond Plaza
Newark, DE 19711-5711
(302) 368-9990

LASER SQUAD: Robert Heinlein's Johnnie Rico (the protagonist of *Starship Troopers*) would feel right at home in this game of futuristic infantry combat. Like *Breach*, the game features small unit tactics with a variety of weapons and an element of role-playing continuity. As one would expect from a European import, however, the graphics are superior to the U.S. product, but the gameplay is tougher and there is less overall product because of the hard disk space required for the graphics. The game seems to use solid algorithms for the artificial opponents (which sometimes seem to have unfair advantage) and offers a solid enough game that wise players will save after *every* turn. Unfortunately, the game only includes a handful of scenarios and, unlike its U.S. competitor, no mission builder. IBM ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #9.

REVELATION: This game isn't the end of the world, but may well be the end of your social life if you are determined to work through the 80 levels of puzzles in this abstract puzzle game. Players take the role of safecracker as they spin color-coded tumblers in an often vain attempt to line up the tumbler colors with the appropriate locks. This is no easy task, as the tumblers often "chain react" as they are manipulated, thus scrambling the whole puzzle at every turn. Special locks and bonus tiles will help players find the correct combination, after which they will be able to plunder a safe of all its goodies. IBM ($29.95). Circle Reader Service #10.

ULTIMATE CARDS: If one doesn't know when to hold 'em, and when to fold 'em, this six-game card collection may be the player's best deal. Nothing very elaborate here, just straight playing challenge with 12 computer opponents eager to clean your clock. Draw a game of Whist, Spades, Crazy 8's, Hearts, Gin

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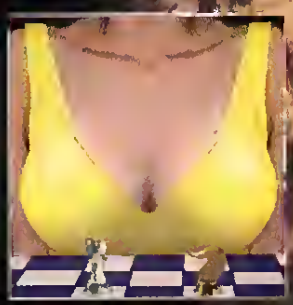

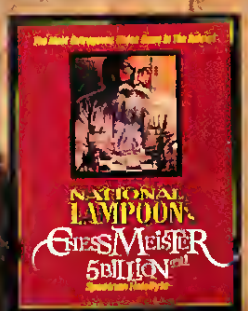

Not an actual VGA screen shot. You wish.

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Spectrum HoloByte

Spectrum HoloByte, Inc. 2490 Mariner Square Loop, Alameda, CA 94501

* HEY, IT WORKED ONCE! This photo of National Lampoon was taken over in 1973. We're happy to report the dog died of natural causes.

Circle Reader Service #100

Rummy or Oh Hell!, pick a partner and ruthless opponents, and watch the cards fly. There are six "expert" level players, three "good" players and three "average" players, who are no slouches at winning tricks. After the cards are dealt, players can use the sort option to organize their hands and refer to an on-screen rules box if they are in doubt. There are help and learn modes to assist the player, offering proposed moves to ace out the opponents. If all else fails, the player may use the "cheat" option, revealing the cards of all players. If that doesn't turn a gamer into a shark, nothing will. Digitized player remarks are supported by Sound Blaster audio cards. IBM ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #11.

MicroProse
Hunt Valley, MD
(410) 771-0440

ATAC: Players take on South American drug cartels as the leader of the U.S.'s "War on Drugs" in this hybrid simulation/strategy game. On the strategic level, players command a task force of F-22 fighter bombers, helicopters and 250 secret agents. As the undercover weasels provide information regarding the locations of important coca plantations, manufacturing facilities and warehouses, the player sends helicopters to confirm these locations in low-flying reconnaissance runs. Once the preliminaries are through, the player then takes control of an F-22 and personally bombs the snot out of the S. American landscape (just say blow) in the name of truth, justice, and the American way — burying the drug lords in the "snow." IBM ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #12.

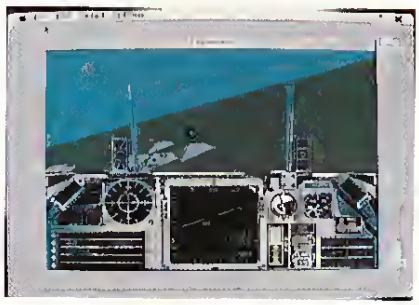
TASK FORCE 1942: The Tokyo Express comes to life in this first person command simulation of the Guadalcanal Campaign. As either the American or Japanese commander, players attempt to resupply their land-based troops at night or intercept their opposite numbers as they try to provision their own troops. The scrolling seems smoother than in the other recent naval simulation, SSI's *Great Naval Battles of the Atlantic*, but the accurate historical emphasis on night actions and tendency to engage at long range makes it difficult to compare the overall graphics approach to the game based on Atlantic engagements. The MicroProse commitment to historical accuracy appears to be firmly established in this game and its documentation. Note also that a future product is expected to integrate carrier warfare with this simulation. IBM ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #13.

Ultimate Cards

ATAC

Task Force 1942

Dragon's Lair III



Falcon MC

Programmer's Warehouse
8283 N. Hayden Rd. Suite 195
Scottsdale, AZ 85258
(602) 443-0580

SOUND EXPLOSION: If one can judge a civilization by the quality of its beer, should one not judge its technical prowess by the number of fart sounds in a software package? *Sound Explosion* for Windows is a veritable tower of sound bytes for your PC. With more than 500 sounds and its own speaker driver (rendering a sound board unnecessary, but still preferable), this package delivers a cacophony of noises for your computing pleasure. Always wanted to hear a toilet flush when hitting the escape button? Dream of a Technicolor yak noise when disgorging a disk? Try those and many, many more: jungle noises, gun shots (rifle, M60, Uzi, AK47), belches, birds, spaceships, screams — name it. These are the same sound effects used for motion pictures, brags the box, and indeed they do ring true. All the sound effects are in the standard Windows .wav format, so they can be used with most multimedia applications. Honk if you love noise. IBM with Windows 3.1 ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #14.

Ready Soft
Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada
(416) 731-4175

DRAGON'S LAIR III: THE CURSE OF MORDREAD: Don Bluth's daffy hero, Dirk Daring, continues his exploits beyond the laser-disk in this, the third game in a series of animated action-puzzles. Daphne, the career damsel in distress, has been accosted by Mordread the evil witch, and Dirk must dust off his trusty two-hander (and the gamer his arrow keys) to wade into the sea of animated peril. Players of the coin-op and the earlier computer versions know what to expect — more ingenious animation, more simplistic split-second-timing puzzles, and even more hilarious ways for poor Dirk to be suffocated and shocked, immolated and impaled, pounded and pulverized. Gamers disappointed with the length of the previous games can expect the same, as well. IBM ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #15.

Spectrum HoloByte
Alameda, CA
(510) 522-1164

FALCON MC: The original groundbreaking combat simulation returns to the Macintosh to the delight of the Apple-owning jet set. This program, based

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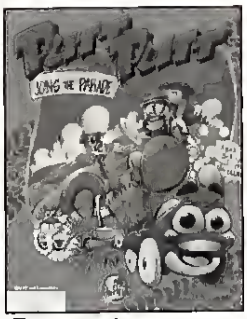
ReadySoft: Dragon's Lair III – The Curse of Mordread

In revenge for her brother's destruction, the evil witch, Mordread, has captured your beloved Daphne and the children. You must test your skills in a frantic quest through time before your family is trapped forever in the Vortex of Eternity.
(For IBM DOS)

A ♥

K ♥



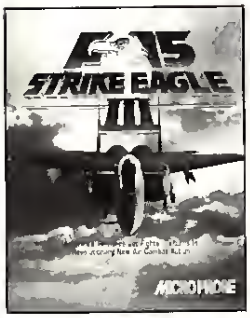
Now Only: $32.00

Humungous Entertainment: Putt-Putt Joins the Parade

Grab your car wax and get ready to buff your bumpers – it's time for the annual Cartown Pet Parade! Help Putt-Putt tackle the local car wash, explore a toy store, rescue a lost puppy and much, much more, before heading to his front row spot in the parade
(For IBM DOS)

K ♥

Q ♥



Now Only: $47.00

MicroProse: F-15 Strike Eagle III

Squeeze into the cockpit of the F-15 Strike Eagle this time and you'll experience aerial combat so realistic you'll be gasping for air! Because F-15 Strike Eagle III is far more than an upgrade. It's a whole new shooting match. An unprecedented line-up of features and state-of-the-art graphics will have you taking on enemy MiGs and destroying targets until your eyes are red! (For IBM DOS)

Q ♥

J ♥

Now Only: $29.00

Sierra: The Incredible Machine

Want to build a better mousetrap? All it takes are bike-riding monkeys, treadmill mice and a few bowling balls. Genius and junk combine to solve the convoluted contraptions in The Incredible Machine. Search for the toolbox for your own gadgetry and set up a chain reaction that will free the cat, exercise the mice, or burst the balloons. You must find the perfect blend of mechanics in your solution to The Incredible Machine. (For IBM DOS or MAC)

J ♥

10 ♥

Now Only: $36.00

Capstone: LA LAW

Developed by a lawyer and adapted from actual cases used in the hit TV show, LA LAW. The Computer Game delivers a realistic glimpse of the human drama, mysteries, puzzles and intrigue played out in the law offices and courtrooms of Los Angeles. Find and interview witnesses, uncover a police report that changes your strategy, negotiate with opposing counsel, look for legal loopholes, or discover missing details to prove your clients' innocence.
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Circle Reader Service #48

on the 2.5 version of the IBM incarnation of Falcon, will offer Mac color, new missions, expanded weapons systems, a more detailed cockpit, and a more realistically rendered flight model. Gamers should not mistake this product for a conversion of Falcon 3.0 on the IBM, as it does not include the new functionality and graphic whiz-bang (and, perhaps, none of the problems associated with the early versions) of the latest IBM build. Mac ($69.95). Circle Reader Service #16.

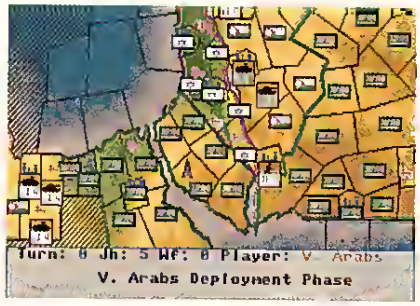
Strategic Simulations Inc.
Sunnyvale, CA
(408) 737-6800

A LINE IN THE SAND: As previewed in *CGW* #101, Line in the Sand is a faithful conversion of the TSR boardgame which features, but is not limited to, the 1991 Persian Gulf conflict. In addition to the Desert Storm conflict, the game also postulates potential Arab-Israeli wars, and a diplomatic game where up to six players strive for their individual objectives through a combination of diplomacy and force. Both easy to learn and simple to play, Line is a lightweight game of "What If" that does its best to make an interesting game out of a rather uninteresting conflict. IBM ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #17.

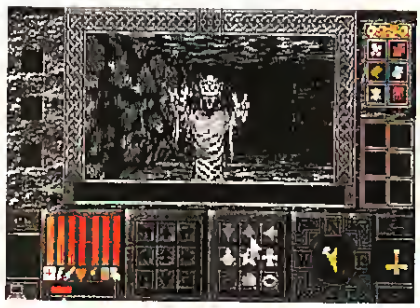
LEGENDS OF VALOUR: SSI seems to have taken ques from Ultima Underworld and Wolfenstein 3-D in creating this smooth-scrolling, first-person role-playing game. The graphics are gorgeous and rise high above the state of those in most RPGs of the day, but, unfortunately, it seems to do so by releasing a few ballasts of story depth and over-all quality. Players will explore an "underworld" realm of dungeons, and a city of "28 miles" of streets (however they measure it) filled with citizens going about their daily lives in diurnal cycles. Players will find themselves tangled in the affairs of the town as they take on 45 quests, leading to an(other) ultimate battle to end all evil. IBM ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #18.

Swfte International
Box 219
Rockland, DE 19732-9904

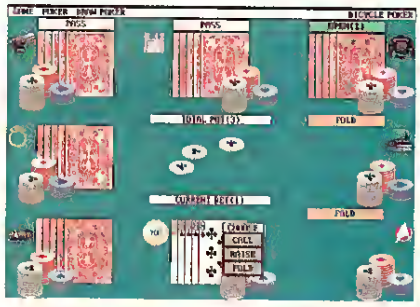
BICYCLE CD-ROM COLLECTION: We sensed a raw deal when we first saw this product — a collection of card games on a nice shiny CD-ROM. "What," thought our puzzled reviewer, "could you possibly do with a card game collection that would require the massive storage capacity of a CD-ROM?" After all, QQP's *Solitaire's Journey* included 105 different solitaire games and



A Line In The Sand

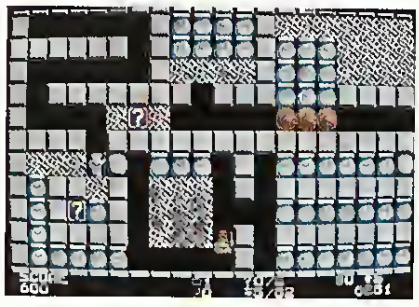


Legends of Valour



Bicycle CD-ROM Collection

V for Victory. Velikiye Luki - 1942



Exodus

used just over a megabyte of HD storage. Well, this product couldn't even sit at the same table with QQP's product, or many others for that matter. It sports four games, Solitaire, Poker, Cribbage, and Bridge and plays average hands with all. The Solitaire program offers only 7 standard variants, and the Poker program offers 5- and 7-card draw and stud games, with very limited variant options and playing-history analysis capabilities. All told the package uses all of 750KBs of the CD's 500+MB capacity, leaving one only to surmise that this package is a "brilliant" marketing strategy to move a rather mediocre game collection on the fast wings of the CD-ROM's novelty. IBM CD-ROM ($69.95). Circle Reader Service #19.

Three-Sixty Pacific
Campbell, CA
(409) 776-2187

V FOR VICTORY: VELIKIYE LUKI-1942: Using the acclaimed boardgame-like V for Victory system, this latest release will allow wargamers to command either side of the classic Eastern Front battle that raged along a line between Leningrad and Moscow from the winter of 1942 through the winter of 1943. This is not an expansion disk for the first Utah Beach game, but is a completely new program with an artificial opponent expressly designed for the problems to be encountered during this historical conflict. ($69.95). Circle Reader Service #20.

Wisdom Trec Inc.
2700 E. Imperial Hwy., Bldg. A
Brea, CA 92621
(714) 528-3456

EXODUS: Gamers may well say, "Holy Moses! I did it!" when they complete a level in this action game where Pac-Man meets Adonai (the Hebrew word for Lord). The action resembles a cross between the classic Pac-Man and the lesser-known Soko-Ban. In this case, however, the "ghosts" of the former have been replaced by Egyptian magicians, soldiers and taskmasters, while it takes "words of faith" instead of power pills for Moses (instead of Pac-Man) to overcome the villains and obstacles on each of the game's 100 levels. As in Soko-Ban, gamers have to figure out the best way to remove or rearrange obstacles like the murmuring of the Israelites or mud of bondage. In between levels, gamers become students and score extra points by answering Bible-based questions. Exodus offers an interesting and positive twist on older game concepts. IBM ($39.95) Circle Reader Service #21. CGW

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD HALL OF FAME

The games in *Computer Goming World's Hall of Fome* have been highly rated by our readers over time. They have been rated for their impact on the computer gaming hobby during their peak period of influence and acceptance by our readership. Note that the dates listed for each game are the copyright dates and may precede the actual release dates. Specific formats listed are those which *CGW* has in its possession. Each month, we will highlight at least two of these games as part of this listing.

The Bord's Tale (Electronic Arts, 1985)
Many formats

Chessmoster (Softwore Toolworks, 1986)
Many formats

Dungeon Moster (FTL Software, 1987)
Amiga, Atari ST, IBM

Earl Weover Baseboll (Electronic Arts, 1986)
Amiga, IBM, Macintosh

Empire (Interstel, 1978)
Amiga, Atari ST, Commodore 64, IBM

F-19 Steolth Fighter (MicroProse, 1988)
IBM

Gettysburg: The Turning Point (Strategic Simulations, Inc., 1986)
Amiga, Apple, C-64, IBM

Gunship (MicroProse, 1989)
Amiga, C-64, IBM

Horpoon (Three-Sixty Pocific, 1989)
Amiga, IBM, Macintosh

Kompfgruppe (Strotegic Simulotions, Inc., 1985)
Many formats

King's Quest V (Sierra, 1990)
Amiga, IBM

M-1 Tank Plotoon (MicroProse, 1989)
Amiga, IBM

Mech Brigade (Strotegic Sinulotions, Inc., 1985)
Many formats

Might & Mogic (New World Computing, 1986)
Apple, C-64, IBM, Mac

M.U.L.E. (Electronic Arts, 1983)
Atari 8-bit, C-64

Pirates (MicroProse, 1987)
Many formats

Roilroad Tycoon (MicroProse, 1990)
Amiga, IBM, Macintosh

SimCity (Maxis, 1987)
Many formats

Starflight (Electronic Arts, 1986)
Amiga, C-64, IBM, Sega

Their Finest Hour (LucosArts, 1989)
Amiga, Atari ST, IBM

Ultima III (Origin, 1983)
Apple, Atari ST, C-64, IBM

Ultimo IV (Origin, 1985)
Amiga, Apple, Atari ST, IBM

Ultima VI (Origin, 1990)
Amiga, IBM

War in Russia (Strotegic Simulations, Inc., 1984)
Apple

Wosteland (Interploy, 1988)
Apple, C64, IBM

Wing Commander (Origin, 1991)
IBM, Sega

Wizardry (Sir-Tech Software, 1981)
Many formats

Zork (Infocom, 1981)
Many formats

Empire
Interstel, 1978
Many Formats

Originally published on mainframes in the late '70s, Walter Bright's game of planetary conquest mixed exploration and strategy with an economic basis for unit construction. The game was revamped for personal computers in the mid-'80s. Mark Baldwin's new interface and the addition of new units enhanced a classic game system.

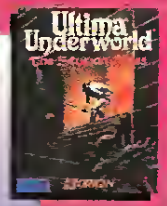
F-19 Stealth Fighter
MicroProse, 1988
IBM

Released prior to the government's public announcement of the F-117A, F-19 Stealth Fighter provided additional challenges beyond those of the typical combat flight simulation of its day. By creating the electronic profile of the craft and adding the element of stealth, F-19 became the first combat flight simulation where it was more fun not to dogfight than to engage in one.

Top Adventure Games

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Quest for Glory III	Sierra	10.46
2	King's Quest VI: Heir Today	Sierra	10.40
3	Indiana Jones: Fate of Atlantis	LucasArts	10.03
4	Monkey Island 2: Le Chuck	LucasArts	9.99
5	The Secret of Monkey Island	LucasArts	9.72
6	Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes	Electonic Arts	9.71
7	Amazon	Access	9.50
8	Spellcasting 301: Spring Break	Legend	9.16
9	The Dagger of Amon Ra	Sierra	9.16
10	The Castle of Dr. Brain	Sierra	9.11

Top Role Playing Games



	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Ultima Underworld	Origin	10.46
2	Wizardry VII: Crusaders of Savant	Sir-Tech	9.93
3	Might & Magic: Clouds of Xeen	New World	9.89
4	Eye of the Beholder II	SSI	9.64
5	Might & Magic III	New World Computing	9.45
6	Ultima VII	Origin	9.39
7	Eye of the Beholder	SSI	9.12
8	Bane of the Cosmic Forge	Sir-Tech	9.05
9	Ultima V	Origin	9.00
10	Pools of Darkness	SSI	8.94

Top Simulation Games

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Red Baron	Dynamix	9.86
2	Falcon 3.0	Spectrum HoloByte	9.60
3	Aces of the Pacific	Dynamix	9.51
4	Stunt Island	Disney	9.50
5	Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe	LucasArts	9.33
6	Gunship 2000	Microprose	9.13
7	Silent Service II	MicroProse	9.08
8	Chuck Yeager's Air Combat	Electronic Arts	9.08
9	Red Storm Rising	MicroProse	9.04
10	F-117A	MicroProse	8.92

Top Strategy Games

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Civilization	MicroProse	10.72
2	Solitaire's Journey	QQP	10.26
3	Hong Kong Mahjong Pro	Electonic Arts	9.85
4	Chessmaster 3000	Software Toolworks	9.42
5	Populous II	Electronic Arts	9.05
6	The Lost Admiral	QQP	9.05
7	Mech Warrior	Activision	8.95
8	Siege	Mindcraft	8.86
9	Castles 2: Siege and Conquest	Interplay	8.82
10	Rules of Engagement	Mindcraft	8.81

Reader Poll #102

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD
The Premier Computer Game Magazine

Top 100 Games

	Game	Company	Type	Score
1	Civilization	MicroProse	ST	10.72
2	Links 386 Pro	Access	SP	10.67
3	Quest for Glory III	Sierra	AD,RP	10.46
	Ultima Underworld	Origin	RP	10.46
5	King's Quest VI: Heir Today	Sierra	AD	10.40
6	Wing Commander II	Origin	AC	10.37
7	Solitaire's Journey	QQP	ST	10.26
8	Indiana Jones: Fate of Atlantis	LucasArts	AD	10.03
9	Monkey Island 2: Le Chuck's Revenge	LucasArts	AD	9.99
10	Wizardry VII: Crusaders of Savant	Sir-Tech	RP	9.93
11	Might & Magic: Clouds of Xeen	New World	RP	9.89
12	Red Baron	Dynamix	SI	9.86
13	Hong Kong Mahjong Pro	Electonic Arts	ST	9.85
14	Wolfenstein 3-D	Id Software	AC	9.76
15	The Perfect General	QQP	WG	9.74
16	The Secret of Monkey Island	LucasArts	AD	9.72
17	Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes	Electonic Arts	AD	9.71
18	Eye of the Beholder II	SSI	RP	9.64
19	V for Victory: Utah Beach	Three-Sixty Pacific	WG	9.63
20	Falcon 3.0	Spectrum HoloByte	SI	9.60
21	Hardball III	Accolade	SP	9.55
22	Great Naval Battles	SSI	WG,ST	9.54
23	Aces of the Pacific	Dynamix	SI	9.51
24	Stunt Island	Disney	SI	9.50
	Amazon	Access	AD	9.50
26	Links	Access	SP	9.47
	Warlords	SSG	WG,ST	9.47
28	Might & Magic III	New World Computing	RP	9.45
29	Chessmaster 3000	Software Toolworks	ST	9.42
30	Ultima VII	Origin	RP	9.39
31	Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe	LucasArts	SI	9.33
32	Lemmings	Psygnosis	AC	9.30
33	Jack Nicklaus Signature Golf	Accolade	SP	9.27
34	Terminator 2029	Bethesda	AC	9.25
35	Conflict: Korea	SSI	WG	9.21
36	Carriers At War	SSG	WG	9.19
	High Command	Colorado Comp.	WG	9.19
38	Second Front	SSI	WG	9.18
39	The Dagger of Amon Ra	Sierra	AD	9.16
	Spellcasting 301: Spring Break	Legend	AD	9.16
41	Tetris Classic	Spectrum HoloByte	ST	9.14
42	Gunship 2000	Microprose	SI	9.13
43	Eye of the Beholder	SSI	RP	9.12
44	The Castle of Dr. Brain	Sierra	AD	9.11
45	Chuck Yeager's Air Combat	Electronic Arts	SI	9.08
	Silent Service II	MicroProse	SI	9.08
47	Bane of the Cosmic Forge	Sir-Tech	RP	9.05
	The Lost Admiral	QQP	ST	9.05
	Populous II	Electronic Arts	ST	9.05
50	Red Storm Rising	MicroProse	SI	9.04

The Computer Gaming World Poll

A monthly survey of the readers of Computer Gaming World Magazine.

Top Wargames

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	The Perfect General	QQP	9.74
2	V for Victory: Utah Beach	Three-Sixty Pacific	9.63
3	Great Naval Battles	SSI	9.54
4	Warlords	SSG	9.47
5	Conflict: Korea	SSI	9.21
6	High Command	Colorado Comp.	9.19
7	Gamers At War	SSG	9.19
8	Second Front	SSI	9.18
9	Western Front	SSI	8.98
10	Command HQ	MicroPlay	8.81

Top Action Games

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Wing Commander II	Origin	10.37
2	Wolfenstein 3-D	Id Software	9.76
3	Lemmings	Psygnosis	9.30
4	Terminator 2029	Bethesda	9.25
5	Oh, No! More Lemmings	Psygnosis	8.92
6	Super Tetris	Spectrum HoloByte	8.85
7	Conan the Cimmerian	Virgin	8.56
8	Out of this World	Interplay	8.43
9	Tetris	Spectrum HoloByte	8.13
10	Speedball 2	Konami	7.92

Top Sports Games

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Links 386 Pro	Access	10.67
2	Hardball III	Accolade	9.55
3	Links	Access	9.47
4	Jack Nicklaus Signature Golf	Accolade	9.27
5	Indianapolis 500	Electronic Arts	8.84
6	4-D Boxing	Electronic Arts	8.71
7	Tony LaRussa's Ultimate Baseball	SSI	8.60
8	NFL Pro League Football	Micro Sports	8.54
9	PGA Tour Golf	Electronic Arts	8.54
10	The Games: Winter Challenge	Accolade	8.50

Poll is based on reader survey cards in each issue of *CGW* and published two issues subsequent. Data on more than 100 games is archived and top ten lists may contain games which scored below the Top 100 cutoff.

	Conquests of the Longbow	Sierra	AD	9.04
52	Quest for Glory II	Sierra	AD,RP	9.02
53	Ultima V	Origin	RP	9.00
54	Space Quest IV	Sierra	AD	8.98
	Western Front	SSI	WG	8.98
56	Police Quest 3	Sierra	AD	8.97
57	The Adventures of Willy Beamish	Dynamix	AD	8.96
58	Mech Warrior	Activision	ST,SI	8.95
59	Pools of Darkness	SSI	RP	8.94
60	F-117A	MicroProse	SI	8.92
	Oh, No! More Lemmings	Psygnosis	AC	8.92
62	Rise of the Dragon	Dynamix	AD	8.89
	Martian Memorandum	Access	AD	8.89
64	Siege	Mindcraft	ST	8.86
65	Super Tetris	Spectrum HoloByte	AC,ST	8.85
66	Indianapolis 500	Electronic Arts	SP	8.84
	Legend of Kyrandia	Virgin	AD	8.84
68	Castles 2: Siege and Conquest	Interplay	ST	8.82
	Elvira	Accolade	RP	8.82
70	Command HQ	MicroPlay	WG,ST	8.81
	Rules of Engagement	Mindcraft	ST	8.81
72	Rex Nebular	MicroProse	AD	8.79
	Gateway to the Savage Frontier	SSI	RP	8.79
74	Hoyle Book of Games, Vol. 3	Sierra	ST	8.78
75	The Summoning	SSI	RP	8.76
76	Heart of China	Dynamix	AD	8.75
77	Battles of Napoleon	SSI	WG	8.72
	Battlechess	Interplay	ST	8.72
	Gateway	Legend	AD	8.72
80	Starflight II	Electronic Arts	RP	8.71
	4-D Boxing	Electronic Arts	SP	8.71
82	F-15 Strike Eagle II	MicroProse	SI	8.69
83	Action Stations	RAW Entertainment	WG	8.68
84	Typhoon of Steel	SSI	WG	8.67
85	Armada 2525	Interstel	ST	8.63
86	Tony LaRussa's Ultimate Baseball	SSI	SP	8.60
87	Buck Rogers	SSI	RP	8.57
	Carrier Strike	SSI	WG	8.57
89	Conan the Cimmerian	Virgin	AC,RP	8.56
90	Megafortress	Three-Sixty Pacific	SI,ST	8.55
91	PGA Tour Golf	Electronic Arts	SP	8.54
	NFL Pro League Football	Micro Sports	SP	8.54
93	Star Trek: 25th Anniversary	Interplay	AD	8.53
94	The Games: Winter Challenge	Accolade	SP	8.50
	Martian Dreams	Origin	RP	8.50
	Shuttle	Virgin	SI	8.50
97	Bandit Kings	Koei	ST,RP	8.48
	Savage Empire	Origin	RP	8.48
99	Global Conquest	MicroPlay	ST	8.47
100	Jetfighter II	Velocity	SI	8.45

AD=Adventure, RP=Role Playing, SI=Simulation, ST=Strategy, WG=Wargame, AC=Action, SP=Sports

PC Research Hits List of Top-Selling Software

November, 1992

PC Games (MS-DOS)

Rank	Title and Source
1.	Kings Quest VI (Sierra On-Line)
2.	Commanche: Maximum Overkill (NovaLogic)
3.	The Humans (Gametek)
4.	Wing Commander (Origin)
5.	Sim City (Maxis)
6.	Star Control II (Accolade)
7.	Wizardry VII: Crusaders (Sir-Tech)
8.	Castles II (Interplay)
9.	Aces of the Pacific (Sierra On-Line)
10.	Civilization (MicroProse)
11.	Monopoly (Virgin Games)
12.	Microsoft Flight Simulator (Microsoft)
13.	Links—386 Pro (Accolade)
14.	Hardball III (Accolade)
15.	Quest for Glory III (Sierra On-Line)
16.	Police Quest (Sierra On-Line)
17.	Might & Magic: Clouds of Xeen (New World Computing)
18.	Microsoft Golf for Windows (Microsoft)
19.	Falcon 3.0 (Spectrum HoloByte)
20.	Stunt Island (Disney)

Amiga Games

Rank	Title and Source
1.	Police Quest III (Sierra On-Line)
2.	Leisure Suit Larry V (Sierra On-Line)
3.	A-10 Tank Killer (Sierra On-Line)
4.	688 Attack Sub (Sierra On-Line)
5.	Kings Quest V (Sierra On-Line)

Macintosh Games

Rank	Title and Source
1.	Prince of Persia (Broderbund)
2.	Award Winners: KQ V & Red Baron (Sierra On-Line)
3.	SimCity Supreme (Maxis)
4.	Microsoft Flight Simulator (Microsoft)
5.	Lemmings (Psygnosis)

CD-ROM Products

Rank	Title and Source
1.	BattleChess (Interplay)
2	Cinemania (Microsoft)
3.	Wing Commander/Secret Missions I & II (Origin)
4	Sherlock Holmes, CD (ICOM)
5.	CD Game Pack (Software Toolworks)
6.	World View (Britannica)
7.	Kings Quest V (Sierra On-Line)
8.	Loom (Software Toolworks)
9.	Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego (Broderbund)
10.	Murmurs of the Earth (Warner New Media)

This list is based on units sold by Software Etc. Babbages, Waldensoftware and Electronics Boutique. For more information, please contact PC Research at (703) 435-1025.

What You've Been Playing Lately

The Feedback Forum of Reader Response

Every month our mailbox fills to capacity with hundreds of Reader Input Cards from hundreds of our most loyal and outspoken readers. Over the years we've found these cards to be an invaluable source of feedback. Within 10 days of the release of our latest issue we can expect to see dozens of cards begin pouring in with comments, suggestions, encouragements, tirades and many good laughs, in addition to the data for our Top 100 game poll. Through your efforts, we know which articles were hits, which flopped, how many tyyros and grammatical errors we've let slip through -- in addition to the many well-articulated opinions on anything and everything related to gaming.

This column is set aside to give our readers a voice, and to display the results of our "Playing Lately?" field on the Reader Input Card. Thanks for taking the time to fill them out -- and keep 'em coming!

Playing Lately? Results For CGW #101, December 1992:

1. [illegible]ilization (MicroProse)
2. Conquered Kingdoms (QQP)
3. Wolfenstein 3-D (id Software)
4. Comanche: Maximum Overkill (NovaLogic)
5. Might & Magic: Clouds of Xeen (New World)
6. Wizardry VII: Crusaders of the Dark Savant (Sir-Tech)
7. V For Victory: Utah Beach (Three-Sixty)
8. Battles of Destiny (QQP)
9. Links 386 Pro (Access)
10. Front Page Sports Football (Dynamix)

The Worst Games You've Played (The Turkey List)

We received a broad range of responses to our question, "What's the worst game you've ever played?" Few games escaped your wrath, including some of the products in our Hall of Fame. There was, however, some consensus on a few products, and so we submit this list of stinkers.

Birds of Prey
Blue Max ("...the apex of embarrassment...")
Codename: Iceman
Das Boot
Earl Weaver Baseball 2 ("Damn shame.")
Fountain of Dreams ("Wasteland 2? Ha!")
Global Effect
Heroes of the 357th
John Madden Football 2
Mantis ("(M)ost (A)ggravating (N)auseating (T)remendously (I)rritating (S)im")
Megatraveller I
Sim Earth ("No Humans Necessary")
Terminator
Ultimate Military Simulator (I & II) ("...watch a movie and eat dinner between moves.")
Wolf Pack

The Patch File

Computer game programs have grown so massive and the number of possible configurations ' as become so huge that incompatibilities and glitches seem to be breeding at an exponential rate. Consumers and publishers are both frustrated at the need for adding patches into "buggy" programs, but they seem to be an interim solution that is going to be with the hobby for a while (presumably, until a standard platform configuration is agreed upon). So, until the golden age of standardized platforms and bug-free programs, *Computer Gaming World* will publish a regular list of the latest updates of which we are aware.

These patches can usually be downloaded from either Compuserve or GEnie, but can also be obtained from individual software publisher's own BBSs and direct from the publisher (with proof of purchase). We continue to urge publishers to keep us updated on the latest versions/patches to their games.

Air Force Commander Slowdown Patch: Makes the game playable on high-powered machines. 11/24/92

Amazon Raft Bug Fix: Fixes the problem getting the raft out of the box in the airplane. 12/12/92

B-17 Flying Fortress Version 2 Update: Adds many new features and tweaks some of the existing ones. 11/17/92

Civilization Update (Amiga): Latest version for the Amiga. 09/12/92

Crisis in the Kremlin Version 1.01: Fixes problems reported by users since its original release. 09/26/92

Crusaders of the Dark Savant Patch #2: Fixes the "Don Barlone" bug. 11/16/92

Darklands Version 06: New features added, fixes various machine compatibility problems, corrects problems in earlier versions, and includes new/revised artwork for certain areas of the game. 09/24/92

Darkseed Version 1.5 Update: Latest version of CyberDreams' adventure. 11/24/92

F-15 Strike Eagle III Install Update: For those having trouble with the install program. 12/23/92

Falcon: Operation Fighting Tiger V3.01.1 Update: Contains new installer, a fix for blank screen lockup, escort mission failures, Reg Flag buildings, PC Speaker sounds, ROE conflicts, B-52 crashes, ships in allied comm mode in Kurile Theatre, and others. 10/13/92

Full Count Baseball V5.1 Upgrade: Expands play-by-play and offers a new screen layout. For owners of V5.0 only. 12/06/92

Greens Version 02 Update: Addresses the problems reported with scoring, Sound Blasters, etc. 11/22/92

Gunship 2000 Islands and Ice Version .08: Lastest version of the I&I scenario disk. 10/10/92

Harpoon Version 1.32 Upgrade: Latest IBM version of the game. 11/14/92

Island of Dr. Brain Update: Fixes "Ooops 10" error, music room puzzle, and several other problems. 12/23/92

Jack Nicklaus Signature Edition Rev 1.5: Fixes the Mini-Moss effect caused by several objects being placed after a hill crest. 12/16/92

Lightspeed Version 02 Update: Fixes the trade problem that some players have experienced. 11/17/92

Links 386 Pro Update Version 1.08: Allows game to run under OS/2 and other DPMI operating systems and software. 11/14/92

Power Politics Update: Fixes all known bugs. 12/11/92

Quest For Glory III "B" Patch: Corrects all known game play errors. 12/03/92

Railroad Tycoon Version 1.01 Update (Mac): The latest version for the Mac. 09/25/92

Rex Nebular Update 8.49 (IBM/VGA): Corrects the chicken-bomb and poly-cement problems. 11/13/92

SimLife Upgrade V1.02c: Fixes minor problems. 12/16/92

Spelljammer Update V1.1: Latest version of the game. 11/21/92

Star Control 2 V1.1: Fixes several small problems. 12/11/92

Stunt Island Update: Fixes a minor bug in the Install program that was causing some system lockups after the hardware autodetect sequence. 11/27/92

Stunt Island Beta-Test Patch: Beta version of the patch to fix the palette shift problem some users were experiencing. (Note: Some companies release beta versions of their patches so that interested users can help test them before official release.) 12/09/92

Tom Landry Football V. 1.02 Update: Corrects problems with modem play, excessive penalities, Sound Blaster problems, and improved animation choreography. 12/03/92

Ultima Underworld Upgrade Bug Fix: Fixes disappearing item problems. 07/04/92

Ultima VII Keys Fix Patch: The fix for disappearing keys in Ultima VII. 06/01/92

Wayne Gretzky Hockey 3 Version 1.10: Fixes many bugs, including the Canadien.VOC file, the computer scoring problem, CH FlightStick problem, penalities, referees, coach's clipboard and others. 11/24/92

The PRODIGY Weekly Top Ten

The Game Center section of the PRODIGY network offers its users the chance to rate their favorite games on a weekly basis. CGW provides this data as yet another indicator of what's hot in gaming as determined by the player's votes. Please note that a PRODIGY rating is not a cumulative rating, as in the CGW Top 100 Poll, and is based upon a straight 1-10 scale.

editorial

They're Only *Toys*

"Guns don't settle anything," said Raymond Chandler's shamus supreme (Philip Marlowe) in his last novel *Playback*, "they're just a fast curtain to a bad second act." Of course, Marlowe was not taking a stance against the use of guns *per se*, Chandler's famous private eye was very capable of handling them. He simply recognized that lots of folks in his fictitious Los Angeles (as well as the real Los Angeles) tended to use their weapons first and think second. If the quotation were taken completely out of context, however, one might think that Chandler was totally against the use of guns.

In the same sense, a lot of people misunderstood the editorial position on violence in computer games which was presented in a two-part editorial. Again, the intent was not to condemn the use of violence in computer games, but merely to suggest that designers provide for the use of other solutions as well. After all, Marlowe talked himself out of a lot of difficult situations and came up with many creative ways to avoid the standard shoot-out schtick used by most private detectives and law enforcement officials in the novels of the day.

So, it may surprise a lot of folks when they read *this* editorial. The recent film, *Toys*, simply cries out for a response. At first, there was some thought to writing a movie review of the film. Although it might seem an unusual thought, there is a precedent. *CGW* reviewed the film, *Wargames*, in the July-August 1983 issue. In the end, the editorial page seemed a better spot for discussion, since even the earlier article did not "review" its subject as much as editorialize upon it.

The 1983 film used its plot to juxtapose two questions: "Is this a game or is it real?" and "What's the difference?" In *Toys*, we are led by the hand through fantastically breathtaking surrealist sets (with many tributes to Belgian artist, Rene Magritte—especially the MTV sequence) toward the definitive proposition that war toys and video games are evil. In 1983, the computer gaming/hacker protagonist is a hero who stops a potential nuclear holocaust from occurring (after setting off the circumstances which made such horror possible). In *Toys*, video games and other war toys are perceived as desensitizing agents (indeed, training devices) that make the war machine possible. In a very real sense, the computer gamer has come complete circle from amoral hacker/hero to insensitive villain/foil.

The thesis of *Toys* would be absolutely ludicrous, did it not reflect a growing disposition against toy guns, military models, military miniatures and both traditional board and computer wargames. Indeed, the State of New York's Department of Health unilaterally ordered the makers of lead miniatures to "immediately cease the sale and/or distribution of said products in New York State ..." The Order for Summary Action cited the following as its rationale:

> WHEREAS, lead is an environmental poison for children and lead exposure is one of the most preventable childhood health problems in New York State today; and
> WHEREAS, environmental exposure to even low levels of lead increases a child's risk of developing permanent learning disabilities, reduced concentration and attentiveness and behavior problems; and
> WHEREAS, higher levels of lead can cause mental retardation, kidney disease, liver damage and even death; and
> WHEREAS, experimental results have shown that lead can be easily removed from figurine surfaces; and
> WHEREAS, during play, young children may ingest lead transferred from a figurine to the hands or by direct oral contact with a figurine, and that such exposure may result in elevated blood lead levels; and
> WHEREAS, the Commissioner of Health of the State of New York, after investigation, is of the opinion that the sale and/or distribution in New York State of figurines containing lead is an activity which constitutes an immediate danger to the health, safety, and welfare of the people of the State of New York and that it also constitutes a nuisance affecting the security of life and health of the people; ...

Perhaps, it is simply this miniatures gamer's imagination, but is it paranoid to think that the use of the term "immediate danger" and "nuisance" in this order is slightly prejudicial? Indeed, it seems especially prejudicial in a state which has not made landlords replace existing lead pipes (that carry water that is *definitely* ingested rather than the "may ingest" allegation in the order) or considered outlawing lead fishing sinkers as well as miniatures. How are lead miniatures more of a health nuisance than fishing sinkers? What about the lead in stained glass (another hobbyist pastime)?

As for the health risk, Loren Wiseman of game publisher **GDW** notes that workers in miniatures are regularly tested for lead accumulation and show no more lead in their systems than the rest of the population. Surely, such a health risk should be obvious among the workers in the substance. This editor simply cannot help but believe that part of the hidden agenda in this executive order was because someone in the health department is concerned about the fact that most miniatures are war toys.

As one wag noted, our computing equipment is made from toxic materials. The solder on the boards is 40% tin and 60% lead; the chips contain arsenic and the PVC wiring gives off toxic chlorine gas when burned. One wonders what excuses might be used to outlaw computer games as health hazards in the future.

Perhaps, the basic problem is that people do not understand the function of "play" anymore. Play is an attempt to try out options with no authentic risk. There is simply enough risk to encourage one to think about actions both before and after perpetrating said actions. As that 1983 reviewer suggested in his review of *Wargames*, the value of play rests within its purpose. "If the purpose is simply *to win* at any cost, the simulation is of doubtful value. If the purpose is *to learn* from both correct and incorrect hypotheses, then the simulation is of immense value."

War, like guns (to paraphrase Chandler), may provide a fast curtain to a bad second act, but play is the activity where that is best learned. How are we going to learn without the opportunity? CGW

SubVersion™ 1.0

War has been declared! As Commander of the Attack Submarine "Nautilus", your mission is to [illegible] and all enemy vessels within the region and [illegible] them. Warning! They are armed with high-tech equipment and they are out to sink you!

Crash down and sink destroyers with either a speedy torpedo or a nuclear-tipped missile. Blow enemy submarines out of the water as they close in on you. Dodge the cumbersome but sensitive mines -- snag a cable and it's off to a watery grave. Send out your frogmen for some demolition work.

Watch your resources! With only two supply ships, you'll have to be careful. Use them unwisely and you may find yourself sinking helplessly towards an implosive end.

SubVersion™ is a challenging balance of strategy and tactics. With 10 levels and over 300,000 combinations of game play, SubVersion is sure to provide you with hours of destroyer-bashing fun.

Macintosh 16 color screen shown

Available for Macintosh and compatible machines. Coming soon for IBM PCs and other computer systems.

See your local retailer or call:

Point Of View Computing, Inc.
5050 Edison, Suite 221
Colorado Springs, CO 80915
719 591 5320

Game Created by: Captain Byte's Bit Shop
Box Artwork by: Josh Stigers
Computer Artwork by: Steve Laveirge

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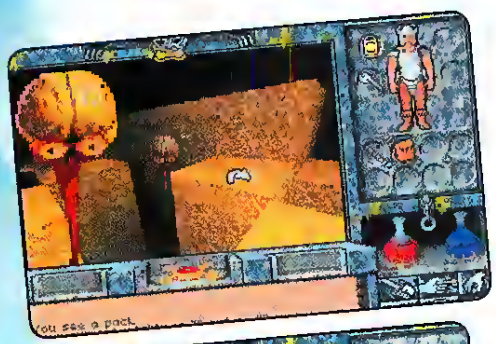
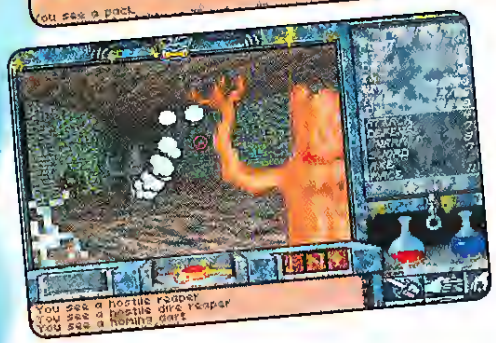
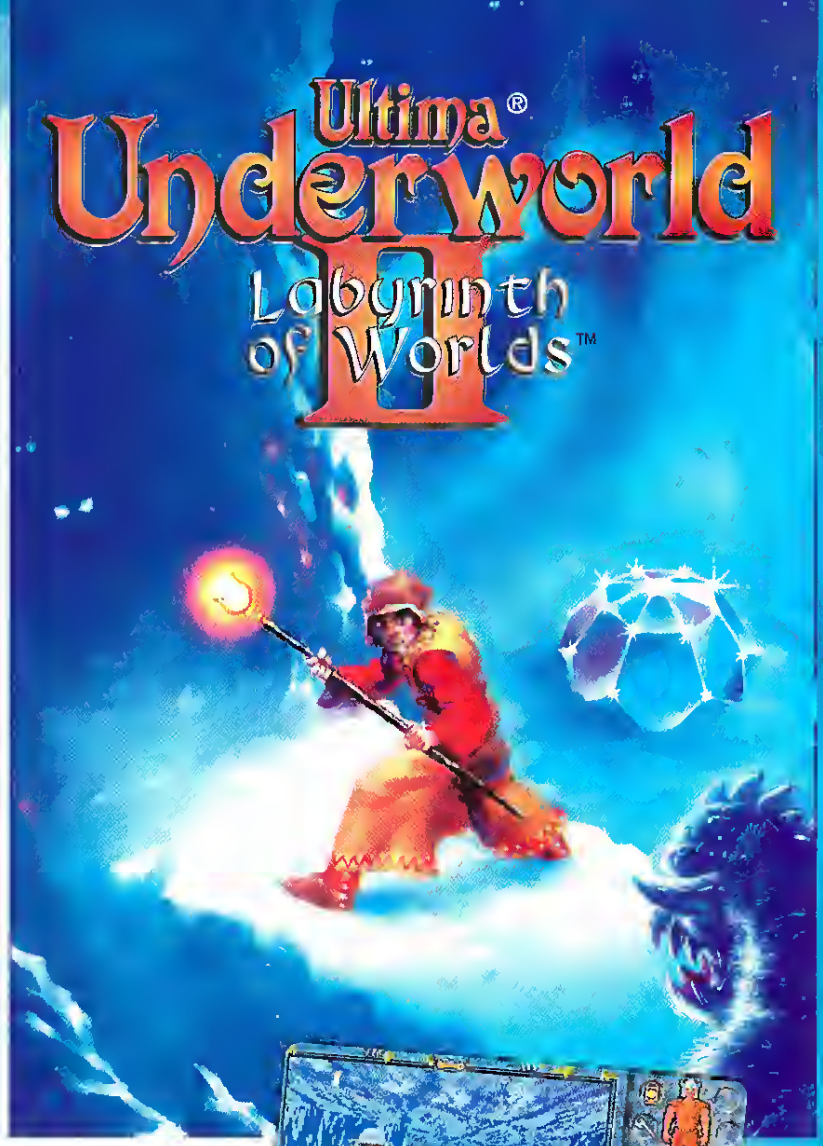
Ultima® Underworld II Labyrinth of Worlds™







Actual screens may vary.

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