

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

The Premier Computer Game Magazine

**100
GAMES
RATED**

June 1993
Number 107

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GAMERS' MEMORY PROBLEMS

X-WING takes flight

EMPIRE DELUXE

**HOW TO WIN AT
SPACEWARD HO!**

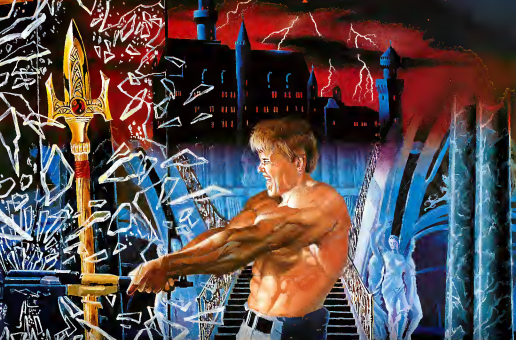
Warner New Media's
HELL CAB

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Go To Hell New York

WarnerNew Media's *Hell Cab*



by Johnny L. Witson

Go to hell. Go directly to hell. Do not pass Times Square. Do not collect \$200.

Oops, wrong game. In fact, very much wrong. The concept behind Pepe Moreno's *Hell Cab* is to stay out of hell. No, the idea of the game is not for us "left coasters" to claim that New York is equivalent to hell. Yet, those of us who have had the "Our of Towners" experience have often wondered if we hadn't managed to hire a taxi driven by a denizen of said theological locale of eternal punishment.

In fact, the latter is probably not only the inspiration for *Hell Cab*, but it is where the game begins. The player, from a first-person perspective, arrives at John F. Kennedy International Airport in order to transfer to a connecting flight and discovers that said flight has been delayed. Along comes a "friendly" cabbie who promises a deluxe tour of New York in order to help out hero/heroine pass the time. Yes, this cab ride does pass the time: the Jurassic Age, Rome in 59 B.C. and France in 1917, as well as modern day New York. Of course, the character who has



just stepped off a plane has no way of knowing this.

What the character does know is that taking that taxi ride is not likely to be as boring as staying around the airport boarding lounge. What the player knows is that the game is funneling his/her character toward that taxi cab. The appearance of the cab driver in a digitized sequence sets up the first interaction. Gamers with CD-ROM experience will notice that the graphics window has been reduced from full-screen in order to provide a faster frame rate, but will immediately be aware of the fact that this is not full-motion video. Moreno and crew removed some of the video frames in order to have the game play reasonably well off the CD. They kept all of the video, in case they were to publish the same product on a machine that supports full motion video (e.g. 3DO or the new CD-I with FMV cartridge).

Adventure gamers will quickly tumble to the fact that the "I Love NY" shopping bag on the bottom left-hand side of the screen

serves as the player's inventory and that the cursor changes shape to indicate different options. Anything interactive is indicated by a hand and extended index finger (an extremely valuable resource, at times). At other times, the cursor is the familiar black arrow.

If the character is streetwise to the entrepreneurial wiles of urban cab drivers, he/she is bound to need some money. Where would someone find money in an airport? An ATM machine, of course. The ATM machine is immediately accessible to the player. If one doesn't immediately remove the debit card from the "I Love NY" inventory bag, pop-up instructions tell the player what to do. Once the machine is activated, one enters the character's name and a three-digit numerical password/account number.

At this point, the ATM is useful for several reasons. First, such ATMs (scattered about NYC and the past) are the player's only source of cash. Second, all instructions for the game are available from these machines. Third, they provide mini-documentaries (in *QuickTime*) on the three historical eras to be visited in the course of the game.

There is one other interesting feature present in the ATM locations. There are brochures in a rack, presumably built into the ATM machine. If one clicks on these bro-



TITLE:	Hell Cab
SYSTEMS:	Macintosh or CD-ROM
	IBM compatible to follow
PRICE:	\$99.95
PROTECTION:	None
DESIGNER:	Pepe Moreno
PUBLISHER:	Warner New Media

chutes, they provide a commercial for some of the game projects which Moreno and his crew would like to publish (including an interactive tour of Frite Lang's *Metropolis*). The idea for "virtual tours" has been around for a long time (just ask Chet Weaver of Bethesda Softworks), but Moreno has utilized the technology to offer something more than a simple tour.



Driving Ambition

Armed with cold hard currency, the character exits the airport and watches with trepidation as Raoul the friendly cabbie crashes into the back of another car (with appropriate sound effects) and backs up to allow admission to the player's character. Moreno calls this a fully interactive taxi cab and it is lovingly depicted (he is an admitted automotive aficionado). As one explores the taxi cab environment, the detailing is incredible. Nevertheless, it is not yet fully interactive. One cannot, for instance, enter the passenger door or open the hood and trunk, though one can accomplish most of these things at a later point in the game.

One can, however, check out the radio and enjoy Jeff Essex' parodies of radio stations, or read typical legal notifications such as one



would expect in a NYC taxi cab. Of course, the most important feature in the cab (besides Raoul) is the meter. Not only does this meter measure cab fare, but it also measures one's soul and game lives. After all, if it hasn't been immediately obvious from the 666 on the license plate and the way Raoul drives, this game is about learning not to traffic (abem) with the devil.

Raoul drives the character downtown and

parks outside the Empire State Building. As always, when dealing with fictional New York cab drivers or the devil himself, the character is expected to pay more than his/her "fare" share. No matter what one does, there is no way to get out of the jam, but to sign Raoul's contract. Naturally, Raoul's contract is a fascinating descendent of every infernal contract since Stephen Vincent Benet's "Devil and Daniel Webster," Broadway's *Damn Yankees* or The Charlie Daniels Band's "Devil Went Down To Georgia." It essentially puts the player-character's soul "in escrow" and the devil wants to close the deal ASAP. Fortunately, for the player's character (as well as the protagonists in the popular works cited earlier), there is an exit (story, Jean-Paul). Of course, it would ruin several hours of play to give that away here.

Where is King Kong?

Once one makes that little deal with the devil (or, in this case, apprentice temptor Raoul), the Empire State Building is open for a visit. Indeed, one can explore the entire edifice without any time constraints or worry about losing the game (or one's soul). Whenever there is something that one can do, the cursor changes into the pointing hand. Whenever one double-clicks, either a magnified pop-up image of a small detail appears in the graphics window, a QuickTime movie runs or an animation takes place. If one clicks on a plaque, a photo-realistic plaque pops up. If one clicks on a curtained window, a movie plays.

These movies tend to underscore the variety of interests to be found among the creators of *Hell Cab*. One film has a brief demonstration of "morphing" (that graphics technique seen in *Terminator 2* where something becomes fluid and metamorphoses into something else), while another features a parody of the closing credits of a television show and features a hilarious voiceover. By far the most interesting tidbit, however, is the "Dead Sullivan Show." This little vignette features a parody of the



classic '60s TV emcee introducing QuickTime videos with soundtracks of real underground bands like New York's "Black Rain." Also, though it wasn't yet implemented in the version we played, gamers who want to experience a quick end to the experience can even jump off the fabled ESB.

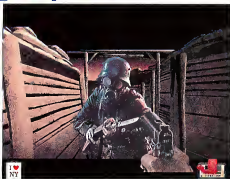
A Plan for All Seasons

Eventually, however, the gamer will tire of this "busy bath" (near things to do with no explicit reason for doing them) style of exploration. To be sure, the ESB may well be one of the richest "busy bath" environments we've explored, but *Hell Cab* would only be a "Me, Too!" product if this was all of the game. So, one moves back to the cab and, almost before one realizes what is going on, moves back in time.

The cabbie takes the player to ancient Rome and before one's character can say, "Nos morituri te salutamus" ("We who are about to die, salute you,"), Emperor Nero requires one to fight a gladiator or face the gauntlet.

Both sequences give us the feeling of playing an enhanced version of a Cinemaware game. The graphics are rich and the sound effects/musical score are superb. Yet, much of the game play is a cross between arcade sequences and timing puzzles. Indeed, it is ironic that we should be reminded of *Defender of the Crown* and *Sinbad and the Throne of the Falcon*, since the former publisher com-





pany was originally formed to create products for multimedia, specifically CD-I.

Unlike the Cinemaware releases of old, however, *Hell Cab* features the ability to save and store several game positions. Also unlike the old games, these arcade sequences seem pretty tough. In addition to fighting the gladiator, one must shoot a German soldier, down a WWI era plane and use a machine gun in a high-res shooting gallery sequence.

**Go to hell.
Go directly to hell.
Do not pass Times
Square. Do not
collect \$200.**

Some gamers will not like having arcade sequences where they must click on the mouse button at just the right time or "die," but the amazing effect of the way death is handled in *Hell Cab* is that each death gets funnier. The player rides the elevator to hell while lively, happy elevator music belies the actual failure within the game context. The incredibly inappropriate music gets cumulatively funnier the more one enters the elevator to hell. Like the rest of Jeff Essex's musical score, each geographical area has its own musical score that seamlessly sets the tone for experience. Some musical themes are reminis-



cent of familiar tunes from film past, but they are all original pieces which are designed to elicit a particular emotion or atmosphere.

Hell is more than just the place where losers go, however. The good news is that this is where the player's character gets "dis"ed in a humorous fashion by St. Peter's opposite number and that this is where one can find, not Hell's Kitchen, but Hell's Garage. The latter is

where the truly interactive cab may be found and explored.

It's a Jungle Out There!

Fortunately, the entire gaming experience is not limited to arcade sequences. One can explore and find light-sourced locations (one features a map that is almost illegible until one figures out how to illuminate it), negotiate mazes in the jungle, read materials like diaries

that provide story continuity and make tactical decisions based on one's soul meter (said decisions might be as simple as whether to kill someone or not). According to Moreno, part of the design philosophy is to give the gamer several opportunities to do something good in order to "buy back" (redeem?) soul points. So, one needs to pay attention to even these interruptions that seem meaningless and irritating.

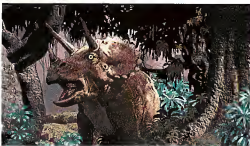
Cinematic Journey

If the gamer is successful, the game features three alternate endings. Each of these endings is incredibly cinematic and humorous. This shouldn't be surprising, though, considering the fact that Pepe Moreno is a book and comics illustrator with a desire to make interactive movies. His *Batman: Digital Justice* was a bestselling graphic novel last year and was wholly rendered on the Macintosh. Indeed, Pepe still has all of the rendered objects and could easily create an interactive *Batman*:



Digital Justice if the demand for such a product was demonstrated.

Certainly, the first impression one gleans from *Hell Cab* is that one has entered the light-and-shadow world of a graphic novel. The colors blanket the screen with vibrant hues, magnificently accented by bold shadows. Moreno knows his craft and his vision has been both well-implemented and duly supplemented by his creative team. Phil Simon, as associate producer, helped refine Moreno's concept. Programmers Mark Castle and Julian Urbach integrated software from Macromind and Electric Image with their own custom C extensions in order to bring the environments to life. Finally, Jim Lasky handled much of the actual animation and, as mentioned earlier, Jim Essex provided the music.



Now Departing, Gate 777

In short, *Hell Cab* is a work of art. It is a showcase product for graphics, technology and sound. The value for gamers hinges on whether they want to explore a fascinating world inside the computer while facing occasional gaming challenges or interact on a deeper level of strategy and communication. The response to that choice will determine whether *Hell Cab* flies (as it does after a successful game) or sinks slowly in an elevator as it plays a mocking medley of elevator music. In many ways, it's the most beautiful game I've seen. The question is, will it play on Broadway? **eww**

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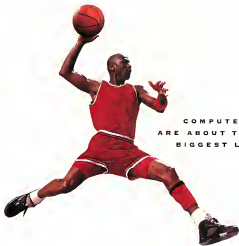
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Through Rough And Over Water

Golf With David Leadbetter's Greens

by Dave Pyron

The sun beamed brightly on the 18th green at Ballybrook Country Club. Sweat glistened on my brow, and not entirely from the heat of the day. Wilbur Gooch had just boled out with a bogey. My turn. The ball was six feet away from the cup, right in the throw-up zone. Can it—and I win. Miss it—and...

Overheard In The Caddy Shack...

With its foremost feature of "on-the-course" instruction, *David Leadbetter's Greens* could end up tops in the Tour. The scuttlebutt in the gaming world was that *Greens*

would rival the best of the golf simulations, and to a large degree, it does.

A clever introductory screen acquaints the gamer to David Leadbetter, the world-renowned golf pro and mentor to some of the P.G.A. Tour's finer players. David Leadbetter will appear frequently during play on all of the six championship courses included with the game. Throughout game play, he helps the player at appropriate times, providing clues on how to swing better, how to play a certain lie, and dispensing useful facts about each hole. (Attention Serious Golfers! These tips are helpful not only within the *Greens* game, but also on your own home course).

Clubhouse Chit-Chat

Each course has its own unique clubhouse, each with its own special interior decor. There are 12 items available in the clubhouses, each representing a "click on" option for the player.

In addition to the expected options of typical golf games, (begin play, statistics, driving range, game type, etc.) *Greens* offers three unique selections. First, *Greens* supports modern play, an excellent feature for playing golf with your buddies on a rainy day. The modern is easy to set up and within a few minutes the player can be immersed in a one-on-one matchup against a twice-removed cousin.

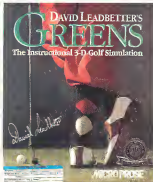
For those who can't do without TV, a detailed, well-crafted, VCR replay option is provided. It records every single shot played, allowing the user to edit any shots from any round played, replay highlights of tournaments, and set up a limited database of various shots as specified by the player. Truly superb!

Last, and most intriguing, *Greens* allows the player to create the "persona" of one's opponents, assigning them various levels of skill in their drives, long game, short game and putting, as well as determining their power, strategy and level of aggression. This feature is

ideal for the golfer looking for the right kind of match. A few clicks to set up the persona and—voilà—an ideal opponent is nodding at you with a naive grin. (Lessee now, if I can get Wilbur to give me two strokes a side for five bucks four ways...)

Fore-ward To The Fairway

Okay...enough of the clubhouse chatter and member gossip. Let's hit the course. As with a number of computer golf games, hitting the ball is accomplished via a "swingometer," a dial that represents the backswing, swing and "snap" of a stroke. Tap a key to start the backswing, tap a second time to start the downswing, and once more as the "swingometer" dial reaches the release or "snap" point. A few minutes on the practice range will do wonders.



TITLE: David Leadbetter's Greens
SYSTEM: IBM (LANS) IBM compatible
GRAPHICS: VGA/EGA
PRICE: \$39.95
PROTECTION: None
DESIGNERS: Lee Hodgson, Mark Davies & Marcus Goody
PUBLISHER: MicroProse
1340 Valley, MD
1102 771-0440



Greens offers a variety of ways to line up a shot. The player may aim using an overhead map of the hole, or one can jump to the view screen where he or she can align their persona in the direction of aim. A unique and interesting feature is the preview shot, an option which can also help the player's aim. The preview will show the ball's expected flight path from a tracking camera perspective, as if the shot was struck perfectly. Really neat!

After the ball is hit, seven different camera angles provide for a myriad of ways to see the shot. Tracking, panning, and reverse angles are all available, each with excellent shot coverage.

Leaving the hi-tech cameras behind, let's get back to the basic "golfer's reality" that is the heart of *Greens*. Reality in the form of duck hooks, banana slices, ball-eating rough and tented trees. Wherever the player hits it, that's where it's played; *Greens* pulls no punches. The ball may end up in a divot, on a cart path, heavy rough, or even plugged hard in a bunker, but timely advice from Leadbetter and the aid of a remarkable shot set-up screen can help the player adjust the stance and club selection for each situation. This



proves extremely useful for difficult shots, allowing the player to hit with better timing and consistency.

After the ball makes the green, the player can call up a grid pattern and/or rotate the point of view to see the surface and slope from a variety of angles. Green speed, slope, and

even wind can affect the accuracy of the putt.

As stated earlier, David Leadbetter watches over the player like a guardian angel. When the inevitable shanked shot occurs, D.L. will appear with all kinds of advice on how to rectify the problem. He also pops up with helpful putting advice, giving the player the green speed and suggesting how strong the putt should be.

Birdies And Bogies

Greens will be appreciated by the avid golfer as well as the non-golfer who just enjoys a fun and challenging game. Realistic game play along with the ability to play against a computer opponent or a far away friend adds to the strength of this game. Other interesting features are the statistical analyses that one may review on each golfer, and the variety of game types offered including matchplay, medalplay, skins and tournament play.

The negative aspects to the game are few, but need mentioning. Players may not take a practice swing while playing—often a helpful convenience when facing a tough lie. Another flaw is the inability to "pick up" before holing out, forcing the player to finish what may be a tedious hole. The most serious blemish within the game is the skimpy and inadequate sound accompaniment. It would have been



nice if Microprose had included better sound support in the *Greens* game.

David Leadbetter's *Greens* is an ideal golf game for those who like realism, fast screen refreshes, and a variety of game types. While *Greens* does not use digitized graphics and sound, it has a number of unique and intriguing features that make this game above par for the course and a serious contender for a top spot on the golf simulation Tour.

Now, Back To The 18th Hole...

...Leadbetter finished giving me his pointers. I settled into my stance and stroked the putt towards the hole. It rolled smoothly, curving slightly to the left. Willbur looked on, his grin somehow less naive. Clank: "Thank you, Mr. Goodb." And thank you, Mr. Leadbetter! **caw**

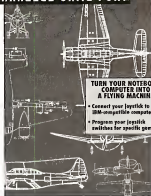
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a still from an animated sequence

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sample configuration of QuadPanels

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Rules of Engagement 2 offers a significant advance in artificial intelligence within computer gaming. Each starship captain has a substantial dossier complete with many personality traits which affect how he, she or it reacts to orders and situations which arise.



NAME	MISSION	STATUS	ATTITUDE
Enterprise	10-01	Completed	100-00
Enterprise	10-02	Enroute	100-00
Enterprise	10-03	Production	100-00

a starship captain's dossier



outfitting a ship in dry dock

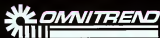
Rules of Engagement 2 offers immense replay value, allowing the player to design and construct both friendly and hostile spacecraft and their captains, specify the physical and mental capabilities of the enemy forces - and design solar systems in which the battles will take place!

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RULES OF ENGAGEMENT 2



Impressions



Corner Those Puppies!

One Nil, Greyhound, and Goal from Wizard Games

by Wallace Poulter



Hello from Harringay, where you'll find Greyhound racing at its finest. The action is just underway... Stay in Bed leads as they start the second lap. Sian Cream and Nether Wallop are challenging on the outside as they go into the turn. Tucked in nicely behind the three leaders are Wellington, Double Chin and Screw Loose. And down the back straight they go, Nether Wallop just in front. Stay in Bed falling back slightly, and Wellington moves up to challenge the leaders. The final corner... for Hartlepool. Jones with the inswinging corner but Moverly picks it out of the air with ease. Chance to start a break. Moverly throws the ball out to Smith the Left Back. Smith moves forward confidently and passes to Honour on the left side of midfield. Honour looks up and spots Saville racing into the Penalty Area. A sweet pass finds Saville in flight and his snap shot is pushed away by the Reading 'keeper, Francis.

First Look

No, you're not mistaken. A greyhound race did just dissolve into a soccer game. Welcome to the wonderful world of Wizard Games. *Civilization*, *Links*, *Railroad Tycoon*, *World Circuit* and *One Nil* are this reviewer's five favorite games. The first four you have probably heard of but the fifth, *One Nil*, is almost certainly a mystery. Quite simply it is the biggest "time waster" I have come across since *Civilization*, and I mean that as the most sincere compliment. Many a time I have made the mistake of starting a game at 9:00 PM, only to look at the clock at 2:00 AM and wonder where the time had gone. *One Nil* is the first of a number of excellent games from a small outfit in Scotland called Wizard Games. We'll take a look at *One Nil*, *Goaland Greyhound*. What is even more amazing is that these are text-based games with ASCII character graphics. Don't be fooled into thinking that somehow a text-based product is old fashioned. Great games are great games.

One Nil
"Advanced management for Football Addicts," says the opening screen of *One Niland*, other than confusing the American audience, it is completely accurate. The initial choice needs to be made between a Scottish data base and an English data base. Those who have a screaming need to manage the Raith Rovers can of course pick the Scottish version. The rest of us pick the English version.

The overall objective in *One Nil* is to manage a soccer team through league and cup play. Unlike US sports where there is a league season and then an elimination tournament (the playoffs), soccer splits these into two distinctive parts. The League Championship goes to the team with the best record (points)

picks a team. In my case, I choose my old hometown of Hartlepool. True to form, the team is comprised of a motley crew and is either too old, too young, useless or a combination thereof. Just as in American football, defense is the basis of a strong team. Therefore, the first priority is to acquire some additional players.

Enter the "Transfer market" where players are Transfer listed for a certain fee. Again, unlike US sports, soccer players are "sold" for a fee rather than traded for another player. There is no such thing as a draft. Looking over the Transfer list, E. Bergsson, a Center back for the Icelandic team of Vikingur is listed at 200,000. A bid of 270,000 secures the services of Bergsson, and the Hartlepool defensive unit begins to take shape. Continual trips will need to be taken to the Transfer Market to upgrade the team as needed. Of course, one has limited funds and must sell players to raise additional capital. Buying younger players for a low price and then selling them after a few years of improvement is a tried and true method.

Building a team is only half the story though. Next comes the individual games. Here team confidence, fitness, energy and hardness come into play along with team and player tactics. There are eight different team tactics that can be set. Each one is important in and of itself, and is a toggle. For example, Passing Preference may be long passes or short passes, Aggression may mean avoiding injury or going in hard. Setting a team to go in hard for example will lead to more ball winning and more scoring opportunities, but will guarantee that one's players will be injured more often and a good set of reserves will be needed.

Once a game is ready to be played there are a number of choices. Tom Fitzgerald who runs Wizard Games in the US likes to watch each and every game as it is shown via ASCII graphics. The ASCII graphics give a good

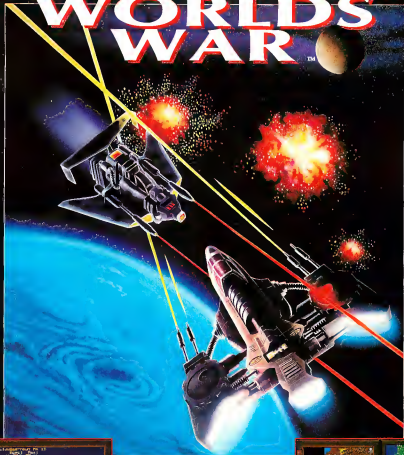
NAME	AGE	HT	WEIGHT	POSITION	MARKS	GOALS	ASSISTS
Goalie	25	5'10"	160	Goalkeeper	1	0	0
Defence	22	5'10"	160	Defender	1	0	0
Midfield	22	5'10"	160	Midfielder	1	0	0
Attack	22	5'10"	160	Forward	1	0	0

In the doghouse again with Wizard Game's Greyhound

at the end of the season. Cup competition is usually a single elimination tournament. Of course the great feat is to do "the double" which is to win the League Championship and the Cup in the same year. To accomplish this, the gamer must make numerous decisions. The term "manager" in the game context is very much the equivalent of being both a general manager and a coach in US Sports. Gamers are responsible for overall team tactics, individual player tactics, trades (known as transfers) and keeping track of the financial matters of the club.

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representation of the game and a running commentary is provided. I, on the other hand, am interested more in the building of the team—the actual match play is secondary. The latest versions of *One Nil* have an automatic option for playing the game in a few seconds (depending on machine speed).

There is, of course, a list of additional features that we soccer fanatics would like to see. Provision for "own goals," more advantage given to a team when the opposing team has

might try to take Sri Lanka to a successful run. Each of the major world regions (Europe, Americas, Africa, Asia) are represented, although using four groups requires some geographical juggling. Australia and New Zealand end up in the Asian group for example and no consideration is given to political situations, such as the fact that Israel is always put in a European group in World Cup qualifying due to the unwillingness of its neighbors to play them.

Once a team is selected, a quick "newspaper" section announces the appointment. Newspapers appear throughout the game to chart one's progress. Three other teams will be selected to join the group of the team that is selected. In England's case, Sweden, Northern Ireland and Luxembourg. A pretty easy ride and England is duly installed as the favorite.

"Friendlies" are played to prepare the teams for qualifying matches against the previously mentioned three teams. This is the opportunity to try out tactics. For example, the computer has selected a 4-4-2 formation for England. I prefer a 5-3-2 which means dropping one of the Midfield players and substituting another defender. B Squads can be selected and "up and coming" youngsters given the chance to try out for the team. More importantly the same tactics will not work against every team, so a coach must be flexible in team formations and selections.

With the World Cup arriving on US shores in 1994, *Goal* is not only an enjoyable and challenging product, it can also educate fans on the strengths and weaknesses of the World Soccer teams.

Greyhound

So, there I am at 3:00 AM, letting out a whoop because Screw Loose came through on the inside to nip Wellington and Double Chin in the latest race—yet another example of how these games from Wizard Games can grab one's attention. As mentioned earlier, Wizard Games are text-based management games that use ASCII characters to represent the action. It is totally irrational to get worked up over six blocks racing around a track, but trust me, it happens.

Each player starts with a stable of ten dogs (to be technically correct, dogs and bitches) and the goal is to win the championship at the end of the season. To do this, one's dogs must move up from their initial grade ten rating and through the different classes to grade one. In fact, having the kennel spread over the different grades gives the player more chances to race as there are only so many open slots in races each time.

Each class also will stage only one of three

different race distances per meet. These are Sprint (1 lap), Standard (2 laps) and Distance (3 laps). Each of the greyhounds has a preferred distance, and it is usually best to stick to the preferences. The lads of Wizard Games did their homework and have added numerous options, including betting, sales and vets!

As with most Wizard Game products, money is an important component of the game. Dogs may be bought or sold, money made or lost on betting, and prize money and vet bills allocated. Building up a stable takes some skill. A significant number of stats are also provided keeping the kennel owner up to date on the race for the championship. These include: races participated, wins, strikes (races divided by wins), money, best lap and points. When the kennel owner starts out, the fittest dogs in their stable will run a lap in about 19 seconds. By the time a dog is up to Grade 1, 17 seconds is the standard.

After pushing this around for some time, I found that the best betting strategy was to load up on low odds, especially when a good



The puppies approach the corner in *Greyhound*

dog drops down a grade, but still outclasses the lower grade. Kennel names and greyhound names can be edited and much hilarity can be had from the animal names.

Conclusion

Wizard Games are shareware. The games can be downloaded from any major BBS such as CompuServe or Genie. The only thing missing from the game is the save option and that is provided automatically by registering the product. As mentioned at the beginning, *One Nil* is one of my five favorite titles. It provides a strategic and tactical look at the world's most popular sport in a symmetry rarely found in a game product. *Goal* offers a more tactical look at the international game, and *Greyhound* is an incredibly enjoyable product. As in racing, these are products where the underdog can surprise.

Again, Wizard Games' products are shareware and are available on most of the major networks. If you do not have access to a network, you can contact:

Wizard Games of Scotland, Ltd.
PO Box 498
Wilmington, MA 01887
(508) 658-2209

EW



An international match in *One Nil*

a man sent off, and, most importantly, leagues other than England or Scotland. As a follower of Borussia Mönchengladbach (gesundheit!), I would love to play the German league, or follow AC Milan in the Italian, or Real Madrid in the Spanish. In addition, it would be nice to be able to play non-league sides so that one could try and gain promotion to the league and then be successful in the league itself. Such a situation has happened in English Football with Wimbledon. Back in the early '70s they were a non-league side. The mighty Leeds Utd got a huge scare one year in the Football Association Cup when this bunch of part time amateurs held them to a draw in one match and only a lucky deflection (off an Eddie Gray shot, if I remember correctly) beat them in the replay—comparable to the Miami Hurricanes holding the Dallas Cowboys to a draw. This served as the spring board for Wimbledon to successfully gain promotion to the league itself and now play in Britain's highest league, the Premier League.

Goal

Goal is the second of Wizard's games. It is the game of "International Soccer Team management," which basically means the World Cup. In many ways, this game is the tactical portion of *One Nil* expanded to its logical conclusion. Instead of worrying about transfer and stadium improvements, all the gamer has to worry about is coaching the best side they can put together.

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Batter Upped

Strategic Simulations PUTS Tony La Russa Baseball 2 in the Big Leagues

by Wallace Poulter

As Spring, when a young man's fancy turns to spring training! The endless debates to determine who was the greatest hitter of all time (Ted Williams), the greatest first baseman of all time (Jimmie Fox), or the worst team of all time (Cleveland Spiders) are renewed with all the passion of a bunny with the verbal itch. I mean, who cares about how bad the Colorado Rockies will be when you can debate much more meaningful matters? For example, my assertion that the Pirates of '27 are the second best team of all time. They just had the misfortune to be around the season of the best, the '27 Yankees.

Scouting The Field

Probably the most crowded field in sport simulations is the sport of baseball. *Tony La Russa Baseball II* has stiff competition from the likes of *Hardball III* and *Pro League Baseball*. Getting into a game is as easy and quick as clicking on play ball, selecting an All-Time team, clicking on an opponent, and signaling play ball. This game has League Championship caliber stamped on it from the first pitch.

The choices are numerous. For each game, settings can be tweaked based on one's skill level and/or interest. Keyboard, joystick and mouse are supported and, while not a fan of

keyboard control, I found *TLR's* controls to be incredibly logical and easy to use. So much so that I now prefer the keyboard controls—certainly a first for me. Fielding, throwing and base running can be set to automatic, which can be particularly useful when one is first learning the product. The designated hitter (hiss!), injuries, errors, one pitch mode, sound effects and more can all be toggled according to the gamer's wishes.

Once in the game, the interface and its ease of use make the gamer's decisions simple and effective. As the pitcher, one must choose from a standard package of fastball, curve, change up or slider (there are supposed to be specialty pitches, but they don't show up very often). Different defenses can be set and strategy is not optional. Even with the ability of a Sandy Koufax, one cannot simply blow fastball after fastball by a batter. Instead, one can set them up with the fastball and then, throw a low change up and see if they bite. Conversely, one can throw sliders and curves and then whiff them with a fastball. The pitch selection and location takes only two inputs to give 36 different combinations, more than enough to keep the hitters off balance.

Similarly, the offensive choices are normal, power, contact and bunt. Various special plays such as the hit-and-run can be called. Again, strategy plays the part. I found using power hitting with less than two strikes to be effective, but went to a contact stance when in "the hole."

Multiple options are also available during the game play. Line score, box score, a rather nifty replay option and slow motion are just some of the items available. Each team, as one would expect, can activate a Pinch Runner or Hitter, send the Pitching Coach to the mound to check on the pitcher, start relievers warming up in the "pen," and make defensive

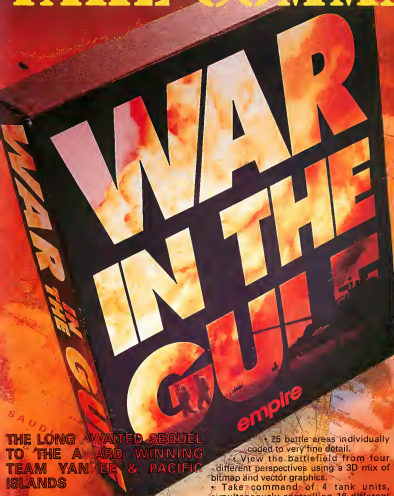
positioning changes and substitutions. (This time, we might be able to take out Bill Buckner in the bottom of the 9th of the '86 World Series.)

Graphically, *Tony La Russa Baseball II* breaks very little new ground. The standard of displaying runners on first and third via windows in the respective top right and top left has served many games well. The catcher's position is taken by a scoreboard of balls and strikes, inning, out and overall score information. To the left and right of this scoreboard are graphic representations of the batter and pitcher (ye olde baseball card approach as in



TITLE:	Tony La Russa Baseball II
SYSTEM:	IBM/IBM/25 recommended, 386/486 RAM required
GRAPHICS:	VGA
PRICE:	\$29.95
PREDICTION:	Documentation Lacks Up
DESIGNERS:	Mark Bachigian, Don Daghour, Tony La Russa, Hudson Pahl
PUBLISHER:	Strategic Simulations, Inc., Sunnyvale, CA, (408) 737-6600

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Hardball III. The animation of the pitcher is the larger of the two, with the animated movements based on the motions of Dave Stewart of the Toronto Blue Jays. (Sounds strange, doesn't it?) The special case animations on an event such as a headfirst slide into home to beat the tag are rather nice. All in all the graphics are what I would describe as "clean."

Not surprisingly, in a game with Tony La Russa's name on it, the managerial aspects of baseball are explored in depth. The manual contains a number of useful overall baseball hints from LaRussa himself and while not earth shattering they do provide insight for the average fan. One of the major enhancements with *Tony La Russa Baseball II* is the Manager profile. This allows each and every team to have different strategies for lineup, pitching, hitting, defense and base running. While it would have been nice to have some defaults for each of the current Major League managers or recent Major League Managers (i.e., Roger Craig would sacrifice bunt every blessed time!), the opportunity to set these values ourselves is great for tuning leagues amongst friends. While I know it is going to extremes, I would like to see the inevitable Tony La Russa III have the additional feature of third base coaches who might have different running philosophies than their manager. Of course, then one would have to be able to fire those coaches.

A League of My Own

Tony La Russa Baseball II really shines in league play. Yet, ironically, it is also where the manual is the most unclear. To set up a league one selects, not surprisingly, "Setup Leagues" from the "Utilities" menu but option. Once within the new screen, the game as commissioner must select "New League" and type in the new league name and abbreviation. Next, it is necessary to choose the number of leagues (such as American & National) within the overall League (yes, I know that sounds confusing) and the number of divisions per league. Teams can be duplicated from any other source league available. Now under the Season menu bar, activate "Start



New Season" and decide the schedules, number of games, season start date, playoff and World Series lengths. Now, one clicks on "New Season" to start the first season of the league.

So far, this is all covered in the manual, though not particularly well. To play the games of a favorite team, a person can activate "Team Schedule" under the season menu bar or do this individually on each date. *TLRBI* uses what they call "Featured" and "Standard" games. The Standard games are the ones the game wants the computer to play, while Featured games are the ones the user wishes to play. However, at no point does the manual explain how to play a Featured game! This requires choosing "Play Standard Games" under the Season menu bar. This automatically plays the games of the other teams in the league through a date selected by the gamer. Then, a window option asks if one wishes to play the Featured game as a Standard Game. Next, the bat/dive rattles away as the former games are played. Finally, a window appears which asks the user if they now wish to play the Featured Game. On answering to the affirmative, the user finally gets into the ball game. As a whole, the manual is somewhat lacking in that it is a step by step listing of each menu choice in the product rather than a manual designed to be user friendly and helpful. It looks like the manual was written by someone already familiar with the product and reflects that knowledge rather than being written for a new user.

However, any frustration is well worth the price one must pay to get into the league simulator. League play is at the heart of the product. Multiple teams are available and feature an incredible array of talent. My frustration is due to the fact that the American League All Stars follow tradition and consider Lou Gehrig the best first baseman. Obviously, this reviewer considers this a major design error on the part of Don Daglow and crew at StormFront Studios (mostly kidding, folks!). In fact, one could generate a whole bunch of adjustments based on the All Star decisions. The previously mentioned Foxx versus Gehrig, the glaring omission of Shoeless Joe Jackson and Ty Cobb (while it would be hard to beat a starting outfield of Ruth, Williams and Mandle, the fact that they don't even make the bench is alarming!), Joe Torre as a backup catcher to Gabby Hartnett rather than Mickey Cochrane or Yogi Berra, and more. In fact, the lineups look a little weird because they are based on the current league the user is playing rather than some mythical All-Time All Star team based on the real life teams the players played for. Meanwhile, this reviewer is off to check the Baseball Encyclopedia to see why Joe Jackson is on the Cleveland roster (which, along with Nap Lajoie, Tris Speaker, Al Rosen and Joe Sewell, might just be the best lineup in the entire game).

Final Score

It is rather interesting that when *Tony La Russa Baseball II* is broken down into its component parts, it seems less impressive than it actually is. One can become annoyed at bugs which add extra errors and RBIs to the statistics, and one can complain that the action game (particularly with its new mouse support) is not as clean as it should be. Yet, I must hasten to add that this is quite simply the *best* baseball game on the market. It is definitely one of those cases where the whole is better than the sum of its parts. As far as I'm concerned, the design is not only fundamentally sound but it is the outright winner of the current world series of baseball simulations.

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RETURN OF THE PHANTOM

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"That's the Man who Shot my Par!"

by Wallace Poulter

Tenth hole at the legendary Konami Hills course. The 305 yard, par 4 hole starts from an elevated tee with a shot over a picturesque lake. A narrow fairway greets the player with two bunkers to the right and two bunkers to the left just waiting for the under hit or wayward drive. The small green is protected by a wrap-around bunker on the right, and a small "pot" bunker on the left. An accurate player has a great birdie opportunity, but traps away on what at first glance appears to be an easy hole. The Wol sizes up the hole and decides, not surprisingly, on a driver. Aim will be to the right side of the landing area, trying to stay away from all the bunkers. A nice solid drive goes 229 yards down the middle of the fairway. Seventy-six yards to the hole and a Pitching Wedge comes out of the bag. However, The Wol is tentative and hits his second shot short of the green by some 14 yards. Again the Pitching Wedge for the third shot and a nice chip (if I do say so myself) to within five feet of the hole. Finally a tough downhill putt fading to the tight which just trickles in. Off to the 11th hole where a blind drive over a hill greets players on the 455 yard par 4 hole.

One of the most interesting products at Winter CES was shown by Konami. This was a golf game that looked quite beautiful, had almost instantaneous screen redraw, and a logical interface. Konami was making a point that this was specifically targeted at the 286 or lower end 386 user (in order to avoid the inevitable comparison with *Links 386 Pro*), but this game appears enjoyable for any computer user regardless of machine speed. One of the more accurate positionings of a product can be found in the manual introduction. "Some software offers high-resolution graphics with enough detail to be able to see a boat sailing in a harbor a half-mile away. Unfortunately, they take about as long to play on the computer as a real game of golf takes on a Saturday at a public links. Then again, you can get a fast game that offers as much visual excitement as a bologna sandwich. ... Of course, someday someone might create a game that gives good graphics with a variety of side games, lightning-quick screen redraws, multiple player options, and the usual options of skill level setting, handicapping, save game features, instant replay of your shots, putting and ball control adjustments." Which is exactly what Konami has



done. In fact, the screen redraw is quick enough to allow what Konami calls the "Gallery Review Cam." Near the end of the gamer's shot, the perspective will switch to the landing site. This is nice, very smooth and possible because of the quick redraw.

The Main Menu is self-explanatory, allowing one to select their on-screen player and the game type that they wish to play. *Wilson ProStaff Golf* comes with a default player, but creating a custom player is painless and offers a number of options. These include: Sex, Style (putter, average, aimer), Level (professional, amateur, beginner), Handicap (hearing impaired, visual impaired, politically correct — well, it seemed too obvious to pass up) and Player Colors (hair/skin, shirt, sweater, pants/shorts). The five basic options provide for a multitude of different golfers. Meanwhile the basic game options include individual competition and team competition.

Once the selections are made, it's on to the course. It is "the" course too. While the 18 holes are different and challenging, Konami should look long and hard about doing add on disks with additional courses. Visually, the 3-D graphics are quite stunning, and while nothing compares with *Links 386 Pro*, the graphics in *Wilson ProStaff Golf* are of exceptional quality and clarity. Trees look like trees, bunkers look like bunkers, and someone took the time to shade around the bunkers so that the normal "rough" associated with bunkers is there also. The background of hills and mountains also adds to the overall aesthetics.

Addressing the Ball

A very nicely designed interface adds to the product. The overlaying windows can be turned on or off but are not intrusive. The information bar shows standard information such as current player, shots taken, distance hit on the last shot, etc. The overhead view allows one to size up the hole and the on-screen player's position at all times. This perspective is particularly useful when picking a bailout spot when one is not confident enough to be able to hit a drive into the preferred landing site from a particular lie. The club selection window obviously shows the club currently in use and the distance, but one can also click on it to activate the putting grid and see some



TITLE: Wilson ProStaff Golf
SYSTEM: IBM (286/3) or equivalent
GRAPHICS: VGA
PLAYERS: 1-30
PRICE: \$39.95
PROTECTIONS: None
DESIGNERS: Nintendo Entertainment
PUBLISHER: Konami
Buffy Grove, NY
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Actual Battleship
Battle Scenes



pretty extreme grades on some greens. The stance window allows the player to intentionally hook or slice by adjusting the footing, and the wind gauge shows the strength of the breeze on a 1-9 scale along with the direction. All pretty standard, but very well thought-out so that one can keep the windows active while playing the game and not feel like a portion of the screen is lost.

The heart of the game is the power meter and aiming spot. An additional window appears as a golf ball surrounded by a circular power meter. Click once to activate the power meter, click a second time to pick the relative strength of the stroke, and then the play gets more interesting. A red aiming spot appears on the golf ball and begins moving around the golf ball. The gamer has to click once more when the red aiming spot is in the center of the golf ball to hit a normal shot. Any deviation will generate a hook or slice. Of course, one can also get under the ball for additional back spin on a shot. This is challenging without being frustrating and allows many different kinds of shots to be made. I found it useful to hit off center depending on the strength of the wind and the landing area.

Wilson ProStaff Golf also includes a number of side games such as Best Ball, Straight Scramble, Carryover Skins and Bingo-Bango-Bongo, which sounds something like Dick Vitale



would say during March Madness. In fact, BBB is rather good, teaching accuracy and consistency. Three points are awarded each hole, the first to the first player on the green, the second to the player who is closest to the hole when all the balls are

on the green and the third to the person who holes out first. Simple, yet I found that my normal hack and slash to get the ball somewhere near the green, chip close and make a putt (see description of play above), *didn't* work playing BBB.

Returning to an earlier point. This game tries out for more additional courses or, better yet, a course designer of some kind. A sparse looking 36 page manual actually covers everything quite nicely, and the interface is so logical I didn't need the manual to play the game.

Holing Out

Returning to the manual, we find on page 4 that *Wilson ProStaff Golf* was designed with fun in mind. I couldn't agree more. It is a highly enjoyable, moderately challenging product that is user-friendly, has multiple options, and fits the niche it aimed for perfectly. *Wilson ProStaff Golf* should join *Links 386 Pro* and *Jack Nicklaus Signature Edition* in the library of every computer golfer. **ew**



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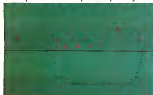
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Blitzed Out of Their Minds

Building a Play in Front Page Sports Football



Defense builds Championships, or so popular gridiron wisdom tells us. It is ironic that the San Francisco 49ers are lauded for their offense. Most of the previous Champions have been known for their defense. From the Steel Curtain and the Doomsday Defense to the Monster of the Midway and the Purple People Eaters, defense has been singled out as the prerequisite for a successful team. During the 80s the Forty Niners were known for the Bill Walsh system that methodically broke down opponent's defensive plans. Joe Montana, Roger Craig, Jerry Rice, Dwight Clark and Ronnie Lott are probably the most well known of the Forty Niners from the 80s, with of course only Ronnie Lott on the defensive side of the ball. Yet, football experts will tell you that it is the Forty Niners defensive play, dismissed by some (such as the Giants) as finesse, which carried the Forty Niners to greatness. Moreover, examining the times that the Forty Niners failed to win, usually a problem with the defense could be shown. The mistake in letting Ronnie Lott depart without having either an experienced Safety or leader on the defense has kept the Forty Niners out of the Super Bowl these past couple of years.



Defensive formation prior to the snap.

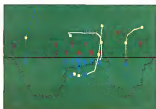
The release last year of Front Page Sports Football from Dynamic was an important step forward in the evolution of football games. The Play Editor it offers is the most sophisticated yet on the market and allows the manipulation of all 22 players on the field.

The following will show how to build a defensive play for the San Francisco exhibition playbook. An important note is that I will refer to the players based on how they appear on the screen, which for the defense is the opposite of real life. Hence, the Left Cornerback is the Cornerback on the left side of the screen. For the sake of simplicity I have chosen to modify one of the existing plays. While all former direction is removed, starting a formation from scratch delves into various formation rules that can drive a user to distraction.

At the main menu, select Exhibition Play. Make sure that the home league is the Dynamic Football League. Click on the box labeled Home Team and select the San Francisco team. Finally, click on the Play Editor button. This will place you in the Play Editor (a good diagram of this can be seen on page 63 of the Front Page Sports Football manual). Click on the load button. This will activate a window with the choices, stock formations, stock plays or exhibition. Click on the stock play formation. Another window, this time with three choices, offense, defense or special teams is displayed. Click on the defense button and the stock plays to reveal the Defense Window (offering 10 different options such as Blitz, Runzone or in this case, Passshot). Within the Passshot option are a further 12 plays. The one we are interested in is the first one, 3-4manuply. Clicking on this will display the defensive play in the upper half of the Play Editor Screen. Different symbols repre-

sent different position groupings. Red circles represent the Defensive Backs, red triangles denote Linebackers, and red squares, the Defensive Line.

Each play is divided into two parts. Movement before the snap and the actions the player takes after the snap. Initially the play on the screen is before the snap. If the user clicks on "After the Snap," the graphics used by Front Page Sports Football to show player



Offensive pass patterns.

assignments are displayed. The orange boxes are zones and the yellow boxes are logic boxes. These yellow logic boxes can be crucial in designing a play as a player will arrive at a logic box and then perform the scripted instructions within that box. It is possible for a player to be given multiple logic boxes that will guide his movements and reactions to the situations relevant to the play at hand. However for the purpose here we are going to delete the current instructions from each player and work from this formation.

Therefore, click on the left most Defensive Back. The lower quarter of the screen will display the instructions that are contained in the first logic box, which is the players starting

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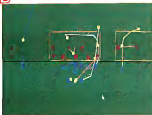
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Defensive coverage for the same pass play.

point. Click on the line, which in this case says "1. Pass defense - man to man - shade coverage underneath" and delete the information. Then click on the done button. Do this for each and every defensive player.

Now, we will start to move the formation around. Take the Left Safety, the second red circle from the left and move this player directly above the right Outside Linebacker (OLB). To do this, you must first activate the "Before the Snap" button and click and drag the left safety to the new position. The intent is to create a local superiority for the defense when they are attacking the right side of the Offensive Line.

Next, we will set up some elementary defensive assignments. Reactivate the "Align the Snap" button and click on the left corner-

back. Press the following buttons. More, Pass defense, Man to man, Bump man at line and finally, press Done twice. Do exactly the same with the right Cornerback. The Safety that you did not move, the right Safety, should be assigned to the buttons, "Key on" and "Receiver." Lastly, for now, set each of the three defensive linemen (red squares) to pass rush.

At this point, we should take a look at the opposing offense. Load, Stock Plays, Offense, Pass, Middle, Medium and Temiddle.play. This will select the appropriate play. The offensive routes are shown in the illustration. The order in which the Quarterback will check the receivers is color coded: white, yellow, orange, grey and black. Blue is not checked. Then, we set up the assignments for the Linebackers and the Safety we first moved. Set up the right Inside Linebacker (ILB) to a Real Blitz. The instructions to the left ILB are a little intricate. Click on the "Move to" button and you will see cross hairs and an orange line from the left ILB to those cross hairs. Right click on the upper left corner of the Nose Tackle Red Square. The instruction script you will see says "1. Move to Logic Box #2."

Left click on that new logic box and select pass defense, zone. This will allow you to designate the zone area (box) for the player. Your boundaries are the OLBs on both the left and right, just behind (ie above) the defensive line and the top of the dark green field

aspirer (ie 10 yards). This zone will cover the intended route of the Tight End, the primary receiver. The left OLB should be set to a Fake Blitz, while the Safety who was moved to behind the right OLB should be set up to a Real Blitz. Finally, issue a "Move to" command to the right OLB and end the move at the Quarterback's logic box destination (between the two running Backs.)

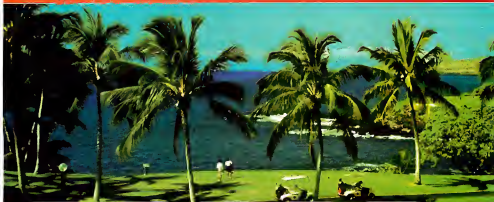
A quick analysis of the situation shows a mismatch on the right side of the Offensive Line with four defenders attacking three blockers, while two additional players (the TE and right RB are designated to go into passing patterns.) To see what happens in reality, go into the practice mode and watch a number of replays of the play. Most of the time the offense will get a first down with a completion to the WR on the right side. Even though this



Less than optimal result for the defense.

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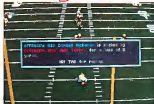
Wide receiver earning his first downs.

open enough to allow an easy completion. If the defenders are to get to the QB, they must have more time. First things first. We move the Right Safety closer to the line of scrimmage (remember of course that you need to activate Before the Snap to be able to readjust the formation) and change the player instructions from Key On Receiver to Pass Defense, Zone. Draw a box of similar dimensions to the Linebacker zone you drew earlier, with this box extending from the Safety himself to the right sideline.

This time when you look at the practice, you will find that the right WR is covered and usually, the QB will look for the TE over the middle. This allows the receiver to be covered more effectively and forces the QB to hold the ball longer. The QB still won't be sacked

because he has time to throw to the TE over the middle or scramble himself. As this point you have created a base from which to work. Save the play off and name it.

In studying the situation, the left RB is staying in the back field to block, while the right RB is blocking and releasing into a passing pattern. If at all possible it would be good to get the attention of the left RB. To do this, we take the left OLB and instruct the player to move down around the left DE into the backfield. This is set up as a "Move to" instruction rather than a blitz. If you try this, and it is useful just to see the way the offensive line reacts, you will find that the left DE moves out to meet the challenge. Nothing much is accomplished. So switch the left OLB inside and place him directly between the Center and the left DE, slightly off the line of scrimmage in front of the left ILB. Set the player up to blitz and go into the practice mode. Ironically, this blitz from the other side is the key to opening up the right side of the Offensive Line. Now, unable to concentrate the blocking schemes on just the right side, enough of a lane is opened up for the blitz of the Safety to be successful as much as 40% of the time. You will have to tinker with this to get the placement of the left OLB and the right OLB just right. You will find that the critical player on the offensive line is the offensive lineman directly to the right of the Center. His attention must be diverted



The optimal result for the defense.

enough, if only for a fraction of a second, to allow the Safety to get by on the blitz.

It is a restatement to the strength of the Play Editor that the movement of one player can open up just enough of a gap for another. Experiment with changing the scripts assigned to each player. Find out what happens when you assign further strategies. Delay blitzes, fake movements and then fall off into a zone, play strict zone instead of man to man on the outside. This play is designed for a specific situation, to defend against a team that throws to a TE out of a pro set backfield. Try this defense against a flea flicker or a long pass to see if it will be useful in different situations. You just might get a new appreciation for the strategies used in professional football. **cmw**

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THE SECRETS OF RUNNING AN NHL FRANCHISE

Bethesda's Hockey League Simulator II

by Johnny L. Wilson

When Disney CEO Michael Eisner officially announced that Anaheim's new NHL expansion team would be called "The Mighty Ducks," he brought with him a bit of show-biz know-how and media manipulation that the NHL has desperately needed over the last decade or so. It is no longer enough to own a professional hockey franchise; it is now necessary to market it. Bethesda Softworks' original *Hockey League Simulator* reflected this to a minor extent. The simulation kept track of attendance figures for the teams and let would-be general managers know how they were performing in relation to the projected budget. Yet, it neither had an algorithm for determining how attendance related to performance on the ice, nor did it do a good job of simulating the negotiations, trades and showmanship necessary to put a quality team on the ice.

Hockey League Simulator II (HLS2) does a respectable job of addressing the latter inadequacy, but deleted the former from the simulation entirely rather than addressing those concerns. The net result is that *HLS2* does a respectable job in handling trades, salary negotiations for coaches, and the megastategy of coaching (setting lines and handling personnel), and is extremely flexible in allowing gamers to replay entire seasons in a single sitting or to weave games played in *Wayne Gretzky Hockey III* into custom leagues. It has a fantastically versatile structure for creating custom leagues and allowing gamers to test out possible results of their trades in fantasy or toniseric leagues. It features a multitude of print options which can greatly simplify the lives of computer hockey league commissioners and statistics-hungry hockey fans. Most importantly, one can easily switch back and forth between viewing the final scores of games played and watching a period-by-period recap of scoring. This allows one to speed up play when desired and watch the season unfold leisurely when that is preferred.

How I Won The Stanley Cup

As the only human general manager, I am able to win the Stanley Cup (or, at least, reach the conference finals) almost every time I replay a season. I have won the Stanley Cup with a superior team, the Montreal Canadiens, and with a team of less stature, The Toronto Maple Leafs. I was unable to duplicate the feat with the Quebec Nordiques. Indeed, my trades managed to decimate that team rather than galvanize it toward victory. With the Canadiens, I won by stocking the team with proven stars from other franchises and dumping the large-salary players in whom I personally had no confidence. With the Maple Leafs, I made strategic trades among the journeymen in the middle of the line-up in order to strengthen specific positions. Then, once the season



started, I dropped a veteran goalie onto my farm team and brought up a promising rookie goalie who lasted the season.

The trades were not as easy to pull off as they were in the original *HLS*. Of course, the original *HLS* didn't have any kind of algorithm to bargain with the human GM. The human GM could make trades to his/her heart's content. *HLS2* factors in a perceived value for each player (loosely represented by the order in which the rosters for each team are displayed on the computer screen). I found two ways to influence trades in the

human GM's favor. One way is to find two expendable players (preferably listed back-to-back) on the roster and offer them for one desired player that is only listed a line or two higher than the offered players. If the computer GM does not accept the trade immediately, one can sweeten the deal with \$10,000-\$25,000 in cash. Another way is to offer a large cash supplement in order to seduce the computer GM into trading for a disparity in talent.

In order to create the economic model for *HLS2*, the design team had experienced NHL executives rate the NHL cities for their potential income. The projected income is based on how certain franchises have performed monetarily over a course of years, in bad seasons as well as good. Although the actual amounts shown on the screen are greatly reduced from the amounts one might see in a "real" transaction, they do a good job of impacting the bottom line of each franchise according to the NHL analysis. The limited funds available to most franchises explains why using money to leverage a trade can cause a computer GM to trade more quickly.

In addition, I found the use of the farm roster to be more solidly implemented in *HLS2*. One can get a display as to the talent available on the farm and can easily move personnel back and forth as required. This played a vital role for me. Whenever injuries occurred, I would tend to bring up "role-players" from the farm system in order to shore up a given line. For example, a farm player rated high in checking might be brought up to fill a Penalty Killing Line, even though that player's overall statistics were weak. I once brought up an unknown to play on the Power Play because he had a high rating for his shooting accuracy, and I had lost my #1 center.

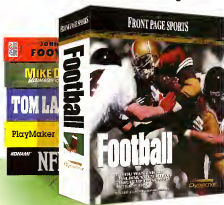
Perhaps the most significant change in *HLS2*, however, is the addition of the coaching factor. Now, human GMs go after the coaches they want and negotiate with a computer "agent." The negotiations aren't very deep, but it adds an element of suspended disbelief that was not there before. The fictitious coaches are rated according to their previous performances (Unknown, Veteran, Renowned, etc.)

HOCKEY LEAGUE SIMULATOR II

TITLE: Hockey League Simulator II
 SYSTEM: IBM with VGA
 GRAPHICS: VGA
 PRICE: \$49.95
 PUBLISHER: Documentation Looking Up
 DESIGNER: S. McEwen and Nick A. Volton
 DEVELOPER: Bethesda Softworks
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Circle Reader Service #85



Hockey in ASCII

CC Challenge Cup Hockey



by Joe Sherfy

The crisp hiss of blades on the ice combines with the bass percussion of bodies colliding with the boards to form a symphony of hockey sounds. The action flows from end to end, bright colored sweaters swirling and colliding like paint thrown onto an icy canvas. Such is the visual thrill of hockey. Punctuate it with the dramatic freeze frames of a sniper winding up to shoot from the point, a defenseman sacrificing his body to block a shot in front of the goal, or a goalie snagging a hard shot with his glove hand and one has a sense of the drama of hockey. For years, the NHL has tried to figure out how to convey the sport on television, without success. The challenge for computer game designers, is how to imbue the majesty and excitement of this action-packed sport onto a monitor smaller than a television screen.

One approach is to stick to the statistical performances of the stars and teams within the sport. By eliminating the sights and sounds, text-based hockey simulations like Lance Haffner's *Hot Trick Hockey*, TRUE Sports, Inc.'s *TRUE Hockey* and CC Challenge Cup Hockey (CCH) from CC Software Corporation try to focus on the coaching experience rather than the viewing/playing experience. For hockey purists, they offer an interesting perspective.

CCH is a text-based simulation of NHL-style of hockey. The gamer is put in the shoes of both the front office manager and the coach on the sidelines. The player makes all the coaching moves, but it's up to Gretzky, Lemieux or Messier to make the manager look good by executing those plans.

After booting, the program gives one a wealth of options. In addition to letting one play a game, one can review statistics, set up a league, schedule league games, and access and edit player data. For those living in

Tampa Bay, Anaheim or Ottawa, expansion teams can be created in order to let fans of the newest franchises join in the fun.

Next, one chooses the competing teams (naturally, each team can be controlled by the player or the computer) and reviews the personnel in order to set up the offensive and defensive lines for the game. Individually, gamers can check the roster and see the strengths and weaknesses of each hockey player. In addition to providing statistics such as goals, assists, penalty minutes, shots on goal and shooting percentage, each player has a rating for defense, passing, hitting, turnover (as a percentage), power plays and faceoffs.

When it is time to set the lines, each team can have six offensive lines (including the center-, left- and right-winger) and six defensive lines (left and right defensemen). Generally, the six offensive lines will include 12 players playing on four different lines, plus one line specifically set for power plays and one for short-handed situations. On the defense, one will have three normal, one power play and one short-handed line. Fortunately, each team has pre-set lines so that this part can be skipped if desired. This is probably a good idea until one has some experience with a team.

Once everything is set, it is time for the gamer to see if he/she can get a given team to play up to its potential. (If playing with San Jose, of course, one hopes to get the team to play better than

that!) As the coach, the gamer begins by choosing the starting offensive line, defensemen and goalie. Once the team is sent out, the player will be presented with a screen which shows a small rink and displays the players that are currently on the ice, the score, shots on goal and time remaining in the period. As play begins, the player will be presented with a text description of the game as it happens on the screen. The text reads just like a radio or television broadcast, right down to the crunching body checks, the obligatory exchanges of fisticuffs, and the removal of injured players from the ice. The speed of the text can be varied to suit just about anyone, and the program has a very unique (although somewhat limited) feature of allowing one to edit the text commentary.

As play unfolds, each line will fatigue and the gamer-as-coach will have to decide when to send in a fresh line. This option is available each time there is a stoppage in play, as well as when one has control of the puck and elects to change lines "on the fly." The text will prompt the player with the option to change the lineup when one has the puck and one's players are coming to the end of their allotted time. Generally, each line can spend up to two minutes on the ice before the players become tired and their play begins to suffer. It is imperative that one make his or her substitutions at the right time so that the team is not facing a fresh unit when it is tired. One also has the option to change



TITLE: CC Challenge Cup Hockey
SYSTEM: IBM
PRICE: \$49.95
PUBLISHER: Name
DESIGNER: C&I Software
PUBLISHER: CC Software Corp.
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Hard Driving The Lane

by Johnny L. Wilson



If phrases like "in the paint," "nothing but net," and "kisses the backboard" stir one's blood, it is easy to identify with the enthusiasm of Bob Chaikin. His creation, *B-Ball: Pro Basketball for the Computer (B-Ball)*, is an ideal game for those who can't remember Jerry West's half-court prayer at the buzzer in a post-season shoot-out with the Knicks of 20 years ago, chuckle over Darryl Dawkins' backboard smashing spree of a little over a decade ago, or resonate with the sight of Clyde Drexler powering to the basket during today's battles of the NBA giants.

B-Ball is a statistics-based, all-text basketball game that reflects Chaikin's fanatic devotion to basketball and accurate statistical replays. He had attempted to sell his statistical analyses of match-ups, performance characteristics, and statistical summaries to NBA franchises. His lack of success, to date, has allowed gamers to grab the game on the rebound. The game comes in two flavors, a single game version and a deluxe version. The latter is three games in one, since it not only features the single game version (the meat of the product from a gamer's standpoint), but a full season capacity (with a very friendly utility for drafting custom teams), and an NBA prediction utility.

Game Plan

In play, the single game version is much like Lance Haffner's basketball games (*Basketball: The Pro Game* and *Final Four College Basket-*

ball). One sets a line-up, selects from a menu of defensive options and establishes the defensive match-ups. An additional wrinkle is the capacity for setting the computer team's substitution pattern to follow a four-minute or six-minute rotation. Since *B-Ball*, like Haffner's classic text games before it, gives plenty of weight to the fatigue factor, this is an important option for those who like to play games against artificial coaches.

The flow of play is similar to the Haffner products in that the screen prints the line-up for the offense at the top of the screen, and the player-as-coach gets to determine where the ball will be passed and when a player will shoot. To pass to a player, one either types the abbreviation for the position of the receiving player (eg. PG for point guard) or, as in Haffner, the number which corresponds to the position. If one opts to use the numbers, the older product makes more sense. Haffner numbers from the first player listed on the screen to the player listed at the bottom of the screen. Chaikin numbers the positions in a reverse order. Since I am used to reading from

the top of a list down instead of from the bottom up, this was unsettling to me, and I used the abbreviations. Unfortunately, this means extra keystrokes.

Playmaking

From this point on, the advantage has to go to *B-Ball*. Since real NBA coaches do not actually get to tell their players who to pass to at what moment, Chaikin has introduced a couple of new pages to the stat-game play-book. Those who want to call a game following a realistic mode of play can opt for an automatic passing option. With this choice in place, the program will determine the most realistic flow of the game according to the personnel in place and the defensive match-ups.

For "control freaks" like myself there is yet another design element. When an offensive team controls the ball in *B-Ball*, the line-up lists a PF (possession factor) for all players (which changes according to their playmaking possibilities) and gives a temporary PF in the play-by-play text for the player who is currently controlling the ball. The PF is a number from 0-3 that determines the on-court player's level of control of offensive factors. The lower the PF, the easier it is for the on-court player to get the ball to the teammate he desires to shoot. So, Louie Dampier of the old Kentucky Colonels (ABA) might bring the ball down the court with a

TITLE	B-Ball: Pro Basketball for the Computer
SYSTEM	IBM
PLAYERS	0-2
PRICE	\$29.95 (single game version) \$65.00 (full version)
PROTECTION	None
DESIGNER	Bob Chaikin
PUBLISHER	BECKETT, Inc. 1523 Foban Road Sandusky, Mich., OH 44871 (216) 271-0343

PF of 2. If Artis Gilmore at center and Maurice Lucas at strong forward are rated at PF 1 and PF 2 respectively, that means that it is significantly harder for Dampier to get the ball to Gilmore in the paint. However, it would be logical for a PF 2 point guard to pass the ball to the PF 2 strong forward.

In our example, Dampier passes to Lucas and Lucas elects not to go for the shot. However, the text rates Lucas at a PF of 0, indicating that he has excellent playmaking position. Since everyone else on the team is going to have a PF of 0 or higher, this means that Lucas would have no trouble passing the ball to anyone. The alert gamer notes that Gilmore and Dampier both have PFs of 0 at the moment. As the "hands-on" player coach, he can elect to have Lucas pass to Gilmore for what would presumably be a quick two points or pass it out to Dampier to try for either two or three.

If the gamer elects to have Dampier try for three, he/she simply adds an "x" to the command for Lucas to pass to Dampier. In this case, I would type px. Someone using the number commands would type x.

Play-By-Play

The text descriptions in *B-Ball* also seem more robust than those in the older games. These seem to be a wider variety of an-

nouncer cliches in *B-Ball*. Players get "nothing but net" and "swish" when they play the string music of putting the ball straight in. One player "elbows his way to the rebound" and another "pulls down the defensive rebound." Fouling players "grab" and "trip" and defending players "reject" and "goaltend." Some teams "slow it down" as they bring the ball up the court and others "fast break," depending on the personnel in play. Sometimes the team is called by its nickname, others by the city where they are located.

Also, since the game is strictly ASCII, statistics and box scores are easy to print. One can print the screen (using the Print Screen key) or one can wait until the entire game is resolved and use the built-in print utility. In the latter case, even the single game version allows one to save the results to disk. I like this versatility.

Net Result

Indeed, the only area where I might fault the program is in the way it numbers the positions from bottom to top (for passing) and the way it handles fatigue. The fatigue factor was well-handled in the Haffner games. It is present in *B-Ball*. I deliberately played two equivalent teams and managed both in order to test out the fatigue model. Whereas Haffner's games forced one to substitute

throughout, I left players in the entire game (except in the case of one injury) and there was no degradation of performance at the half. Indeed, the fatigue factor did not come into play until late in the fourth quarter. I would like to see enough impact in the first half that one would be forced to substitute realistically.

Another factor which may be a disappointment to some gamers is the inability to design and save set plays. Though the manual passing option allows one to have more control than a real coach, many NBA fans would probably like the opportunity to save a play-book in advance and be able to interrupt the automatic passing game by calling those set plays at various times. No text game has yet allowed this, however, so one cannot give too much weight to this consideration at the moment.

Nevertheless, one would have to give the overall nod to *B-Ball*. With its capacity to predict NBA games, resolve entire seasons in 30 minutes to an hour, and its robust play-making model, it is a statistics buff's dream. Plus, Chaikin offers a tremendous library of season disks to choose from. If one is more interested in performance results than graphic on-screen portrayals of action, *B-Ball* has to be a contender. **CSW**

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Scorpion's Mail

Daughter of Serpents ■ Veil of Darkness ■ Forge of Virtue
Ultima VII ■ Crusaders Of The Dark Savant
Indiana Jones/Atlantis ■ Spellcasting 301
Eric The Unready ■ Ultima Underworld II



Well, here we ate with summer just around the corner (it's the one there on your left). But if summer is here, can autumn be far behind? Let's hope not, because the mail room isn't air-conditioned. Can't even bring in a wheeie unit with all these mail sacks around. At least we did manage to neaten up the piles since your last visit.

Before we get to the good stuff, a word or three about mail. February was not a good month for letters. Next issue, I will go into more detail on that, but it is enough to say for now that somehow I managed to mix up some unanswered mail with older, answered letters and (ahem) threw them out. Really sorry about that, folks. Neatening the piles does have its dangers.

So, if you wrote to me in February and didn't get a reply, that's probably the reason (that or you didn't include a SASE; some people still don't put them in, however many times I mention it). The year did not get off to a promising start. Anyway, enough about that for now; let's get to the main event.

Daughter of Serpents: The hint here is to watch out for this product. It isn't so much a game as a computerized novelette. While the story is interesting, and there are minor variations in the plot, you can get through it in about 20 minutes or so. While "playing" it, I had the feeling this was someone's idea for a Call of Cthulhu scenario that they thought would make a neat-to-computer game. Well, maybe it would, but not in this implementation. Caveat emptor!

Veil of Darkness: Veil is still pretty new as I write this. It's a fairly simple and fun game, which gave me no problems until the confrontation with the vampire at the end. Then I had a lot of trouble, until I found out about something I had missed in the swamps; namely a sinkhole. Even when I knew it was there, it was very difficult to make out. So, if you're playing this one, watch for that sinkhole; you can't win the game without going down there.

Forge of Virtue: Many letters on this one,

and everyone has the same problem; namely, finding the real amulet in the Test of Truth. That's not surprising, as it's a tricky matter. Look for a secret door near to where you enter the test, and that will put you on the road to what you're after.

Ultima VII: Some players manage to get into the secret caves behind Buccaneer's Den early in the game (far sooner than they're supposed to), and wonder why they can't find Hook. Well, you're never going to find him there, no matter when in the game you visit those caves. You only catch up to him and the rest of the merry crew (Elizabeth, Abraham, and the gargoyle) at the very end. I also wouldn't advise running off to the final dungeon right away if you've gotten into the caves early; you're likely to come to an unpleasant end without the right items in your inventory.

Crusaders Of The Dark Savant: Getting into Murkaos's Outer Sanctum at the Orc castle is giving some players a hard time. Well, that blood stain in the corridor is there for a reason. Then, if you polish up your thinking, and reflect on the situation, you just might find the door open to you. And getting into that room is quite important, so don't skip it.

Indiana Jones/Atlantis: Those taking the team path through this one are having a little trouble persuading Mr. Trotter to hand over his stone, particularly when Sophia is doing her mumbo-jumbo spicet act. Everything goes fine until she has to guess how many fingers he's holding up behind his back. Well folks, that's the nasty part: there *isn't* any way of knowing, you just have to guess and hope you're right. Even more irritating, the number is picked randomly each time Sophia guesses; it isn't always the same. So unless you want to keep on saving and restoring until you get lucky, it's better to let Indy do this one.

Spellcasting 301: Breaking jail is fun stuff, right? No? Well, get used to it, because Ernie will find himself behind bars several times (a few players have learned this already). Whatever way he uses can only be used once; after

that, a new method for taking it on the lam has to be found. There are a couple of times when an item comes in handy, but most exits rely on spells. So, be familiar with your spellbook, and remember that there's one spell that can modify other spells to have different effects. Don't be afraid to experiment!

Eric The Unready: The hardest part of this game is to keep from laughing so hard and get on with playing it. Still, there are a couple of places where what to do isn't exactly obvious. The bar with Bruce the Waiter, for instance. Patience is a virtue here, but that by itself isn't enough. As anyone who lives in New York knows, any waiter or waitress under the age of 90 is an aspiring actor or actress. Keep that in mind and read a book while you wait (heli).

Ultima Underworld II: The Void is the last of the eight worlds and, in some ways, the most difficult. Some people aren't sure of what's going on in this weird place, or what exactly has to be done. It's a confusing area, to be sure. The main thing here is to follow the various colored paths one at a time through the moon gates until you reach the pyramid of blocks. Then, you get to play Q-bert and change the pyramid to the same color as the path that led you here. Be sure to end at the top, because a moon gate will show up there when the whole pyramid has to be changed. The pyramid has to be done four times, once for each path that leads you there.

Well, that's about it for this look into the mailing. In the meantime, if you need help with an adventure game, you can reach me in the following ways:

On Delphi: stop by the GameSIG, under the Groups and Clubs menu.

On GEnie: visit the Games RoundTable (type: Scorpia to reach the Games RT).

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

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

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But, I Don't Want to be on T.V.!

CGW's Bag-Guy Seduced by The "Dark" Side of The Farce

by Mike Rooney Kronkite



It was not the type of scene I was expecting. The entire crew of that prime time news show was crowding into my office. I heard some technician complaining about needing time to white balance the shot and the host started rattling off questions at hyperspeed as I sunk into my chair with a dejected slump.

Someone had told this crew of investigative journalists about a conspiracy in the entertainment software industry and that I was a conspiracy buff. So, they invaded my basement office in the massive Golden Empire Publications building to get my thoughts on the matter.

"Could I deny that Strategic Simulations, Inc. had laid off almost 20% of the company, largely over delays in their *Dark Sun* product?" I told them that delay had hurt a lot of people, but I was more excited about *Gary Grigby's War in Russia*. The monster game will do for the CGW Hall of Fame game (*War in Russia*) what *Gary Grigby's Pacific War* did to the old 8-bit *War in the Pacific* game—bring it into the '90s (and MS-DOS world) and provide the kind of accessible and customizable challenge one finds in *PW*.

The television interviewer wouldn't let up. "How about MicroProse? Didn't they let 10% of their employees go? Might that not have something to do with their *Darklands* product?" I told him that the company was

not only trying to fix *Darklands* completely with their version 7 update, but that they were working on a lot, new cyberpunk game called *Blood Net* as well.

Before he could ask another question, I attempted to change the subject. "If you want something that's really news," I said, "you ought to ask about the upcoming game from Papyrus Software."

"Who?" he asked, as I knew he would.

"The developers who designed and programmed *Indianapolis 500: The Simulation* for Electronic Arts. They are planning to release an open-ade racing game which retains some of the feel of *Indy*, but offers much improved graphics and a whole list of features that weren't even considered during its production."

He seemed placated for a moment, but seemed unsatisfied when I told him that the game hadn't been named, pending the signing of a license with a major racing team. The reporter opened his mouth to ask another question, but I interrupted to throw him off balance.

"Did I tell you that Virgin Games is discussing scenarios for *Dune II*? How about the fact that they're planning a Sega Genesis version of *Dune II*? When that stopped him for a moment, I followed up with some more news from Virgin. "They're also planning to publish a CD-ROM version of a game called *Curse of Enchantia*." I was losing him. He glanced back at his notes and I blurted out, "They're doing *Genet's Palace for Windows*!" The latter might have been good news for gamers, but it didn't seem to do much for the broadcast news personality.

"Then, tell me about Sierra and Dynamix. Didn't they reduce their work force by 10%?" he queried.

"Sure," I responded, but there is still going to be good stuff coming out. I started listing titles. "There's *Freddie Phurbs*, *Frontier Pharmacist*." He already knew. "There's *Quest for Glory IV: Shadows of Darkness*." I struck a nerve. He wrote feverishly on his notepad and

ordered the cameraman to zoom in. "Hey, I didn't even get to mention Dynamix' submarine simulation, tentatively called *Sea Wolves*, or even their Japanimation-style robot combat game. They both have terrific graphics."

He zeroed in on his agenda. "Ever notice that all these companies that had worker reductions have the word 'Dark' in, at least, one title? In fact, the same thing happened to a pen-and-paper game company with a game called *Dark Conspiracy*. Maybe there is something about that word? Maybe there is a 'dark conspiracy'?"

I tried to change the thrust. I told him that LucasArts was finally going to publish that *Sam & Max: Freelance Police* game I had always wanted to see, the one based on Steve Purcell's short-lived Comics comic book. "You know," I reminded him, "the characters satirized in the costume shop for *LeChuck's Revenge*?" He didn't.

I informed him that Mallard Software was going to release an enhanced version of Wes-son's *Lunar Commander*. He didn't bite. I told him that they had an air traffic controller simulation called "Tower" on the books that would connect lots of flight simulation fanatics. I told him that they were going to publish voice command modules for *F-117A Stealth Fighter*, *Comanche Maximum Overkill* and *Flight Simulator 4*, bundled with a headset. He wouldn't take the hint.

How could I get rid of this guy and get back to work before my editor killed me? I faked it. It was just like an NBC newscast. "Ever hear of I-Motion's *Alone in the Dark*?" I asked. His eyes widened. "They did it. They joined in league with H.P. Lovecraft's *Og-Sugghoth* demon and caused the other companies to have to lay off employees."

"Why?" he asked with great gravitas.

"Why?" I answered, "so that they could be *alone* in the dark." I didn't tell him that there was no conspiracy. It would have ruined the episode to mention that *CyberDreams' Dark Seed* won an SPA award. And, of course, I wanted to be on television. **CGW**

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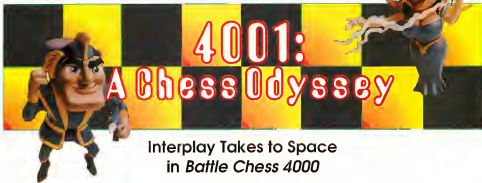
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Interplay Takes to Space in *Battle Chess 4000*

by Jay Kee

Chess isn't supposed to be fun. It's tough to learn, impossible to master. It's deep, mysterious, intriguing and challenging—anything but fun.

Fun is for kids. Fun is for carnivals, video games and vacations. Chess is for serious study, intense concentration, deep thinking. It conjures up images of silent clubs decorated in leather and wood; of opponents hunched over their boards, faces etched in frowns of intellectual effort. Why, the very thought of someone laughing out loud boggles the mind.

Of course, that's exactly what happens when one plays *Battle Chess 4000*, a new and delightfully irreverent installment in Interplay's *Battle Chess* series. One laughs...a lot.

In this version of the grand old classic, a nameless Grand Master (the player) has been transported through time to the year 4000 and deposited on a space station in earth orbit. Within the station is an arena housing a huge, translucent chessboard. On the board is the strangest collection of characters ever assembled. Gone are the standard inanimate medieval icons. In their place is a cast of characters right out of a *Back Rogers* novel, each outfitted in a strange and unique manner, equipped with strange and unique weapons, and harboring a strange and unique sense of humor.

Instead of pawns, there are cute alien worms; bishops have been replaced by mad scientists with infectious giggles and bizarre wands; knights have become spaceship captains and rooks have been transformed into huge robots that could best be described as a cross between a *Transformer* and a *BattleMech*. The humanoid King and Queen are almost ordinary by comparison, but their repertoire of weapons and skills are anything but ordinary.

In this game, there's none of that pawns-takes-pawn stuff. Pieces aren't just captured—they're tickled, vacuumed, blasted, melted,

hypnotized, tricked and hugged to death. This is cartoon violence, mostly harmless and very funny; the characters deliver punch lines, facial expressions and sound effects with an uncanny sense of timing.



TITLE:	Battle Chess 4000
SYSTEM:	IBM
PRICE:	\$59.95
PLAYERS:	1 or 2 (head-to-head and modem play)
PRODUCTION:	Documentation Look-up
PRODUCTION:	Brian Fargo, Scott Denver
PUBLISHER:	Interplay Productions Irvine, CA 07140-5534-6676





Under normal circumstances, most people would consider watching a game of chess to be roughly equivalent to watching paint dry. I have several chess sets, a dedicated chess computer, one or two computer chess games, and have played at both the club and tournament levels. Not once have family or friends shown an inclination to sit down and watch. With *Battle Chess 4000*, however, the first game out of the box drew a crowd. And the crowd loved it.

This is a dangerous game; it should have a warning from the Surgeon General. It's so funny, it's distracting. Players will spend more time laughing at the antics of the characters on the board than concentrating on position or tactics. It's also very slow. It takes time for these characters to move from place to place and even more time to knock one another off.

Fortunately, the designers were thoughtful enough to include a 2-D option with conventional chess pieces displayed on a conventional board. Without it, patience would soon wear thin, and chances of winning at any level would be greatly diminished.

Looking Good

Visually, the SVGA version of *Battle Chess 4000* is a treat. Words like "stunning" and "awesome" are used so often as to become trite. Sometimes, however, those words are not only justified, they're an understatement. *Battle Chess 4000* is one of those cases. The SVGA graphics are razor sharp and crystal clear, and the animated movements are smooth and natural, and are enhanced by digitized sound effects that pack the punch of a movie soundtrack.

There is, however, a catch. The SVGA version is a memory hog, requiring a minimum of 600K conventional memory, at least 1 megabyte of expanded (EMS) memory and a fat 14-plus megabytes of disk space. It also needs a fast computer—a 386SX/16 MHz or better. Running on a 386/33 system under DOS 5.0, with 4 megabytes of RAM, and Qualitas' 386-Max memory manager, the program was clean and well-mannered, with few interruptions from disk-accesses. Per-

formance on a slower machine is likely going to be less than optimal.

BC4000 supports all the standard options: mouse control, take-back moves, time clocks, autoplay, swap sides, print moves and so on, but it includes some not-so-standard variations that make it fun to play. There's one that lets players rewind a game to the beginning, fast forward it to the last move played, or replay it from any position. There's another that gives players the opportunity to grade themselves on the Elo scale (named after professor Arpad Elo, who designed it) by testing them on 24 chess positions. Also, if playing against the computer isn't enough of a challenge, another option lets players use a modem to play against another person over the phone line.

No, But Seriously...

While *Battle Chess 4000* is unquestionably a comical and thoroughly entertaining game, it does have a serious side. Hidden just below the surface is a surprisingly sophisticated chess program with all the features any serious player could hope for.

For starters, *BC4000* boasts an opening library of over 300,000 moves. Openings are determined by three user-definable parameters: Random, Strength and Popularity. The first introduces a randomizing element; the second determines how strong or weak the opening will be, and the third determines how common or uncommon it will be. Players can set these to whatever configuration and degree they wish, thereby controlling the aggressiveness and unpredictability of the game. With the Learning option, *BC4000* can record and store any particularly strong opening variations. These moves are then written to a supplementary file and subsequently included as part of the program's opening book. This gives the program a near-human capacity for adapting to the skills of the player, a feature that can really make life interesting.

Equally interesting is the unorthodox method of setting skill levels. Program strength is not simply determined by a pre-set scale, but divided into Weak and Strong categories and controlled by independent variables. Selecting Weak opposition brings up a



menu of 10 levels, ranging from beginner to intermediate. Choosing Strong brings up an advanced level with five time-control options, each with its own unique degree of difficulty. Of the five, Tournament is the strongest and most aggressive level. In this setting, the program actually manages time according to the difficulty of the position, spending less time in obvious situations and saving it for complex positions and endgame play.

An extension of this capability, and one of the factors that makes *Battle Chess 4000* a formidable opponent, is the Thinking option. When this is turned on, the program uses the time a player spends thinking to predict the next move and plan an appropriate response, in much the same way a human player operates. When it guesses right, the response is made immediately and time is saved for future use. The result is a faster-running program, with the percentage of correct guesses producing an equivalent increase in speed. According to Interplay, *BC4000* will guess right 30% of the time, which translates into a 30% increase in speed.

Another factor that significantly improves *Battle Chess 4000*'s speed and performance is its use of a hash table. Basically, hash tables (or transposition tables, as they're often called) permit a program to store information about a position and then compare that to other positions during a game. Whenever an identical position is reached, the information from the hash table is used to generate a move, eliminating the need to search the position all over again. As a game progresses and the number of identical positions increases, the gain in speed and performance is substantial; the endgame, a classic weakness in chess programs, is improved dramatically.

All of this adds up to a killer program, one that easily justifies Interplay's claim of an Elo rating of 2000—a Candidate Master class, under the USCF system. *Battle Chess 4000* has transformed chess from a stuffy, intellectual exercise into a game that is fun to play. It combines great comedy, superb graphics, and a serious chess game without compromising anything along the way. It can be played for laughs or played for real. It can satisfy the kid or the Grand Master in all of us. **CBW**



The Cyberpunk Conspiracy

The Koshan Conspiracy from UbiSoft

by Jeff Labrecque

As a literary genre, cyberpunk has emerged as an exciting subculture in the realm of traditional science fiction. The works of William Gibson (*Neuromancer*), Walter Jon Williams (*Hard Wired*), Bruce Sterling (*Mirror Shades*), George Alec Effinger (*When Gravity Fails*) and many other talented writers have helped make cyberpunk one of the fastest growing segments in popular fiction. Even film has joined the cyberpunk bandwagon: Ridley Scott's cult classic *Blade Runner*, adapted from Philip K. Dick's novel *Do androids dream of electric sheep?*, cast Harrison Ford as a troubled android killer in futuristic Los Angeles. Stephen King's recent *Lanternman Man* film visually demonstrated the concept of cyberspace in a convincing fashion.

In the software industry, the increasing popularity of cyberpunk has not gone unnoticed. Infocom's *Circuit's Edge* brought George Alec Effinger's seamy and exotic Budayeen to computer gamers a few years ago. Interplay's *Neuromancer* adapted William Gibson's novel of the same name, while Dynamic's *Rise of the Dragon* took visual and stylistic cues from *Blade Runner*. Almost unnoticed in the growing software cyberpunk market, UbiSoft's *BAT* (*Bureau of Astral Troubleshooters*) was a quirky and intriguing product released in 1990, which was unfortunately hobbled by a variety of minor design foibles and defects.

Learning from the shortcomings of their first foray into the U.S. computer gaming market, UbiSoft has now released *BAT II: The Koshan Conspiracy* (*BAT2*). Although *BAT2* shares many design elements with its predecessor, it is clearly a superior product. Instead of the relatively restrictive gaming environs of *BAT*, *BAT2* gives gamers a huge, multi-faceted game world in which the player must find the people, items and information needed to succeed. The designers claim that



BAT2 is five times larger than the original and I found no evidence to dispute this claim.

BAT2 begins with the player either selecting a pre-generated agent or creating a new one from scratch. After a brief training period to increase attributes, the player's agent is sent into the fray. The goal of the agent is described in a 14-page scenario booklet. In essence, the player's agent has been sent to Roma II, a city on the planet Shedislan where a large corporation, Koshan Inc., is attempting to control the production of Echiatone 21, a valuable mineral. The player must thwart the schemes of Koshan Corp. and assume control of the Echiatone 21 supply.

After arriving in Roma II and meeting the *BAT* contact, the player begins the game proper. *BAT2* is roughly divided into three broad gaming segments. In the first, the player must obtain, by any means necessary, the deeds which grant ownership of Beddin 6, the natural satellite of Shedislan that contains the majority of Echiatone 21 deposits. After that goal is accomplished, the player will have the opportunity to fight in gladiatorial games, journey into space, and undertake a variety of other actions in the last two segments.

When In Roma...

Gamers will spend most of their playing time in the city of Roma II—a grimy, pollution-choked metropolis which resembles the

21st Century Los Angeles seen in *Blade Runner*, and the seamy, hard-edged world of George Alec Effinger's Budayeen. Roma II is composed of six sectors, each sector being a gameworld in miniature. The soaring towers of the business sector can only be reached by flying taxi, while the northern market section offers gamers a chance to buy a variety of goods. In the tourist sector, a video arcade offers three video games—much like the games *Breakout*, *Chinese Checkers*, and a bizarre water, pipes and buckets game—which the player can use to increase funds. Having a healthy supply of monetary units on hand is essential to success, so players would be well advised to spend a substantial amount of time visiting the arcade and battering with NPCs to raise the required funds.



TITLE: The Koshan Conspiracy
SYSTEMS: Amiga, IBM
RELEASD ONE: IBM
PRICE: \$49.95
PROFECTION: Documentation Lodap
DESIGNERS: Computer's Dream
PUBLISHER: UbiSoft
 San Jose, CA
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All of the game elements are wrapped up in a unique, mouse-controlled interface. Everything is viewed from a first-person perspective, with the gamer seeing things with the agent's eye. As the mouse-pointer moves around the screen, its shape changes to reflect possible game actions. For example, moving the pointer to the edge of the screen changes it to an arrow, allowing the player can move in that direction. Moving the pointer over non-player characters (NPCs) turns it into a set of moving lips, making conversation possible. Using this "multi-mode" point-and-click system, players can use services and vehicles, and purchase supplies and weapons.

Conversing with NPCs is straightforward; after clicking on an NPC, a window opens displaying all of the NPCs which can be spoken to, while a scrollable list of topics fills the bottom center of the window. Other options allow players to fight with, steal from, and hire NPCs. Clicking on a topic will elicit a response from the NPC; if the NPC has a comment on the topic, a series of dialogue balloons will impart information to the player. Words highlighted in red can be clicked upon for further information, allowing players to direct the flow of any conversation. New terms learned from NPCs are stuck into the topic list. While this system seems very workable at first, it quickly becomes cumbersome as more topics are added. Since topics aren't listed alphabetically, players can spend an inordinate amount of time scanning through the topic list.

As in most role-playing games, conversation sometimes degenerates into outright conflict. *BAT2* offers two combat options: strategic and action. In strategic mode (essential if the player has managed to hire a mob of hirlings) the player may place characters in a tactical fashion. The action option resembles a shooting game like *Operation Wolf*, with the player moving an on-screen crosshair to target and fire at running, diving and jumping opponents.



All of these segments are accompanied by excellent sound effects: the noisy chatter of bar patrons, the muted whoosh of a hovercar on an empty street, and the whistling wind at the roof of a city skyscraper. The graphics are equally impressive; what the artwork lacks in aesthetic appeal is more than compensated by



the effective portrayal of a grimy, overpopulated city of the future. The graphics even change to reflect day and night cycles; a grimy, vermin-infested alleyway during the day becomes a corridor guarded by condescending neon burst of light at night.

Bionic Buddies

While real-world computer users fumble with palmtop PCs, battery-hungry laptops, and other nascent attempts at portable computing, the player's agent in *BAT2* has the ultimate in toadlike processing power: the Bidirectional Organic Bioputer (or BOB, for short). This wonder of futuristic technology is embedded in the left arm of the player's agent, serving the role of fully programmable computer with a variety of functions. In addition to keeping tabs on the physical well-being of an agent, BOB offers five cybernetic implants which can grant an agent a variety of special abilities. The ATS34 implant keeps the agent awake for long periods, Morpho L7 can alter the agent's physical appearance, while other implants allow the agent to heal wounds, activate night-vision, and even generate a singling "Spiderman sense" which alerts the player to danger. Perhaps most powerful of BOB's features is the programming module. Using a variety of icons, the player can create a variety of mini-programs to automate certain functions. Players can create programs to translate languages, track the agent's physical condition, set alarms, tell time, and perform other responsibilities. Once created, up to five programs can run at the same time. Amiga owners familiar with Commodore's AmigaVision multimedia authoring system will recognize the iconic flowchart approach used in BOB's programming module. Although not essential for completing the game, the BOB adds another intriguing layer of gameplay for players to explore.

Cyberpunk Sims

In addition to the adventuring and conversation elements, players will need to master the controls of several flight simulators in order to complete the game. One of these is needed to use the via-express, a mass-transit system which links the six sectors of Roma II. To navigate the via, players must travel about in the "mosca," a rocket-powered land vehicle. Another craft is the "mosquito," a hover-

craft similar to the flying squad cars seen in the film *Blade Runner*, used to reach the lofty skyscraper runways in the business sector of Roma II. The "katatruck" vehicle is functionally identical to the mosquito, although it is used solely by the player to perform a little breaking and entering. In later segments of the game, the player gets some time behind the controls of a small spacecraft and an asteroid-tunneling machine.

Even at the highest detail settings, all of the simulators are visually rather plain; gamers seeking to zoom around the world of *BAT2* with *Falcon 3.0*-style realism will be sorely disappointed. The mosquito taxi and the "mosca" via-express vehicle can be automated by hiring a chauffeur to drive the vehicle about. Whichever vehicle the player chooses, one will see ray-traced animations of the vehicle landing, lifting off, or otherwise changing location.

Ghosts In The Machine

Although a vast improvement over the original *BAT* in both size and scope, *BAT2* still has its own share of problems. Aside from the cumbersome text handling and barebones simulators, a few other defects should serve to irritate gamers. While most adventure games today allow lengthy save game descriptions, *BAT2* restricts players to a meager eight letters for their save-game mnemonic. Further, spelling and grammatical errors are far too common in the game documentation; even the scrolling text introduction contains an embarrassing number of spelling errors. In terms of gameplay, some players may dislike the wide open, "anything goes" approach that UbiSoft has used in *BAT2*. Although this reviewer found wandering around the streets of Roma II to be enjoyable, some gamers may prefer the "step A, step B, step C" approach used in other adventure games.



In the final analysis, those aforementioned problems prove to be more irritating than infuriating. *BAT2* is an enormous game, offering a richly textured, futuristic gameworld that gamers can find themselves easily drawn into. Whether one is a cyberpunk fan or an adventure gamer looking for something new and unique, *BAT2* is a gaming experience well worth the monetary credits. **cmw**



A Fragment Of The Diary Of Lt. Col. Lemuel Cork,

Found Among His Papers After His Disappearance¹

Translated by Charles Ardai

Friday, March 13

Last night I again had the vision, as indeed I have had now for a fortnight consecutively. I set it down in these pages less for posterity than for my own sanity.

I awakened—or I fancied that I awakened, for in reality I knew full well that I was dreaming—to a tapping on the pane of my window. Drawing the curtain, I saw upon the ledge a leathern box, as wide as it was long and twice as high, bound twice around with twine. I threw open the window and brought the box within. It contained, I lost no time in discovering, three items—as, indeed, each night it has.

There was a case, the size and shape of a gramophone's, but where the horn might be there was instead a large cube, one wall of which was glass. It resembled nothing so much as a glass-fronted diorama but for the fact that the glass was opaque so that one could not see within.

Second, there was a flat, rectangular board with buttons arranged in rows upon it, each labeled with a numeral or a letter of the alphabet. It was clearly a device of kabbalistic purpose.

Finally there was a smaller box, with a garish image upon it—each night this image has been different—which box contained a flat square of some stiff material. Within the box there were printed instructions for inserting the square into a slot below the glass-fronted cube and for activating the nefarious device.

Despite a warning within the box that the results of my actions would prove inexplicably horrific, I found I was unable to prevent myself from following the instructions. Lo! upon my completing the task, the front of the cube came alive with color and motion. Figures in miniature moved across the glass. There were words upon the glass as well.



Yet, aside from wonderment at the sorcery I had worked and a gnawing fear that by doing so I was weaving the black web around me, no terror was forthcoming. To be sure, the tiny men who moved upon the glass committed grave atrocities upon one another—at my direction, I am afraid, for it was I who directed their actions by depressing the keys on the board—and yet, their acts struck me less as horrific than quaint, for the images were so crude and tiny that no amount of violence done by them or to them could raise my gorge or make me wish to shield my eyes.

Last night, the vision ended as it always ends: I reached behind the cube and deactivated it. The images vanished. I was left in marvel and bewilderment.

Saturday, March 14

My God! It has begun again, but this time it is no vision!

I awakened this morning to the familiar tapping at my window; but this was waking in fact, not in a dream, as I swiftly ascertained

by pinching my forearm violently. I approached the window with some trepidation, afraid of what I might find when I opened it. You may well imagine with what internal disequilibrium it was that I uncurtained my windows to discover that self-same leathern box about which I have dreamt to, these 15 nights.

I drew it in and cut the twine that bound it. With shaking hands I unwrapped its contents and removed them to a corner of my bed-chamber. The cube and board were as they had been in my dream. The smaller box was one I had never seen before. It bore the legend, *Alone In The Dark*, and the image on the front of a broad-shouldered gentleman,



TITLE	Alone in the Dark
SYSTEM	IBM/386 Recommended
GRAPHICS	VGA or MCGA
SOUND	Sound Blaster, Creative
PRICE	\$59.99
PROTECTOR	Symbol Look-Up
DESIGNER	Frederic Raynal
PUBLISHER	Infotrac 1300 Ocean Avenue, Suite 1, San Jose, CA 95131 (415) 576-1085



¹With specific reference to L-Motion's *Alone In The Dark*

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lantern held aloft, on the point of entering a fog-shrouded mansion. In the clouds above the mansion one could just discern the ghoul-ish face of an undead soul.

The square within the box had the familiar, handwritten note attached, warning me of the horror that awaited me if I inserted it into the cube. Yet my curiosity was more powerful than my anxiety and it won the contest for control of my will.

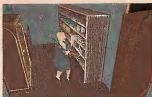
Would that it had not! Would that I had never laid eyes upon the devilment that soon followed!

I inserted the square; I activated the machine. Immediately I knew that this sorcery, this dumbshow upon the glass, was of a different type entirely from what I had seen before. All the rest had been merely preparation for this. For now, on the glass, I beheld not tiny sketchwork figures but a man, a fully articulated simulacrum of myself, walking through the corridors of a mansion, climbing stairs, opening cabinets and trunks and drawers. True, the image was somewhat stylized, but the motion was indisputably that of a man.

The image, too, filled the entire screen. No one-inch, flat man was this, like the hieroglyphs drawn on the walls of a Pharaoh's tomb. This was a real figure, whom I saw from every possible angle, a different angle in each room—nay, several angles in each room, depending on where I stood. At times, I viewed the man from an overhead perspective. At other times, I gazed upon him as though I were looking up from the floor and at still other times, as though I saw him through one of the house's windows.

I cannot begin to express fully the terror that gripped my heart as I directed the figure through the house. I could hear the man's every footstep, whether on carpeted floor, on gravel, or on wooden stair. In the distance without I could hear the howls of damned beasts; and from within the house came suspicious creaking and slamming of doors.

The man walked at my command, and this was only the start, not the limit, of his abilities. When I directed him to do so, he raised his hands, kicked out with his leg, ran, jumped, or threw one of the objects on his person. I tested all of these abilities one by one, learning them on my own since the instructions contained in the box were most inadequate. Yet learn them I did; and soon I



was able to maneuver my doppleganger with great agility and ease.

Then—my hand trembles most violently as I write of it—while I searched the house attic, a brutish hound leapt through the window and bounded directly at my throat! I had no weapon on my person and lost much blood in the first instants of the attack. Rallying my forces, I drew back my fists and rained blows upon the beast's flank. It slunk back last at last, collapsed on the floor and, in a clap of thunder, exploded into clouds of violet smoke.

I thought to test and recover my strength, but it was not to be. A green-fleshed figure sprang up from the floor below, through a trapdoor hitherto undetected, and swung at me from behind. In my weakened state, I could not stand against him. I had barely time to swivel to face him before I collapsed, issued a horrible death-cry, and saw myself dragged by the feet to the horrible beast's crypt.

As I scan my words above, I see that I have adopted the habit of referring to my stylized simulacrum in the first person. It is a habit easy to fall into. I find myself identifying with the poor, beleaguered figure. He died despite my best efforts, at the hands and jaws of the fearful servants of evil. I must, I now realize, revisit the mansion tomorrow. This is so despite the palpable sense of foreboding that has descended upon me.

None of the other simulations I had experienced previously, in my dreams, had this effect. None of the others could stir the heart in my breast, bring me to shortness of breath, make me lean forward in my seat until my face was barely a foot from the glass. None before had made me care about the characters whose lives I directed. None had made me jump in fright at the slightest sound. Not had any so fully realized an environment: though it only existed on the glass, I feel that I have been inside a real house.

I am afraid to sleep tonight, for I fear what dreams may come. I also fear that I might awake to find this wondrous *Alone In The Dark* gone in the morning.

Sunday, March 15

It was not gone. The cube, with its darkened glass, seemed to glare at me as I stepped from my bed. I detected a radiant malevolence

issuing forth from the machine, as though it knew the discomfort it had caused me.

Does it know, too, I wondered, that I am tantalized and fascinated, that I could no more resist the urge to return to the simulation than I could resist the urge to breathe? Does it know how it has captured my imagination?

Immediately after I had finished my morning ablutions, I sat before the cube and called up the simulation. Before it would let me begin, it had me look up two symbols printed on a page in a book that had come in the box. Why it did this I have no clue, unless it was in a deliberate attempt to delay my satisfaction. Yet, I did as I was asked.

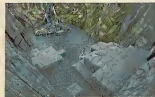
Then, the mansion appeared before me. I noticed what I had not before, that before entering the mansion I had the choice of whether to direct a female or a male simulacrum. I chose the male, of course, but could not help thinking that this was a most congenial feature.

I was in the attic again and the scene began to play out as before. Forewarned as I was, however, I took precautions against the attacks that would come: I pushed a heavy wardrobe in front of the window and a trunk over the trapdoor. When the monsters came, they could not break through. I was able to proceed through the attic unmolested.



Ah, but there is so much more to the house than that one room! In all there are three other floors, with monsters of unspeakable description on each: ghouls, zombies, winged demons, ghosts, hellhounds like the first I had seen, even a suit of armor that came to life as I neared it. Some of these I fought, others I avoided. I found weapons and tools to aid me as I proceeded, though it was not always obvious how the tools were to be used. I died many times before seeing all the rooms—indeed, even now I cannot be sure that I have seen every room.

Fortunately, I discovered a technique for preserving a moment in time, saving it so that I might return to it in the event that I die, rather than starting all over from the beginning. The simulation permits me to save four such frozen moments, and it helpfully provides a picture of each next to the label I have given it so that I might remember where in the house I was at the time that I saved it. This technique, of "saving" before I enter a poten-



tially dangerous situation—which is to say, each time I enter a room!—has allowed me to make much more rapid progress.

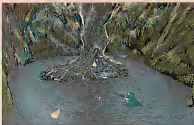
I am beginning to uncover the history of the house and its unfortunate inhabitants. The most recent owner committed suicide rather than allow himself to be enslaved by the demons he had conjured. Pieces of the story are contained in letters, books, and other documents I have found scattered throughout the house. Each document is a fragment; each holds only a piece of the puzzle. I will not rest until I have found them all.

Where can I look for the rest? Where have I not been yet? I realize, as I glance up at the window, that it has become dark. I have been at this machine all day. Yet I cannot lift my hand from the kabbalistic key-pad. I cannot end the session, not yet, not with so much still undiscovered.

I shall play the night through if need be.

Monday, March 16

The underworld beckons! After much searching, I have found a way beneath the house, by placing...



[Translator's note: at this point the manuscript becomes illegible.]

...more horrible than I could have imagined. Strange travesties of nature abound, with the forms of insects and amphibians and giant worms. I have slain an undead pirate in a fierce sword duel, kept from plank to plank across a haunted lagoon, traversed a dark maze. While in the house I was free to roam as I chose; I now feel channeled from episode to episode, directed toward a fate at whose nature I can only guess. I preferred the exploitation of the house, but who would not? An inexorable descent into Hell would be chosen by no man.

Yet, it is my fate. I approach an unholy altar,

prepared to drive the Satanic hordes back to the depths of the abyss or die in the attempt. My pulse pounds in my ears, my hands grip the key-board tightly, and I crave the solution to this nest of puzzles.

This is truly a diabolical simulation, rich in civil imaginings and unexpected twists. I cannot stop, though I am at it for hours. I am caught, and I give the designers of this devilish trap the full credit they deserve. Whosoever they may be (demons all, I have no doubt), they have captured my soul and will have it in their keeping until the story's end.

At the same time that I want to solve the mystery, though, I dread its conclusion—for where, after this, can I turn for another? Having experienced this marvel, where shall I find the like? Heaven grant that this be not the only simulation of its kind! I pray that I might find another!

[Translator's Note: Here the manuscript ends. On March 17, 1911, looking haggard and exhausted but wearing a serene smile, Lemuel Cork left his house, walking in the direction of a nearby town. A neighbor reports that Cork was whispering the following cryptic words as he walked: "The Seventh Guest... must find *The Seventh Guest*..." He was never seen again.] **CGW**

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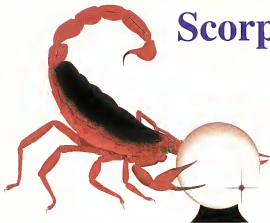
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Scorpion's View



Scorpia Finds Herself Alone in the Dark

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

Horror seems to be the "in" genre this year, with several companies having such products already on the market or slated to be released in the coming months. Of course, horror games are nothing new, but there haven't been very many of them over the years. Outside of Infocom's *The Lurking Horror*, an adventure with a decidedly creepy plot, few titles leap to mind until we get to Horrossoft's *Eloira*, and even after that, it is hard to think of other games in this area. So it's still a rich field, and the publishers are finally getting around to sowing a few seeds.

The newer crop of spooky titles are more along the lines of *Eloira* than straight adventure: puzzles with a touch of hack-and-slash and weird things happening along the way. *Alone In The Dark*, from Interplay/Motion, is very much in that category.

Drawing heavily (in some respects) on the works of H.P. Lovecraft, *Alone* is set in Louisiana during the 1920s. A private investigator is hired to visit an old house and retrieve a document from inside a piano stored in the attic. Naturally, there is more here than meets the eye, and before long this simple errand turns into a life-and-death struggle with the evil that infests the house.

The designers have done a good job of establishing mood, a very important aspect for games of this type. Anyone familiar with Lovecraft's works knows that diaries, books, journals, letters, etc., usually play an important role in his stories. That is also the case here; there is much reading material to be found throughout the house. Some of it contains clues to solving puzzles, some fills in the history of the mansion, and some seems to be there just to enhance the eeriness of the whole experience. Reading is definitely an integral part of the game, and should not be skipped.

Sound is used to good effect. Floors creak realistically when walked upon, as do doors when opened. Each

weapon type has its own sound: the blast of a gun, the "woosh" of a sword, the twang of a bow. Your character grunts with the effort of combat, and cries out when injured. From time to time, odd moaning and wolf howls float through the air.

Music is good, but perhaps a little too fast-paced. Something a bit slower and more ominous would have fit into the atmosphere better, particularly when walking through the empty (and not so empty) rooms. The music became annoying at times, and I turned it off occasionally.

Graphically, the game has a unique feature: the use of different viewing angles throughout play. A typical adventure usually has one view; either "you-are-there" 3D, or some sort of third-person perspective. While *Alone* uses the third-person view, this is done from different perspectives in different locations.

These angles range from looking from the floor up to looking from the ceiling down. Years of watching horror movies have taught us that when the viewing perspective changes, it usually means that *something* is up (maybe creeping up!), thereby creating a certain amount of tension. This cinematic approach is used very effectively, keeping you alert and worried over what's about to happen.

However, this same technique has drawbacks on occasion. There are some situations where maneuvering the character while the angles change can make your life difficult. Imagine running around narrow library corridors while being chased by a critter that can walk right through walls, while the perspective changes constantly as you move.

Worse yet, in the end game, you have to wade into the middle of a lake, while Deep Ones (nasty water monsters) are coming up on



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the side, and a tree in the lake is tossing fireballs your way. The initial view is full-figure, but half-way into the water, it suddenly changes to a close-up of the character. This is not only disorienting, but makes it extremely difficult to see which way to go to avoid being killed. The full-figure view should have been continued longer, or at the very least, a close-up of the forward view ahead of the character used. As it is, this section of the game will likely give many players unneeded frustration, and they may well have to go through this part more than once to complete it.

There is also a lot of jumping around necessary in the tunnels. In some parts, it's very tricky making the leaps, and the angle changes can make it more so. Save often when hopping across pillars or over rotten bridges. Deep Ones are always lurking in the water, waiting to rip you to shreds.

While there is fighting in *Abuse*, it isn't by any means a CRPG. Aside from hit points, there are no physical attributes or skills, and there are no experience points or levels of any kind. Killing monsters has only one purpose—to get them out of your way.

Combat itself is therefore simple, and more a matter of timing than anything else. Your character arms him or herself with a weapon (or uses fists/feet if no weapon is available), faces the creature, and lets loose. Facing is very important here, especially when using a revolver or rifle. It is quite easy to miss with those weapons if you're not looking in the right direction. I much preferred the sword in most fights, as you can be a little off and still hit opponents, and you don't need ammunition.

Which brings us to another little sore point in the game. Critters fall into three basic categories: those that can be killed, those that are indestructible, and those which require special methods to be removed. It is not always easy to determine which type of critter belongs in which category.

You can waste a lot of time trying to kill something that can't be destroyed. The bathrub monster is one of those, and so is the big worm (actually a Cthulhonian) that lurks in the tunnels. The rats in the cellar and the spiders in the garden are also unkillable. On the other hand, the immaterial critter in the library can be killed, but you need a special weapon for that, and the strange creatures guarding the stairway down from the balcony require non-violent methods.

So the first rule is: if you can't kill it right off, stay away from it until you've done more reading and/or found some other items to try out. Be careful with the cavalry saber. It has a special use in the game, and should not be wielded as a weapon, as it is prone to breaking. I found that out too late and had to replay a substantial portion of the game. Leave the item safely in your inventory; there are plenty of other and better weapons available.

The game also has a couple of "gotchas." Most of the reading material is safe, but a couple of things aren't wise to read. Unfortunately, none of the books have exterior titles, so they have to be opened before you know what you're looking at. By then, it could be too late.

For instance, I opened one book to the title page and saw "De Vermis Mysteriis". No. We will *not* read this book. As a reader of Lovecraft,

not to mention Call of Cthulhu player, I knew this one was deadly. Too late. Just looking at the title page alone is enough to kill you. Beware of books with red or yellow covers. Save before you read!

Another problem can crop up in the end game. It is absolutely vital that, after passing through the "maze," you have at least a little oil left in your lantern, or a spare can of oil, plus the lighter. Without those, you cannot finish. Once you enter the tunnels under the house, there is no going back up again until you're done down there. If you've left the spare oil can behind, or even worse, used up all the oil, you are in big, big trouble.

While there aren't many dark rooms in the house, you can use up a lot of oil going through the library, which is actually four rooms in all. The best thing to do here is get through it as quickly as possible. Pick up everything you come across, and wait until you're outside (and the lamp off) before reading anything.

If you waste no time in any of the dark rooms, you should still have some oil from the first can, with the second as a spare for later. Oddly, it doesn't matter if you run out of oil going through the maze, as the lamp will stay lit until you're out of it. So long as you have that second can in reserve, you're okay.

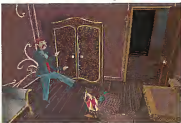
It was an unwarranted assumption on the part of the designers that a player would have sufficient oil for the big moment. Some people went through almost to the end, only to find they had to replay a lot of the game, or most of the endgame, because they had no oil. Either they ran out of oil entirely, or left the spare can upstairs (there is only so much you can carry). All this could have been avoided if an extra oil can had been placed somewhere down in the tunnels.

The interface is mouse-driven, although you can also use the keyboard. It takes a little getting used to, but once you have the hang of it, it is really simple and fairly efficient.

Saving and restoring can be done at almost any time in the game, including combat. While there aren't many save slots available, there is one interesting feature to it: each save is accompanied by a small picture, a "snapshot" of where the character was when the game was saved. This, along with the title (which can have only the standard MSDOS eight characters), can be very helpful in determining which position to bring back.

Overall, *Abuse In The Dark* is one of those neat games with some irritating flaws. It sets a good atmosphere and maintains it well for the most part. Using Lovecraftian overtones adds a lot to the game. The view shifts are a novel and effective addition. Most of the puzzles are fair. The game did NOT crash on me, or exhibit technical problems (big plus right there).

Graphically, the monsters could have been better; some of them looked more ludicrous than horrible, dangerous though they were. The viewing angles could have been planned more carefully, and the design in general should have been tighter to prevent nasty dead ends, such as running out of oil in the tunnels or using the saber in the wrong way. Since you've been warned about those, however, you should find *Abuse In The Dark* a nice change of pace from the usual run of adventure games. **CDW**



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Piercing the Veil

SSI Releases Event Horizon's *Veil of Darkness*

by Chuck Miller



“O hhh, my head...the throbbing! I feel like I've been clubbed with a two-by-four. The last thing I remember was the storm. Thunder...lightening flashing outside the cockpit. Then, the controls went crazy; the plane began its dive. After that...I must have blacked out. I seem to remember dragging myself from the wreckage. But how did I get here, in this room, in this bed? And what name belongs to that angelic face looking down at me?”

“Hello. Welcome to Csarda.
My name is Deidre.”

Those familiar with Event Horizon's *The Summoning* will find the trappings of *Veil of*

Darkness (Veil) recognizable, as it is based upon the same game engine. However, rather than spending the entire adventure underground, the player-as-vampire-slayer-in-training invests a majority of this quest above ground in a secluded Romanian valley. Instead of battling hordes of dungeon denizens, he or she must defeat the earthly and undead minions of the evil Kairn, vampire and lord of Csarda. In *Veil*, fantasy gives way to horror as the player is introduced to a dark world of werewolves and witches as opposed to wizards and wyverns, an experience balanced equally well with both challenge and reward.

Where There's a QUILL, There's a Way

Veil provides players with a welcome opportunity for a change of pace. Now, it is possible to stake out one's claim in the gothic realm of vampire hunting. Current releases seem to be trending away from staid dungeon romps and into the realm of horror (i.e. Accolade's *Werewolves*, CyberDream's *Dark Seed*, and I-Motion's *Alone in the Dark*, as well as Virgin's impending *The 7th Guest* and MicroProse's *The Legacy* and *Return of the Phantom*), a refreshing change that many gamers have long awaited.

The hero, though decidedly male, is named by the player at the start of the game (when conversing with the inhabitants of this darkened land, the player is referred to by that name, a welcome personal touch). Once play commences, it soon becomes evident that *Veil* places greater emphasis on puzzle solving than on combat, a significant change from the emphasis in *The Summoning*. There is, in fact, very little combat in comparison. Most of *Veil* involves untangling the secrets of Csarda and finding the bits and pieces necessary to succeed in the quest and lift the curse that has long held the land in its grasp.

Put This in Your PIPE and Smoke It!

To be honest, not every adventure succeeds equally well in holding my interest from out-

set to conclusion. *Veil*, however, is one that held me in rapt attention until I had seen it through to its resolution. It constrained me to play until I had rid Csarda of the evil Kairn.

Yet, while *Veil* is clearly one of the most enjoyable quests I have played this year, it does have one notable weakness—the experience ended all too soon. While *The Summoning* seemed a bit too long in total playing time (over 100 hours), *Veil* ended in the opposite direction, providing about 10 hours less play than would have been ideal (only 20 or 30 hours is required to complete it). Still, the experience is one to be savored.



Putting the Bite on the Competition?

Graphically, *Veil* is not what I would define as stunning. While the palette is well chosen to emphasize the “dark” theme of the game, the actual art, in some cases, is a bit crude in comparison to the VGA works of art provided by other developers. Yet, the imagery is clean and attractive, especially the character portraits, and does not detract from game play.

The interface, designed with the player in mind, has been refined from earlier games with added touches to complement the horror style employed (I especially like the body in the casket used to indicate character condition, turning into a skeleton as damage is accrued). Game options are easily selected (printing of text, sound toggle, loading and saving) with plenty of save positions available for those times when a quick restore is needed.

Audibly, *Veil* is above average by current standards, and provides just the right feel for



TITLE:	Veil of Darkness
SYSTEM:	IBM and Compatibles
PRICE:	\$39.95
GRAPHICS:	VGA
SOUND:	AdLib, Sound Blaster, Roland and Compatible Sound Cards
PROTECTION:	Documentation Lock-out, Symbol Identification
DESIGNERS:	Event Horizon Software, Inc.
PUBLISHER:	Strategic Simulations, Inc., Sunnyvale, CA 94089 737-6660

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the game world. Though sound effects are sparse, the soundtracks are quite mood enhancing, stirring the player's sense of dread and suspense. The resulting atmosphere is as rich as that of any game I have played in recent months.

Epitaphs and Cartographs

Documentation, always a strong suit with SSI, offers a gripping introduction to the game. The Prelude, which runs for 32 pages, is a well-written background to the events preceding *Veil*. Enjoyable fiction on its own, this piece sets the stage for the interactive horror to follow and enhances the mood conveyed in the quest. Conversations within the game, also written with great aplomb, add further to the development of the story and the internal tension.

As in previous releases from Event Horizon, automapping is provided for underground



locations (the mausoleum, cave and catacombs), allowing the player to print out maps if desired. Above ground locations, displayed on the Valley Map (new to this quest), are not expansive enough to disorient the player. Though locations are limited initially, as new locations are mentioned in conversation they appear on the map, increasing the number of areas to explore.

Holy Water and Silver Bullets

Though weaknesses are few in this adventure, room does exist for improvement. Animation is a little choppy at points, especially in animated close-ups. Adding a few more frames of animation would certainly help. The speed of movement of the player's character also seemed a bit slow. While smoothly animated, the ability to adjust speed would be a welcome feature.

In addition, object management could stand some improvement, especially with regard to the selection of "containers" in which to carry one's possessions. Most pouches look exactly alike (let's see, which pouch has the potions in it?). There are also some "hidden words" in this game that the player must discover by simple guesswork. This only poses a problem in two specific instances, but is a bit frustrating nonetheless. (See the two all-capitalized words on page 72 for assistance).

Although there is a greater emphasis on puzzle solving in *Veil* than on combat, there

still needs to be a few more creatures to battle during the game. For being overrun with evil, the land seemed too sparsely populated with skeletons, vampires and the like. (Note that while *Veil* does offer the player three levels of play, this only regulates combat difficulty and not the number of opponents).



Easy on the Garlic!

Event Horizon is a growing company providing high caliber games. With strong releases like *Veil*, players have much to look forward to in the future. For the present, *Veil of Darkness* is an adventure that offers many hours of quality entertainment for the night stalker in each of us. While it may not make Game of the Year for 1993, it is definitely one that I am glad to have played. Now, if I can just get the smell of garlic out of my clothes...**EW**

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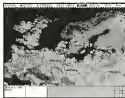
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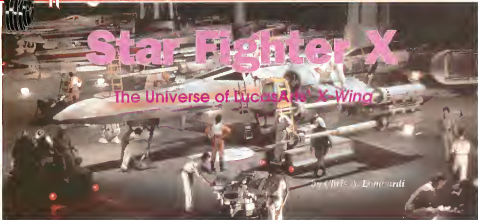


Photo Courtesy of LucasArts

Many games have been long awaited by gamers in the ten years of this hobby. Six months, a year, sometimes two do gamers drool at ads, ogle magazine covers, and pester their local merchant for the date, the date, the date. But the wait for this product goes beyond the year since the project was announced. Some could mark the date back to 1983 when LucasArts' game division (nee Lucasfilm Games) was born out of the vision of the film group and a million dollar grant from Atari. The only thing that could come to mind then was *Star Wars*. An incredibly ripe universe, a gaming company, a guaranteed audience of many thousands—it was a natural if there ever was one. And we vainly wait for many years for the obvious to manifest itself.

Some, though, could put the date for the beginning of this Great Expectation back much further—back before computer games were a consideration—back, indeed, to 1977 when a generation of kids (myself at an impressionable eight), spellbound by the magic of George Lucas' film, came out of the theater zooming several feet off the ground, their heads filled with the sounds of impassioned star fighter squawk, and their hands on the stick of an X-wing.



The wait is over, and the anticipation has culminated in *X-Wing: Space Combat Simulator*, an intense retelling of the story of the Rebel Alliance viewed from the seat of a star fighter cockpit. The game is part adventure game, part simulator, and many parts of lavish Star Wars detail, born of a synergistic action between LucasArts' storytelling talents, their extremely talented artistic staff, and their successful combat simulations group headed by Lawrence Holland (*Battlehawks 1942*, *Their Finest Hour*, *S.W.O.T.D.*). LucasArts has been very careful to stress the simulation aspect of this game—most likely out of marketing considerations—but there has been some debate among gamers on whether that classification applies. Action game, simulation, it's splitting wookiee hairs to me; *X-Wing* is one of those genre mixing games that eludes simple taxonomies and keeps BBSs in business with pointless debates. One should expect a moderately complex fighter simulation with many intense dog-fighting furballs, nail-biting missions, and many hours of play, all culminating in The Final Mission—The Trench Scene.

The Initiation

The player comes into the *X-wing* universe as an untrained novice with a distaste for the Empire's politics and, presumably, many dead Womp Rats under his belt. After successfully passing the rite of copy protection, the player checks in at the registration desk, taking on the persona of, for the sake of this article, Star Fighter X. The player does not play Luke Skywalker (unless you provide that name) though X will find that his or her destiny will have uncanny parallels with Luke's.

Entering the Flagship Independence, the

base for the Rebellion's activities and the central interface, X finds himself in a large spaceport with several accessways. Here, one gets a feel of what's to come; pleasant graphics, snatches of digitized speech, a slick and informative mouse interface, and loads of atmosphere. Yet, one has little patience for appreciating such things at this point and, besides, X will wear a pixel pathway through this scene before the last Tie is flamed.



TITLE: X-wing: Space Combat Simulator
 SYSTEM: IBM D86/33 recommended, 1MB RAM required (more recommended)
 GRAPHICS: VGA
 PRICE: \$69.95
 PROTECTION: Documentation Lock-Up
 DESIGNER: Lawrence Holland & Edward Kibben
 PUBLISHER: LucasArts
 San Rafael, CA
 (415) 721-3342

The first step is to the Pilot Training Grounds. Unfortunately, unlike the hero of the film, X cannot step from a sand speeder into an X-Wing and know the difference between the targeting indicator and a dashboard river. He'll have to fly through several hundred gates on a training course before being awarded a flight certification. Each training level becomes progressively more difficult as more laser firing obstacles are placed about each gate and the allotted level-completion time is lowered. Though graduated in difficulty, these training levels will quickly become quite difficult for the initiate as he hits the first learning slope of the game—figuring out how to configure the power systems of the craft.

Feel The Power, X

Before discussing the power system, it must be mentioned that X will not only fly the X-wing, but the A-wing, and Y-wing as well. In the fiction of the game, the Y-wing is an older model of fighter and the slowest in the fleet. It bears two frontal lasers, an ion cannon used to disable ships, and a healthy complement of torpedos. The A-wing is the newest craft in the fleet and is the fastest and most maneuverable ship in the Rebel arsenal. The X-wing falls in the middle with its mid-range maximum speed and turning rate, its four wing-mounted lasers, and a small pack of torpedos. Each craft will be used somewhat randomly from mission to mission, so X had better train in each craft before continuing on.

Though differing slightly in performance, each craft is operated in the same way. As mentioned, the key to success is power management. Each ship is somewhat like a flying battery that supplies power at a slow but steady rate. This power can be directed to the engines, the lasers, or to the shields. Diverting power to one area reduces the amount available to the others. Through the training missions, X will learn the series of keystrokes needed to move this power around, and will soon find that he is deftly directing the energy of his battery-powered craft like a skilled Jedi with his battery-powered sabre.

Once a few flight badges are earned in the proving grounds, X moves on to the Historical Missions for his first taste of combat. There are six missions for each craft here, each a graduated step into a full-blown mission. Here one is introduced to the basic enemy craft: the TIE fighter, the TIE bomber, and the various larger craft used by both the Rebellion and the Empire. The TIE fighters are the grunts of the Empire's force, and X will flame fleets of them before it's all over. If the ships in X-wing are flying battery cells, then the X-wings are "D" cells, and the TIEs are watch batteries. Two or three laser blasts will cut them in two. The bombers are a little tougher, both in shield power and in fire

power. Their complement of torpedoes are extremely dangerous, and will end up sinking more than one of X's missions.

The Hero's Path

With the Proving Grounds and the Historical Missions under his belt, X is ready to enlist



in a Tour of Duty. There are three tours; the first two with 12 missions and the third with 14. Though X is given the choice of enlisting in any one of them, it is logical and recommended that he follow them in order. Each tour has an ultimate object, explained in a few introductory paragraphs that scrolls off into a star field as in the famous introduction to the first Star Wars film. The story of the tour is developed further in the mission briefings and in cinematic sequences interspersed throughout the tours. These cinematic sequences are beautifully drawn and composed; their only fault is that there are too few: two for each of the first two tours, and three for the last.

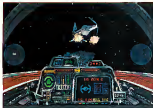
Fans of that Other popular space combat game, who became enamored of its "branching" storyline should not expect the same of X-Wing. In X-Wing the story does not play out the possibilities of failure; X will have to replay his missions until he finally succeeds. I won't waste space arguing the value of one over the other (it really doesn't matter to me—I never followed the "failure" branches of the Other game, anyway); players should simply know what not to expect.

The missions themselves are nicely varied in objective. X will make attack runs on fleet craft, rescue captured allies, defend ships from attack, and eventually make "ground strikes" on the Death Star. Some of these missions are cake walks for the experienced pilot, but others are extremely difficult; and the difficulty doesn't crescendo as one might expect. Here we arrive at one of X-Wing's weaknesses. X will find that he soars through four straight missions without so much as batting a lash, only to find that the next mission will have him stumped for hours—sometimes days! Though I didn't keep a tab, I've replayed some of these difficult missions upwards of two dozen times. I would suspect myself of being especially weak in the Force if I hadn't heard the same from others. The missions are simply unbalanced.

The Dark Side

Through an exchange with LucasArts I've learned from them that the missions were designed as puzzles to be figured out and solved. This is entirely accurate. The tougher missions have a very specific "solution" that must be executed with heroic precision. Fly to point A, knock out fighters with inhuman accuracy, race to point B, knock out bombers with same, race to point C to nip off a second bomber squadron at the last possible second. While this is extremely challenging and will make for many hours of play, I'm not convinced that it's the most effective design possible. It yanks X out of the fiction of the game when he has to play a mission five times, just to figure out what his true objective is, and then, to play the next dozen times trying to execute the path perfectly.

Often, success requires X to anticipate the



arrival of enemy units, and unrealistically race out into space to meet a "surprise" attack from the Empire. It's all a matter of balance, young Jedi, and on the sliding scale of Trivially Easy to Joystick Flinging Frustration, *X-wing* often stumbles awkwardly toward the latter. From atop the reviewer's high ground of hindsight, it seems a player-controlled difficulty setting might have been a good solution.

Related to the mission difficulty is the issue of pilot management, which has a few quirks of its own. The Rebel fighters have an amazing ejection system which will automatically shoot X between the teeth of the jaws of death whenever he succumbs to a swarm of TIEs or accidentally slams into another ship. This will save his hide many times. Unfortunately, if the ejection system is damaged, X will die, and if not, he will often be captured by the Empire. Either way, he meets the same end; he is gone and can only be recovered by Reviving him from the main pilot screen. Unfortunately, a Revived pilot loses all score and all rank (though for some reason he will retain all his special honors and medals). So, if the player wants X to complete the game with any sort of rank, score, or dignity he must get through the game without getting captured or killed. This is virtually impossible; I'd bet the price of an expansion disk that no one has done it.

So, if one plays within the confines of the game, X will end up completing the final mission rated as a Rookie (a Rookie draped with honors, but a Rookie no less). No self-respecting gamer is going to allow this, so one resorts to making backups of the pilot files or acquiring a nifty file editing program from a BBS. Editing or backing up pilot files to remove unsightly KIAs and POWs is a common practice in all combat simulators. What



I don't understand is why players are forced to go outside of the game into the nasty darkness of DOS to do this. I don't see why the player cannot make his own choice between playing the game "realistically," that is, letting dead pilots lie, or having the capacity within the game to pretend that the fatal mission was just a bad dream.

On a related note is the issue of wingmen. In most missions, X will be a part of a team of fighters, either as a wingman or a flight leader. In spite of the appearance of help, one should consider most missions to be solo missions—wingmen are about as useful as a rowboat on Tatooine. Even ace wingmen are only short-term enemy diversions on most missions. Though they might take out the occasional fighter or flagship, X will end up with the lion's share of the kills. One will still want good wingmen (if only for psychological support) and so must develop them—the "development" usually consisting of popping into DOS and cloning pilots with the COPY command.



While in critical mode, I should mention an especially disappointing oversight: the documentation. Larry Holland's previous flight simulators have had lavish manuals packed with photos, history and detail—they have lead the industry. For *X-wing* LucasArts commissioned a beautiful book/manual from Prima Publishing called *The Farlander Papers*. Its 100 pages packed full of pictures and history from the films, the Papers follow the fictional account of one Keyan Farlander, a young pilot not unlike our dear Pilot X. For some reason, LucasArts decided that this would be a "collector's item" that would only ship with the first 100,000 copies. Word has it that these went remarkably fast, and so the rest of the gamers will go without. What is left is a dry, black and white, 20 page booklet which isn't much more than a glorified (and poorly glorified at that) reference card. Very disappointing.

The Chariot of Deliverance

Beyond these problematic peripheral matters lies the heart of *X-Wing*—the combat simulation itself. The polygon-based flight model is cleanly implemented. On a 386/33, the game plays smoothly when there are a dozen or so ships in the scenario. With more



ships, and especially with several torpedoes in the air, things became a bit choppy, though a quick switch into a lower detail level will usually smooth out the ride. At the highest detail level, the ships look quite nice; X will see identifying colors and insignias, as well as textured panels and ship accessories like gun emplacements and antennae. At the lowest level, all of this detail is stripped away. On a high end 486 one can play comfortably at a mid-range setting, but in the large scale battles one will have to jump down a few notches.

Other simulation features include the standard multiple ship views, with the interior views all meticulously drawn to reflect differences in each of the three fighter types. There is also a Camera function that allows X to record his missions and review them from the perspective of any object in the mission. On the whole, the flight model is excellently executed and a joy to play. And LucasArts should be given a special combat medal for their heroic quality assurance: at 30+ hours of play, the game crashed but once.

The Resolution

Like the universe of Lucas' creation, *X-wing* is composed of both Light & Dark, Good & Bad. Also like the Star Wars universe, the Good soundly spans the Bad when all is said and done. While I occasionally cursed the game when replaying a tough mission for the umpteenth time, still, I must say that I enjoyed the experience tremendously. In spite of Master Yoda's teachings to the contrary, ("Adventure! Hmph! Excitement. Hmph! A Jedi craves not these things."), I wait with mind-clouding impatience for the forthcoming add-on disks and sequel. **CGW**



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



Tim Tyler a.k.a. "Tyre"
Toronto, Canada
"Merlin, I'll cast a cure spell on you."

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Millenium's

Daughter of Serpents

by Robin Matthews

The gaming world's unofficial Year of Horror is well underway. With the release of SSI's *Veil of Darkness*, 1-Motion's *Alone in the Dark* and *Shadow of the Comet*, and the inevitable release of Virgin's *Seventh Guest*, gamers are up to their necks in garlic, holy water and silver bullets.

Into this horde of spooky software, UK software house Millenium has unleashed *Daughter of Serpents*. Designed by Eldritch Games of *Hound of the Shadow* fame, this is a graphic adventure with a degree of role-playing. Eldritch's *Hound* was a very successful Amiga graphic adventure, considered as one of the best of its kind released on the Commodore box, and was ahead of its time, though perhaps a bit too ambitious.

Daughter of Serpents claims to have been written as a tribute to the style of HP Lovecraft, in particular to the Cthulhu myths. The main themes of *The Call of the Cthulhu* (written by Lovecraft in 1926) were of the total insignificance of the human race, and of mankind only being able to retain its sanity by remaining ignorant of the horrors that surround it.

The plot of *Daughters* is set in the city of Alexandria and revolves around Ancient

Egypt—Anthony and Cleopatra, lost scrolls, spells and a terrible curse. The player takes the role of either a pre-defined character (the usual ones you might find in an Agatha Christie novel, varying from landed gentry, through wizened New York cop, to amateur sleuth) or the player can create his or her own. The character creation routine is quite versatile and has lots of different professions and skills allowing players to personalize their hero so that he/she is an expert in reading papyrus scrolls, but not so hot on toxicology.

The story starts with a boat berthing in Alexandria and its passengers disembarking. As one's character walks off the ship, a distinguished, fez-wearing gentleman is maniacally stabbed by a locally dressed native. The native is in turn shot and as he dies turns into a grotesque reptile creature. This occurrence probably causes a mild stir, but the player just toddles along and books into a hotel.

Depending on which profession the player has chosen, there will be a message for him or her at the reception desk. This message sets the tone for that character's adventure, which varies slightly from character to character though the basic theme is a common one of intrigue, mysticism and MURDER!

The gaming world is not presented in the typical graphic adventure third person perspective, but rather by way of a "first person" perspective, seen through the eyes of the character. To those reared on more typical adventure games, the lack of a hero on the screen may seem strange, but it does allow greater detail to be drawn into the locations.

As per the latest trends, the game system has a name—SIGNOS (Scripted Interactive Graphic Novel Operating System). The manual states that SIGNOS is a system designed for "plot-based computer role-playing games, where dialogue and interaction with characters are a key feature." It basically works on the premise of a limited number of locations that are visited by selecting them from an inventory-held map. In some locations at certain stages of the game, one will encounter either NPCs or items. These are recognized by an intelligent cursor and can be communicated with or manipulated.

Conversations are depicted by cartoonish speech bubbles. The only degree of interaction in conversation is through the highlighting of odd bits of text; this operates like the typical "keyword" conversation system and triggers further text. This inevitably makes

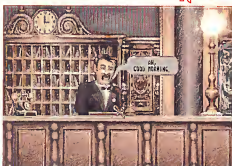


the game linear and does not allow any real deviation from a single plot line.

The locations are few in number and, although graphically pleasing, they are re-visited constantly and eventually become over used. The map approach is also hammered to death as is the use of animated sequences. At one point the player's character relates what has been happening to another character, and the player is forced to sit through a black and white replay of an earlier animation. This is pure padding, but bearing in mind the overall length of the game, this is not too surprising.

Other than the main gaming world screen, two others can be accessed by moving the cursor to the lower right and left corners. One is an inventory; the other is a "manipulation" area where items can be used and viewed. When selected, these screens actually replace the main view. These screens would have been better presented by way of windows or drop down options, especially as there are so few locations. The present system is unwieldy and serves to disturb the limited atmosphere of the product.

The other main problem with the game is its length. Hardened gamers who have cracked the likes of *Crusaders of the Dark Savant* within a month will probably take about a full afternoon to complete *Daughters*.



Much of the supplementary information can be ignored and, as long as you click the mouse quick enough, game length can be measured in hundreds of minutes. The initial character creation routines create an expectation of variety, replayability and multi-solutions. In reality this is not delivered and it is unlikely that anyone will have the patience to click their way through more than a second time.

Documentation is sparse, but includes some interesting notes for a paper and pencil version which does add to the software product.

On the positive side *Daughters* does have some very nice touches. There is some superb additional detail that is accessed by referring to a Thomas Cooks guide, and some of the locations and sequences are very well presented. Also, notes are automatically made in a diary that can be readily referred to, avoiding reams of manually taken comments. Auto-mapping is an irrelevance, both because of the method of travel and the limited number of locations.

Ultimately, *Daughter of Serpents* is a disappointment. The graphics are well crafted and the sound support is good. The storyline is fine, and there is a wealth of background and historical detail, but the problem is with the actual gaming system; it is linear to the ex-

treme, and the player can hardly affect the game play at all. At times gameplay is merely a matter of clicking the mouse button to force up the next bit of text or the next automatic sequence. The overriding impression is one of looking at a slightly interactive demo.

Again from the manual *Millennium* state that *Daughters of Serpents* "is probably the closest to the techniques used in graphic novels, although it could be described as an interactive drama." OK, it is graphic and, granted, it is novel, but regrettably it is neither interactive nor dramatic. *Horn of the Shalou* did fail in some respects, but it did manage to succeed in many areas, particularly in the development of atmosphere. *Daughters* by comparison is almost totally sterile.

Millennium states that *Daughters of Serpents* is an ambitious project, but nowadays the standards are so very high for both graphic adventures and role-playing. Pretty graphics and system acronyms do not a good product make, and for a certainty, *Daughter of Serpents* will not endure as long as have other pieces of Egyptology. Perhaps something can be retrieved from this gaming system, but currently, although it may look the part the game, it is as about as interesting as a camels hump, and probably is about as attractive as other parts of a dromedaries anatomy. **EW**





BEST of the REST

The world of shareware

As much as I enjoy a good adventure or role-playing game, one where I can immerse myself in a new and exciting world, I still find great pleasure in playing more traditional games. In particular, I enjoy the games I played when growing up, games with titles like *Scrabble*, *Boggle*, *Monopoly*, and the like. As such, my games of choice this month are *Ibidid-o-Matic* for the Amiga, plus *Wheel of Luck*, and *Yacht-Z* for Windows on the MS-DOS platform.

The Proper Way to Get Stoned

A few years back, Accolade released *Ibidid*, *The Way of Stones*, a computerized version of an ancient board game of skill, strategy and chance. *Ibidid*, in its simplest form, is somewhat of a cross between chess and Go. Since its release, several clones have appeared, the best by far being an Amiga version named *Ibidid-o-Matic* [Amiga RT #18544].



Ibidid-o-Matic

Game play is simple yet challenging. The goal is to place 72 stones on a board of 96 squares while matching adjoining stones by symbol and/or color. Each stone is characterized by a combination of one of six colors and one of six symbols, giving 36 different stones with two of every kind. Points are determined by the number of neighboring stones of the same color and number. For instance, a one-way match (two stones) is worth only one point, while a four-way match (six stones) is worth eight points, plus a bonus for each four-way match constructed (beginning at 25 points and doubling with each successive match).

Rules for *Ibidid-o-Matic* are brief. Stones can only be placed on the playing field under the following conditions: 1) the field must be adjacent to at least one stone, 2) the stone must correspond with all adjacent stones in color and/or symbol, and 3) the number of neighbors of the same color and of the same symbol must not differ by more than one. When all possible stones have been placed according to these rules, the current game ends.

Single player, two player and tournament (reusing the same sequence of stones) modes are supported in *Ibidid-o-Matic*. High scores for each mode are saved to disk. No time limit is imposed on play. There is even a built-in help feature that identifies all possible stone placements per turn.

Ibidid-o-Matic is compatible with most Amigas, at least through the A3000, and has been released as "Free-Ware" by its author, Robert Brandner of Austria. Evident from the start is the amount of care that has gone into this simple yet classy version of *Ibidid*. Graphics are 32-color low res (320 x 200), more than adequate for this title. Music is provided in the form of a MED module of Bach's *Præludium #3*, offering the player a pleasant selection to listen to while deep in thought. If one prefers, music can be toggled off in favor of simple "click" sounds or complete silence.

Ibidid-o-Matic scores high marks. One can anticipate many hours of enjoyment with or without a friend playing this strategy game. And who can argue with the price?

What Happened to Vanna?

Moving over to the MS-DOS world, we have an excellent Windows version of TV's *Wheel of Fortune*, sans Vanna White. *Wheel of Luck 2.0b* by Dan Puraty is a well designed offering for fans of word puzzles and the popular TV game show.

As with its TV namesake, *Wheel of Luck* provides up to three players with the opportunity to earn cash and prizes by solving a phrase regarding a person, place, thing, saying or event. Each player takes a turn spinning the

All in the Family

Traditional Coffee-Table Games in the Shareware Family

by Chuck Miller

wheel and guessing a consonant or buying a vowel. As long as the player is correct in his or her guesses, it remains their turn. Of course, spinning a "Bortus" gains one a free spin, "Sorry" results in a lost turn, and "Broke" wipes out one's current winnings. Correctly solving the phrase concludes the round. When the winning player reaches the bonus round, 256-color graphics are provided of the prize pictures.



Wheel of Luck

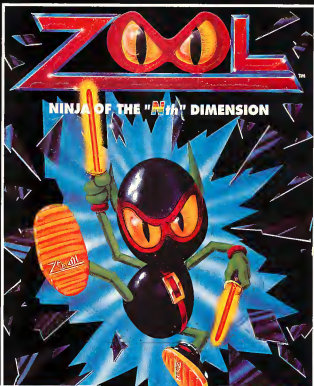
Those with a Windows compatible sound card have the benefit of appropriate sound effects. Options allow one to toggle sound effects, countdown timer and spin deceleration. User editable support has also been provided for the phrase file and sound effects, allowing one to enter their own phrases or select different .WAV files for game-driven events.

Wheel of Luck is an entertaining shareware offering worthy of the very reasonable \$10.00 registration fee requested at the end of its 30 day evaluation period. Both Windows 3.1 and VBRUN200.DLL (the Visual Basic 2.0 runtime module) are required. If one would like to practice up for their appearance on *Wheel of Fortune* or just have some fun "turning a phrase," grab a copy of *Wheel of Luck* and give it a spin.

Please send a check for \$10 (US funds) to register. Address all inquiries to:

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Wheel of Luck

Of Dice and Men

One game I played extensively when I was young was *Yachtzee*, a classic game of dice. While there have been many clones on numerous platforms, *Yacht-Z 2.0* for Windows [Windows RT #549] is one of the best I have discovered. Its only fault is that there is no dice sound. Apart from this, the game is excellent.

Yacht-Z is actually a combination of *Yachtzee* and *Triple Yachtzee*, with support for up to four players. As with the original, the player has three chances to roll five dice to achieve the highest score. When "Show Hints" is selected from the menu, the scorecard will display in black the items that will yield points if selected. All others will be disabled (shown in gray). If "Show Hints" is not enabled, all scoring categories will be displayed in black. Another feature provided is the ability to

Change Luck. This menu item is provided for those times when things just don't seem to be going one's way. Registration will elicit an explanation of how it works (or if it is just a placebo).

A poor decision when selecting an item, fortunately, is not irreversible thanks to an Undo menu. If the wrong choice is made, it can be reversed as long as the dice have not been rolled. High scores are also available from the menu, and one's game can be saved easily for completion later.

Registration for *Yacht-Z 2.0* is set at a reasonable \$10. If you would like to play an old-time favorite on your PC, contact:

Bob Dolan
237 Willis Avenue
Rochester, NY 14616
(716) 865-8248

Each month it becomes more and more evident by the number of submissions received and by the new listings on BBSs that shareware authors are busy creating new titles for the pleasure of computer gamers everywhere. Let's remember to properly compensate them for their efforts so that they continue to produce quality entertainment for all to enjoy. Until the next time, great gaming to all!

Games reviewed in this column are available through numerous distributors of shareware and public domain software, as well as on many national and private on-line services



Yacht-Z 2.0

(Genie RoundTable locations and file numbers appear in brackets when available). If you do not have access to these services, you can usually write or call the game developer for an evaluation copy. Remember, if you find a shareware game enjoyable, please register it with the author.

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) with documentation and a cover letter to:

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Anaheim Hills, CA 92808 **cmw**

Secrets of Shareware Success

With six months of the Best of the Rest column under my belt, I felt it necessary to address a concern of importance to shareware authors, especially those sending their work to *CGW* for consideration. This matter is critical to assure the eligibility of your software for review, as well as to its success in the shareware community. The issue is one of quality. Product value, both perceived and actual, is important to the success of one's efforts.

What does this mean? Well, it boils down to that familiar acronym WYSIWYG—What You See Is What You Get. In other words, the quality of the software program one has written will be judged initially by the appearance of what is received. When someone opens the mailer containing the disk of software provided, they should not find a recycled disk with the name of the original program scratched out and the name of the new program scribbled over it in pen. This speaks shoddily workmanship and poor quality. As unbelievable as it seems, we have received contributions in this condition. Please remember that the name of this column is BEST of the Rest. Substandard work of any form will not fare well in the battle for coverage.

So, what can one do to ensure that their work will even be examined? Here are a few simple and reasonable steps to follow to ensure the eligibility of the "sweat of one's brow" for consideration in these pages.

1. Best of the Rest only reviews entertainment shareware. Do not send any spreadsheet, auto maintenance, lottery or financial programs. Educational games are accepted and encouraged.
2. At present, we can only provide reviews of software for MS-DOS and Amiga computers. Unfortunately, other systems cannot be supported at this time.
3. Submissions should be sent on a NEW floppy disk, preferably 3.5"

media, with a neatly printed label. Many high quality, inexpensive label printing programs are available, both commercial and shareware, to enable one to print attractive labels for their disks. At the least, use a new label and type the name of the program on it.

4. Include a printed or typed cover letter that describes the submission, providing one's name, address, phone number and the registration cost of the program. Fact sheets, photocopies of other reviews the software has received, printed manuals and any other materials available should also be provided.
5. Two complete copies of each product should be mailed to *CGW* including all printed matter. In addition, copies of both the shareware and registered versions should be included and properly identified. Also, please carefully package the submitted materials using sturdy disk mailers for protection.

Submissions that do not meet the above criteria will not be considered for review. The volume of contributions now being received together with the limited review space each issue only allows time to review the most outstanding products. Thus, some guidelines need to be established and maintained. Presentation does make a difference. Commercial developers invest considerable time and money in packaging and promoting their products, an area in which shareware authors need to invest more thought and effort.

In the end, following the above guidelines will help ensure one's success as a shareware author, whether one's product is reviewed in *CGW* or not. In either case, we wish shareware developers the best of success. **cmw**

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Circle Reader Service #46





Over There

I'm U.K., You're U.K.

by Robin Matthews

In the last few months, the Over There column would not seem the same without some mention of the prolific UK software house, Impressions. This month is no exception with two releases pending; the first being *When Two Worlds War*, a strategic simulation of interplanetary conflict in which the player controls an entire planet's military resources in an effort to conquer a hostile neighboring planet; the second being a Civil War game, *The Blue and the Gray*.

The small task of world management in *When Two Worlds War* is conducted from a super high-tech workstation which, via equally high-tech software, allows the player to design new craft and weapons, and direct technological research. Once one's armed forces are up to snuff, one can then set up sophisticated missions and face the real challenge of the game.



When Two Worlds War

Both planetary surface combat and tactical space combat is involved in the game. When one is ready to invade, it is necessary to reconnoiter the opposing planet in order to determine the key installations and target-rich environments. Combat actually runs in real time, and space flight can either be computer assisted or one can program missions using a point-n-click visual language.

The dominant component of *W7W* is the construction of installations and project

scheduling, so this may really appeal to those who want real depth in their strategy games.

When Two Worlds War will boast 256 color graphics, a two player link, and will not only support both Ad Lib and SoundBlaster cards, but may possibly be one of the first software titles to support voice control. Rumor has it that Impressions is working closely with Aria on a voice recognition feature. More as things develop...

The Blue and the Gray is the next proposed title in Impressions' "Miniature Series" and is due to appear in the second quarter. It deals with the Civil War and modestly claims to recreate all its famous campaigns and battles. According to designer Edward Grabowski, the game will contain both real-time animated combat (apparently with the combatants in authentic uniforms), and will also have professionally drawn stills to add to the atmosphere.

Impressions states that "*The Blue and the Gray* is set to be one of the hottest wargames ever—with superb graphics, a campaign game and fully animated battles re-fought over a map stretching from the Mid-West to the East Coast, from Florida up to New York." Grand aspirations, indeed.

Each battle will contain up to 200 separate and distinct animated figures, presented in 256 color graphics and using a further development of their point-n-click miniatures interface. Terrain and fortifications will be the more varied than any previous release, and it is Impressions' intention to release scenario disks covering all the major battles.

MicroProse UK, the same programming team that created *B-17* and *ATAC*, have another flight sim waiting on the runway. *Dogfight* is very much a combat flight simulator, letting one pilot 12 different airplanes, from Sopwith Camels through Spitfires, Sea Harriers and F-16As. Contests can be selected

with planes from the same era, or can be mixed and matched. The agility of the old WWI biplanes does not quite make up for the lack of air-to-air missiles, but one does have the wind in their hair.

Dogfight will also come with half a dozen scenarios, each with their own missions. One minute it's defending observation balloons against the Red Baron, next it's splatting Argentinean fighters over the Falklands. MicroProse UK is stressing that each airplane will have its own realistic characteristics and that it has been designed with an excellent learning curve. *Dogfight* will initially be released in the UK at press time, and both Amiga and ST versions are planned.



The Blue and the Gray

More snippets are slipping out about *Captive 2*, due for release shortly from Mindscape UK. The storyline revolves around the world being controlled by huge state corporations which have been abusing its resources and grinding the planet into a state of decay. One of these huge corporations is "BioCorp" which has an increasing number of androids/robots that have started "accidentally" killing civilians. BioCorp has covered-up these small technical glitches and have framed innocent people for the murders.

The player continues in the role of Trill (from the original *Captive*), and controls four

Foreign Correspondence

droids as they try to free the wrongly jailed humans. The gaming world is set in huge futuristic cities—over 4000 randomly generated, with 9 segments in each city and over 1000 buildings in each segment. The gaming system will let one play on after completing the goals, so this could be a real bidgee.

Other than their recent *Ashes of Empire*, UK software house Mirage has announced *Starfighter Ace* and *The Jurassic Levels for Humans* (recently imported to the US by GameTek). *Starfighter Ace* is developed by the Maelstrom programming team and is a fast-thinking space combat game using the latest technology, and 3-D glassed. It is claimed that while wearing the red and green shades the graphics jump right off the screen and give the nearest thing to virtual reality. The graphics use perspective, shaded solid graphics and scaled sprites, and it flies particularly well.

Mirage may regret the timing of the release of *Starfighter Ace*, bearing in mind the recent launch of *X-Wing*. It remains to be seen whether the Force is with Maelstrom or LucasArts. *Starfighter Ace* requires a 386 at minimum and will support Roland, AdLib and SoundBlaster. It should be on the shelves by press time.

Humans is a popular Lemmings me-too from Mirage, and *The Jurassic Levels* is an



Space Crusader

add-on of 80 more levels. Available both as a separate data disk and a stand alone product, there are more dinosaurs, more natives, and trickier puzzles. This should be available at the time of publication on both Amiga and PC formats.

Gremlin Graphics Software, the Sheffield based company, has just announced the shipping of *Space Crusade* for the PC. It is a conversion of a highly rated board game of space combat and strategy at the squad level, and has been a considerable success on both the Amiga and Atari ST.

In *Space Crusade* the player controls a space commander and four space marines of the Legionnaires. The warriors of this corps

are acknowledged as an elite force, the most powerful and feared men in the Imperium.

The discovery of the Warp Drive and Warp Space had catastrophic results as the minions of chaos escaped the warp. The first great space war followed and the Age of Serife began. A single man, the Emperor of Human Space gathered together the remnants of human society and formed them into an empire. The Legionnaires are the official warrior arm of the Empire.

Space Crusade puts the player in command of a squad, and one must lead them through a series of 12 missions, boarding old space hulks, engaging foes, etc. A campaign game links all missions together. The troops have a good range of weapons and armor, and the tactics employed can vary greatly.

The software version does not try and disguise its board game origins. With turn-based combat, movement phases, line of sight and "squares," *Space Crusade* retains its roots, and does so well. The graphics are good, the interface works well once one is used to the off-center perspective, and the sound support is adequate. Not the same approach as Krisalis's *Lunar Sigand*, and in most ways more appealing. *Space Crusade* has already been released on Amiga and ST, and is now available on PC. **ccw**

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CUSTOMER SUPPORT

An Analysis of CGW Reader Responses

by M. Evan Brooks

A feedback question in *CGW* #103 posed the following question: "In your experience, which companies have the best, and which the worst, customer support? Why?" A similar query was posed on both the GEnie and Prodigy networks. The e-mail responses were similar to the written responses, and for ease of statistical analysis, only the written responses have been used here.

Customer support is a subject of much controversy. Consumers decry the availability of such support, while the companies decry the added cost and time. Both sides question the utility of such support, although obviously from different perspectives.

Customer support is very dependent on the individual consumer. A summary of the results showed little consensus, with few trends apparent. A total of 220 responses were analyzed; generally, the responses mentioned more than one or two companies per card, therefore accounting for the larger number of results.

Perhaps the first statement that should be made is that the survey is quite unscientific. Do *CGW* readers represent a viable sample of the computer gaming public, or by the very fact of their readership do they constitute a more hard-core audience. Similarly, over 40 percent of the responses mentioned bulletin boards and modem support. Does the average gamer feel comfortable with electronic mail; are they in fact modem-literate? Also, do people who respond to such queries in fact represent the average reader? There are no easy answers to these questions, but the reader should be aware of the inherent biases.

The results have been analyzed as a "love-hate" relationship. Few responses rated a

company's support as mediocre. Yet, the most surprising facet of the poll was that there were few clear winners or losers. Results are as follows (any companies with less than four responses have been omitted):

Company	Good Support	Poor Support
SDG	13	8
Access	9	8
Activale	5	0
Bethesda	1	7
Dynamis	20	7
EA	3	17
Impressions	-	4
Interplay	1	5
Loreskills	8	1
Minds	3	1
MicroProse	55	20
Mindscope	1	4
New World	9	2
Origin	23	23
ODP	6	2
SSI	9	13
Sierra	56	9
Strattek	6	5
Spectrum	13	1

Access was the clear winner in terms of customer support. However, Access has a limited product line. The bulk of their product support is for the *Links* products. Users especially appreciated the toll-free line; "Why should I have to pay for support that should have been provided with the game?" It remains to be seen whether or not the customer support will sustain its reputation when the company expands its product base.

Both Dynamis and Sierra generally garnered high marks, as did Spectrum *HoloByte*

and *MicroProse*. However, *MicroProse* customer support seemed dependent on whether or not one could get through the ubiquitous busy signal. If a human did answer, customer support was generally highly regarded. Indeed, one *MicroProse* support person stated that the number one complaint that they receive from customers is having to wait a long time on the phone for someone to answer their question. "They don't consider," wrote Doug Whitley in a GEnie discussion, "that they are calling the day they bought a new game that just hit the shelves and 50,000 other people bought the game the same day (and also called). Also, *MicroProse* did seem to have a number of complaints that it never responded to written inquiries. Finally, Amiga users were very critical of *MicroProse*; they noted that installation procedures were incorrect and that games were often "buggy" and never fixed.

Bethesda Softworks was consistently rated as poor, as was Electronic Arts. With respect to EA, however, it is apparent that customer support is very product-dependent, with



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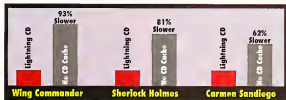
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some games receiving excellent support and others (especially European imports) becoming software orphans.

Origin was a special case. One either loved or hated it—there were no in-betweens. Special criticism was made for Origin "not admitting to bugs, and then charging for updates" (which ostensibly fixed the bugs). Also, employees were noted as "borderline rude with very dry personalities." I suppose rudeness with scintillating personalities would be excusable? Besides, how much personality can come across a telephone on a computer query? On the other hand, readers complimented Origin for "knowing what the problem is" and "their enthusiasm for games is very catching." Is there a contradiction here?

SSI was almost a tie. However, analysis of the individual response cards revealed that role-playing games (CRPG) products seemed to be well supported. The staff was quick to respond and knowledgeable. However, wargames were given short shrift and customer support seemed to cease once the product shipped out the door. For a company that was founded by and for wargamers, it was a sad ending, albeit not altogether surprising result. In a market economy, CRPGs speak volumes; wargames whisper.

However, special laudos should be given to SSI designer Gary Grigsby. On his own (and at his own expense), he is regular on GENie (Scorpius Roundtable, page 805). In the SSI category, he will respond to any questions or comments on *Pacific War*, and often posts his answers within 24 hours. His support is above and beyond the call of duty.

While these results were limited to software companies, a special place in the "Hall of Shame" should be reserved for Creative Labs.



Bob Kinawar, Mark Parker, Bill Klymszyn, Dan Owens, John Rodenick and Debbie Catania make up a portion of Sierra's "Problem Killers"

While the *SoundBlaster* is the soundtrack of choice for gamers, the company's customer support was singled out for condemnation.

Electronic BBS support was an anomaly. Some users found it useful, while others wanted a human voice. Of course, there was the user who dispataged a company for using humans; he actually preferred electronic bulletin boards!

Then there were the responses that simply could not be used. Customer support was geared at post-purchase assistance. Did the company help the user if he had a problem with the program. Yet, a number of responses specifically mentioned Origin for late releases. One response went so far as to list product names and number of months delayed. While this may aggravate a user, I think it more properly belongs to consumer relations than technical support. Of course, this tepper doesn't even begin to address the never-ending debate whether to "get it out today with bugs or tomorrow bug-free." That

is a marketing decision and not customer support.

A thoughtful reader noted that, "Good customer support comes from companies who are willing to bite the bullet and delay the release of a new product in an effort to make certain the consumer receives a complete polished product. Good customer support is making sure you don't have to provide any later."


While a consistent thread is not apparent, many users rated customer support by the "politeness" of the customer service representatives. A rude technician who treated the consumer as a computer illiterate (even if he were)

would be sure to garner negative dividends. Such rudeness was noted in virtually every negative response. However, when the same company is praised for its knowledgeable and friendly technicians and then blasted for its rude and uncaring support, one begins to wonder.

Any new game is likely to garner many telephone questions; therefore, it is often difficult to simply get through. Does this make customer support unattractive? To a user who can't get the new mega-hit up and running, the answer is a resounding affirmative. Paying for support aggravates consumers; both excessive on-hold and 900 roll lines are singled out for criticism.

An interesting comment from a reader concerned registration. Although he registers all purchases, "It is very rare that manufacturers notify me that updates to fix bugs or improved versions are available." I can sympathize. All too often, it seems that registration is merely a device for companies to get one's name on a mailing list. Generally, I register every product under a slight variation of my name so I can determine who sells my name to whom and respond accordingly.

In conclusion, there are no conclusions! Consumers want fast and polite responses. Modem support is appreciated, although this would seem to constitute a minority (albeit a vociferous minority) of the customer base. Pre-announced release dates which then are delayed aggravate the user, but consumers are even more outraged by buggy products. Our readers' requirements of customer support may be summed up as "make it quick, make it friendly, make it free." Obviously, few companies are pleasing all of the people all the time, but the results do show that some companies are doing a better job than others. **cow**



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Tapping Into The Infrastructure

The Software Publishers Association
Spring Symposium 1993

by Johnny L. Wilson

It would be impossible to confuse the meetings of the SPA with those less-formal and more fanatical days of computing's earliest era. The days described in Steven Levy's marvelous *Hackers* where everyone admired a good "hack" (it meant finding a clever solution to a problem in those days) and sharing information wasn't just the right thing to do, it was the social law. The true "bad guys" in those days were the monitors who kept fanatical young computer scientists from getting to the system and getting information.

With today's software piracy problem and the association of the word "hacker" with software thieves, it would be hard to find individuals within the SPA who had any sympathy for the "hacker ethic" with its belief that software ought to be freely distributed. Software is now property, albeit intellectual property, and property must be protected. So, it is not surprising that many members view the SPA's anti-piracy campaign as its most important and successful activity. Entertainment software publishers wish that more attention was paid to their specific needs in said campaign, but they recognize what Eileen Rosenthal's (the SPA's counsel in this area) group has accomplished as a positive step.

The early hackers would very likely be horrified, however, by the reluctance of SPA panelists to give "real" numbers or share useful information. Instead of the free flow of information which was transmitted from hacker to hacker in the early days, SPA panels often serve as guarded presentations based on the most general industry wisdom. At times, said wisdom is authentic, but it is more often marketing jargon and corporate commercials.

Fortunately, this year's Spring Symposium had several exceptions to this rule. Even those panels which usually serve as "warm-ups," in which the discussion is often warmed over, had some panelists who broke the mold. We will focus on those refreshing presentations in this report.

The State of the Consumer Software Industry

This panel is a perennial event. It usually serves to set the stage for comment during the conference and is usually one of the most well-attended panel sessions. It also has the highest cliché quotient of the panels and the least real news. Many times, it degenerates into a Dickensian axiom like, "It was the best of times. It was the worst of times." At any given conference it would be possible to get away with citing such a paradox.

This year, the panel was different. Keith Ferrell, editor of *Omsi*

magazine, chaired the panel and led off by observing that the consumer software industry is an "improvisational" industry. The industry is constantly changing its approaches in order to reach that goal of a broader market with its attendant results of a wider audience and a more solid bottom line. The panel proceeded to confirm this observation by suggesting some new ways to reach that market.

Jeff Braun, president of Maxis, suggested that "cooperation" (competitors working together to link their programs and create extra value) would create a synergy between products that would make every company's product even better. Braun's plan is an outgrowth of Maxis co-founder Will Wright's desire to have an open and standardized file format so that games can be integrated in new and interesting ways (many readers will remember our editorial to this effect in *CGW* #74).

Braun and crew are putting their money and technology where their mouths are, by putting "cooperation" into effect and cooperating with their competitors. *Mallard Software* will be working on a product that converts *SimCity* structures into *Microsoft Flight Simulator* scenery formats. When that is complete, gamers will be able to build their cities and fly around them. In addition, they are expecting *Imagineer* to develop a racing game where one can race through their own *SimCity*. Maxis has also talked to *Reality Technologies (Wealth Builder)* about linking a real estate investment program to *SimCity*. Braun would also like to see a 911 rescue game connected to *SimCity* that would add value to both products.

Yet, Braun's vision went beyond his own products. He observed that if all sports programs saved their statistics files in the same formats, a software publisher could create a newspaper product that would incorporate data from any game into a desktop publishing program or utilize it in a multimedia version of a network sports wrap-up show.

Later, Braun was asked which platforms would become dominant in the future. He simply cited a magic number of 1 billion units sold. He observed that the current buzzword in high-tech industries is infrastructure. Many people are betting on cable connections, phone lines, cellular radio bandwidth, old railroad radio bands which are not being used, etc. Yet, he observed that, "If it's a platform with over one million units, I'm gonna' be there — even if the data is delivered through the sewer system." Now, that's improvisation!

Jack Heidstadt of Electronic Arts followed up with a sound pronouncement regarding the future of the entertainment software industry. He lectured the assembled crowd that, "Entertainment is

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R

This game is not for the faint-hearted. It contains violence and some material inappropriate for minors under 18.

Circle Reader Service #66

MEGA TECH

critical.* Like Braun, he worried that the computer entertainment industry spent too much time worrying about platforms and not about providing solid entertainment. He urged the talent assembled to build a positive brand recognition for their companies which could be ported to any media, any platform.

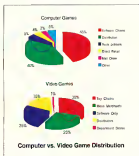
As anecdotal evidence, he noted how *Popular Mechanics* makes seven figures worth of income per quarter on a tool license which they provided to WalMart. If such a perception of value can be translated from a print magazine to tools, how much more should the software industry be able to define its business so that compatibility is not the issue. He suggested that studies of consumer behavior would lead one to believe that the TV monitor will be the console of the future (a semi-veiled reference to his company's interest in the 3DO video game machine), but that it is important to build product that will translate across platforms.

Lessons from the Video Game Industry

Lots of people talk about the differences between the video game industry and the computer game industry, but Alan Chaplin of ASCII Entertainment Software had figures to back his observations. Not only is Chaplin in a good position to make this comparison, since his company is a player in both markets, but his statistics were both useful and fascinating in creating a capsule portrait of both industries.

	Computer Games	Video Games
1993 Income (in millions)	\$430	\$5,900
Average Software Price	\$49-\$59	\$15-\$19
Retailer Price	\$70+	\$49-\$59
Packaging	no uniformity	uniform packaging
Advertising	print	television/print (\$70 million)

Chaplin also observed the differences in distribution between the two industries.



After delineating these factors, Chaplin observed that retail space is shrinking in the video game world. Though Gary Kuzin, co-founder of Babbage's, was to state in a later session ("Trends in Distribution") that the idea of shelf-space was a myth, Chaplin used hard data from the video game world to enforce his assertion.

System	Titles Available	Titles Stocked
Nintendo	300	100
Super Nintendo	75	50
Sega Genesis	250	100

Titles Available vs. Shelf Space

Then, Chaplin challenged the assembled group of predominantly disk-based publishers to consider the attraction of the disk-based industry. He noted that the installed base of personal computer owners is increasing and the video game demographics are getting older (and, presumably, more demanding). He contended that technological advancements in the computer game market were getting attention from more consumers and that mass market retailers such as KMart, Sears and WalMart were becoming more inclined toward carrying software.

Then, he preached an eloquent sermon on the barriers to exploiting these positives. With limited space, retailers need software companies to commit to standardized packaging. Standardized packaging has worked to the advantage of the video game companies and means that retailers will not have to build separate racks to handle the products. He also bemoaned the variables in system requirements, observing that many retailers will be reluctant to stock product that is not compatible with all MS-DOS, Windows or MPC systems. Finally, he hit upon the high price of the hardware (something software publishers can do nothing about) and the 5.25" and 3.5" inch split that forces retailers to have two separate displays of the same title. The implicit conclusion was that the attendees were encouraged to work to lower these barriers through cooperation.

At the same session, Randy Thier of Sony Imagesoft offered his lessons from the video game industry. Thier said to: amortize costs over multiple platforms; err to the conservative side in purchasing inventory (video game cartridges have an extremely high cost of goods); aspire to high quality; and integrate vertically (putting hardware, duplication, computer software, video game software and licensed properties under the same corporate rubric).

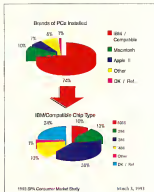
In short, Thier's presentation cycled around to the same conclusion Jeff Braun reached at the beginning of the conference. It isn't the infrastructure (the delivery system or platform and distribution system) that matters, it is the product. A publisher with good product can place that product *anywhere*.

Statistically Significant

One of the most interesting meetings which we attend at any SPA Symposium or Conference is the press conference where new demographics are released.

The SPA regularly interviews a random sampling of computer or video game users and compiles the data for the benefit of its members. The figures released at this meeting confirmed the assertion that personal computer users are financially better off and have the advantage of more education than the average population in general and those who only play video games. However, the most interesting data concerned the mix of IBM compatibles currently in use. As the chart shows, IBM compatibles claim the lion's share of the market and more than half of these are 386 or better.

Statistically, financially and philosophically, the software market is changing. The question is, "Will the software industry be improvisational enough to adapt?" **CSW**



Memory Management and System Configuration for MS-DOS Games

by Mike "Moondawg" Weksler



Among other things, "Dawg" is our in-house hacker. He configures all of our game related hardware and software and he's been known to perform the occasional act of wizardry. Whether he's helping our writers with their technical problems, helping the technical support employees with their own products, running around backing our rigs for beta versions of games that refuse to load, configuring sound cards that refuse to sound, or warning that refuse to talk, we feel that he's definitely packed up a few secrets. With that in mind, we've encouraged him to shed some light onto a subject that has us all coming into his write mail at one time or another.

You are the first one on your block to purchase "Palace of Beer Stein-3D," the horres game on the market, only to install the game and watch DOS report that you have "insufficient memory?" No, it does not necessarily mean that you inhaled back in your college years, it means that your computer lacks sufficient memory to load and run your new game. With most contemporary computers it is unlikely that you have too little memory or RAM, but rather that your computer is not configured properly.

Neophyte Memory Commander Academy Entrance Exam

Before you read any farther, let's see how you rate on my "Dawg Scale of Rocket Science." Is your VCR still blinking 12:00? If you answered yes, please skip to the paragraph labeled "Third Party Memory Managers." Otherwise, don your propeller beanie and blast-off with me.

Extended and Expanded Memory: Getting a Clue!

Who could forget the classic scene in Accolade's "Les Manley 2: Lost in LA", where Les is



Les Manley about to explain Extended and Expanded Memory in Les Manley 2: Lost in LA.

entertaining two gorgeous women in bed. They ask him to do it just one more time. Exhausted, our hero sighs and, with pen protector in pocket, begins to explain the differences between Extended and Expanded memory. I didn't have the privilege of interviewing Mr. Manley for this article, so I'll give you a quick overview. Back when the first IBM PC was held upside down and spunked, it could only address 1 megabyte (MB) of memory. A program that needed 64K of RAM was considered a real memory hog. The first 640K of RAM, or Lower 640K, was for loading programs and DOS itself. The remaining 340K, or Upper Memory was reserved for system stuff. When faster processors came out, hardware manufacturers slung RAM in excess of 1MB onto the motherboards. At first, there wasn't any way for DOS to access that additional RAM, but eventually, software drivers, or special programs, were written which tricked DOS into utilizing the additional memory. This memory, called Extended or XMS memory, could only be used to store data and consequently, some of the first programs to

The following are sample CONFIGs and AUTOEXECs.

Notice that in the following examples, the Shell command is used. It is placed in the CONFIG.sys file to tell the system that command.com is placed in the C:\DOS directory. Additionally, all of these files are placed in one directory called c:\units, to help keep them organized. If done in this manner, the only two files in ones root directory will be AUTOEXEC.bat and CONFIG.sys (WINA20 386 can be placed in the c:\windows directory with the appropriate win.ini entry to tell windows where it is located). Here is a portion of my SYSTEM.INI file that shows the entry for relocating the WINA20.386 file:

```
[386Enh]
display=vdppga.386
device=c:\windows\win20.386
EGA80WDA FON=EGA80WDA.FON
EGA40WDA FON=EGA40WDA.FON
```

Example CONFIGs and AUTOEXECs for MS DOS 5.

The following configuration under the mouse driver works well as a "vanilla" configuration.

```
CONFIG.XMS (extended memory)
DEVICE=C:\DOS\HIMEM.SYS
DOS=HIGH
DEVICE=C:\WINDOWS\MOUSE.SYS
SHELL=C:\DOS\COMMAND.COM C:\DOS\IP
FILES=30
BUFFERS=30
```

```
AUTOEXEC.XMS (extended memory)
@ECHO OFF
PROMPT SP$G
PATH C:\DOS;\UNITS
```

Below is an alternate XMS configuration with access to Upper Memory Blocks via EMS manager, notice NOEMS command following EMM386.EXE

```
CONFIG.XMS (alternate extended memory)
DEVICE=C:\DOS\HIMEM.SYS
DEVICE=C:\DOS\EMM386.EXE NOEMS RAM
2048 MB (DR FRAME-E000)
DOS=HIGH,UMB
DEVICE=HIGH-C:\WINDOWS\MOUSE.SYS
SHELL=C:\DOS\COMMAND.COM C:\DOS\IP
FILES=30
BUFFERS=8
```

```
AUTOEXEC.XMS (alternate extended memory)
@ECHO OFF
PROMPT SP$G
PATH C:\DOS;\UNITS
LH C:\DOS\SMARTDRV
```

CONFIG.EMS (expanded memory)
 DEVICE=C:\DOS\HMEM.SYS
 DEVICE=C:\DOS\EMM386.EXE RAM 2048
 FRAMES=1000
 DCG=HIGH.1MB
 DEVICEMGH=C:\MOUSE\MOUSE.SYS
 SHELL=C:\DOS\COMMAND.COM C:\DOS\IP
 FILES=30
 BUFFERS=8

AUTOEXEC.EMS (expanded memory, with Soundblaster Pro settings)
 @ECHO OFF
 PROMPT \$P\$G
 PATH=C:\DOS\C\UNITS
 SET SOUND=C:\SBPRO
 SET BLASTER=A220 I7 D1 T4
 C:\DOS\SMARTDRV

CONFIG.QUEM (Quarterdeck's QEMM)
 DEVICE=C:\QEMM\QEMM386.SYS R4 RAM
 STM
 DCG=HIGH
 DEVICE=C:\QEMM\LOADHI.SYS /R:1
 C:\DOS\SETVER.EXE
 DEVICE=C:\QEMM\LOADHI.SYS /R:1
 C:\CDROM\DCD.SYS /D:MSCD000
 DEVICE=C:\QEMM\LOADHI.SYS /R:3
 C:\MOUSE\MOUSE.SYS
 LASTDRIVE=Z
 SHELL=C:\DOS\COMMAND.COM C:\DOS\IP
 BUFFERS=20

AUTOEXEC.QUEM (Quarterdeck's QEMM with CD drivers)
 @ECHO OFF
 PROMPT \$P\$G
 PATH=C:\DOS\C\UNITS
 SET TEMP=C:\WINDOWS\TEMP
 SET SOUND=C:\SBPRO
 SET BLASTER=A220 I7 D1 T4 C:\QEMM\LOADHI
 /R:1 C:\CDROM\MSOEXE /D:MSCD000 /M:10
 C:\QEMM\LOADHI /R:2 C:\QEMM\FILES-20
 C:\QEMM\LOADHI /R:3 C:\DOS\SMARTDRV.EXE
 C:\QEMM\LOADHI /R:2 C:\DOS\DCSKEY.COM

CONFIG.MAX (Qualitas' 386MAX)
 Device=C:\386MAX\386MAX.SYS
 prog=c:\386max\386max.pro
 DCG=HIGH
 DEVICE=C:\386MAX\386load.sys size=1504
 prog=C:\DOS\SETVER.EXE
 DEVICE=C:\386MAX\386load.sys size=28500
 prog=C:\MOUSE\MOUSE.SYS
 DEVICE=C:\386MAX\386load.sys size=27284
 prog=C:\CDROM\DCD.SYS /D:MSCD000
 LASTDRIVE=Z
 SHELL=C:\DOS\COMMAND.COM C:\DOS\IP
 FILES=30
 BUFFERS=8

AUTOEXEC.MAX (Qualitas' 386MAX)
 @ECHO OFF
 PROMPT \$P\$G
 SET TEMP=C:\WINDOWS\TEMP
 SET SOUND=C:\SBPRO
 SET BLASTER=A220 I7 D1 T4
 C:\386MAX\386load size=30288 prog=2 file-
 name prog=C:\CDROM\MSOEXE /D:MSCD000
 /M:10
 C:\386MAX\OCACHE.EXE
 C:\386MAX\386load size=6400 file:name
 prog=C:\DOS\DCSKEY.COM

Example CONFIGs and AUTOEXECs for MS DOS 6.

**CONFIG.XMS (with MS-DOS 6 Mem-
 maker)**
 DEVICE=C:\DOS\HMEM.SYS
 DEVICE=C:\DOS\EMM386.EXE NOEMS
 HIGHSCAN X=CDD0-03FF
 BUFFERS=8,0
 FILES=30
 DOS=UMB

utilize it were RAM disk programs, software which could emulate a hard disk in Extended memory. The XMS driver that is used today can usually be found in your CONFIG.SYS file and is called HMEM.SYS. MS Windows uses HMEM.SYS to access up to 16MB of Extended memory. Some games are written to store data in extended memory and require the HMEM.SYS driver to be in your CONFIG.SYS file.

As if the MS-DOS world of computing isn't confusing enough, there exists another memory standard for getting DOS to access memory beyond the first 1MB of RAM. It's referred to as Expanded Memory, or EMS. In order for a program to take advantage of EMS, the program must be written to execute with EMS. Such programs will load themselves into areas above 1MB in 16K chunks called Pages. When data is required by the program, it makes a call to a special software program called an EMS Memory Manager, or EMM. The EMM will set up a special 64K part of memory between 640KB and the first MB (also referred to as Upper Memory) as the EMS Page Frame, capable of working with up to four of the 16K EMS Pages.

When a program needs some data which resides in a 16K page frame above 1MB, the EMM tricks DOS into thinking that it can access that data by mapping the required page into the EMS Page Frame in Upper Memory area (usually at E000h). In other words, the program needs data and the EMM points the program to that data. DOS then thinks that it's all loaded within 1MB. It is interesting to note that data is not being moved once it is loaded above 1MB, i.e., upon first loading the program. During program execution, the EMM is furiously mapping these 16K pages (i.e. showing the program where to find them). Although this can cause your systems to run at less than optimal efficiency, many games require Expanded memory.

In MS-DOS, the Expanded Memory Manager is EMM386.EXE. This is a software driver which converts existing XMS memory into EMS memory, therefore, HMEM.SYS is required in your CONFIG.SYS file before loading EMM386.EXE. You may have seen the term LIM EMS. LIM refers to the consortium of Lotus, Intel and Microsoft, who set up the EMS standard. Like Extended or XMS memory, EMS memory can only hold data. One example of Expanded memory is the video playback feature found in many of the flight simulations and sports games. Another example would be for a simulation to load the object data for other aircraft and terrain data into Expanded memory. As the data is required by the simulation, the Expanded Memory Manager (EMM) tricks DOS into thinking that it's accessing data above 1MB. Why should I care about putting a few MB of data into RAM when I have a 300MB hard disk? Simple. It takes forever to read data off of your hard disk. RAM is much faster. Your program will "bit the disk" less during a flight, resulting in better performance.

Whenever Possible, Use "Protection"

MS-DOS runs in Real mode (i.e. the original operating mode whereby only one program will run at a time and is unable to access memory

above 1MB without the above XMS and EMS drivers). However, there is an operating mode (brought on with the advent of the AT computer) called Protected Mode. This mode is used by operating systems such as MS-Windows and OS/2, where the operating system uses Virtual RAM (i.e. space on the hard disk sometimes referred to as "swap files," in order to access memory way beyond the actual physical RAM installed on the computer). Additionally, software in protected mode has the benefit of running while other programs are using other areas of Virtual RAM. Hence, programs may run simultaneously. This is the basis of multi-tasking. In the last few years, third party developers have written programs called "DOS Extenders." These programs, when used in conjunction with software written especially for use with them, will allow software to run under MS-DOS in Protected Mode. Novologic's *Comanche: Maximum Overkill* is one such product. Protected Mode programs enjoy the benefit of addressing memory over 1 MB without the overhead incurred in using an Expanded Memory Manager.

Loaded for Bear

If you weren't into games, then you could stop right here. Most business programs, with the exception of MS-Windows, and certain CAD packages, simply do not require large amounts of your computer's memory. Games, on the other hand, require incredible amounts of memory. It is because games, more than any other software, push computers to the limit of the envelope. Let's say you just ripped the shrink wrap off of Dynamix's *Age of the Pacific*, only to read that it requires 604K of lower memory (currently, the highest memory requirement of any game) and additionally, the use of an Expanded Memory Manager. You type CHKDSK and see that you have 613,000 bytes of free lower memory; no problem, right? Wrong! The program requires 604K of memory. Remember from that dry boring DOS manual that 1024 bytes equals a Kilobyte? If you divide 613,000 bytes by 1024, you arrive at 598.6KB. As Maxwell Smart would say, "Mised it by that much." So, what do you do? Well, besides reading the rest of this article, you could take some superfluous things out of your CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT files. This is a good idea anyway because I've seen such innocuous programs as Quicken's *Billionairecrash Wing Commander!*

There are several solutions to memory headaches. First, I'll cover the basics of configuring your system for both Extended memory and Expanded memory, then I'll go over third party Expanded Memory Managers, and finally I'll discuss how to manage multiple configurations, whether you are using DOS versions 5 or 6.

Mr. Cajun Man Says: "Confygura-shone!"

The lower 640K of a PC's memory is like my closet: Eventually, the floor gets crowded with shoes, die gear, boxes, etc. When I need more room in the lower area of my closet, I move some of the boxes and stuff right past the shelf (partially full of other stuff), and up into the attic, thus making more room on the floor. This is analogous to the system portion of MS-DOS

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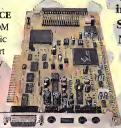
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**SOUND
GALAXY**



```
LASTDRIVE=Z
FCBS=4,0
DEVICEHIGH L.2,12048 =C:\DOS\SETVER.EXE
DOS=HIGH
DEVICEHIGH L.2,28560
=C:\MOUSE\MOUSE.SYS
SHELL=C:\DOS\COMMAND.COM C:\DOS \p
DEVICEHIGH L.2,44176
=C:\DOS\IBLSPACE.SYS MOVE
```

```
AUTOEXEC.XMS (with MS-DOS 6 Mem-
maker)
@ECHO OFF
PROMPT SP$G
PATH=C:\DOS;C:\WINDOWS\TEMP
SET TEMP=C:\WINDOWS\TEMP
SET SOUND=C:\SBPRO
SET BLASTER=A220 I7 D1 T4
L.H.L.1,6400 C:\DOS\SMARTDRV.EXE
L.H.L.1,6400 C:\DOS\DOSKEY.COM
```

```
CONFIG.EMS (with MS-DOS 6 Mem-
maker)
DEVICE=C:\DOS\HMEM.SYS
DEVICE=C:\DOS\EMM386.EXE RAM HIGHSCAN
X=CBC0-CBFF
BUFFERS=8,0
FILES=30
DOS=UMB
LASTDRIVE=Z
FCBS=4,0
DEVICEHIGH L.3,12048 =C:\DOS\SETVER.EXE
DOS=HIGH
DEVICEHIGH L.3,28560
=C:\MOUSE\MOUSE.SYS
SHELL=C:\DOS\COMMAND.COM C:\DOS \p
DEVICEHIGH L.2,44176
=C:\DOS\IBLSPACE.SYS MOVE
```

```
AUTOEXEC.EMS (with MS-DOS 6 Mem-
maker)
@ECHO OFF
PROMPT SP$G
PATH=C:\DOS;C:\WINDOWS\TEMP
SET TEMP=C:\WINDOWS\TEMP
SET SOUND=C:\SBPRO
SET BLASTER=A220 I7 D1 T4
C:\DOS\SMARTDRV.EXE
L.H.L.1,6400 C:\DOS\DOSKEY.COM
```

```
CONFIG.XCD (Memmaker XMS with CD-
ROM drivers)
DEVICE=C:\DOS\HMEM.SYS
DEVICE=C:\DOS\EMM386.EXE NOEMS
HIGHSCAN X=CBC0-CBFF
BUFFERS=8,0
FILES=30
DOS=UMB
LASTDRIVE=Z
FCBS=4,0
DEVICEHIGH L.2,12048 =C:\DOS\SETVER.EXE
DOS=HIGH
DEVICEHIGH L.2,28560
=C:\MOUSE\MOUSE.SYS
DEVICEHIGH L.2,27264 =C:\CDROM\FD0D.SYS
/D:\MSCD000
SHELL=C:\DOS\COMMAND.COM C:\DOS \p
DEVICEHIGH L.2,44176
=C:\DOS\IBLSPACE.SYS MOVE
```

```
AUTOEXEC.XCD (Memmaker XMS with
CD-ROM drivers)
@ECHO OFF
PROMPT SP$G
PATH=C:\DOS;C:\WINDOWS\TEMP
SET TEMP=C:\WINDOWS\TEMP
SET SOUND=C:\SBPRO
SET BLASTER=A220 I7 D1 T4
L.H.L.2,38256 C:\DOS\MSCDEX\DMSCD000
.M10
L.H.L.2,44284 IS C:\DOS\SMARTDRV.EXE
L.H.L.1,6400 C:\DOS\DOSKEY.COM
```

loading the majority of itself above the first 1 MB of your computer's RAM. With HMEM.SYS and the command "DOS-HIGH" in your CONFIG.SYS, DOS will load itself in the first 64KB area above your first MB of RAM, also referred to as the High Memory Area, or HMA. Without loading DOS high, you are never going to get more than 575K free of lower 640K (or "precious memory"). This is exactly why configuring your rig "Vanilla" (i.e., clean without loading DOS high or any memory manager), will not necessarily get you more "precious memory." With today's high-end games, this simply won't cut it.

Referring back to "Dawg's Allegory of the Closer," I can make room on the floor by placing additional items in the space available on the shelf. This is analogous to loading some of DOS in that 320K above your lower 640K and under your first 1 MB — the area referred to as Upper memory. This area already has system stuff in it, but with magic words, DOS will load itself into what are referred to as the Upper Memory Blocks. In order to access the Upper Memory Blocks, an Expanded Memory Manager (EMM) must be running. Again, following the HMEM.SYS command in your CONFIG.SYS file, you would need to load an EMM. To load the DOS EMM386 file, you would see something like this: DEVICE=EMM386.EXE NOEMS, followed by DOS=HIGH,UMB. This is telling your computer at startup that the EMM should allow access to the Upper Memory Blocks without running the Expanded Memory Manager (if your game needed EMS, you would merely remove the "NOEMS" from the end of the command). The subsequent DOS=HIGH,UMB command tells DOS to load up into the HMA and any UMBs that are available, freeing up more precious memory.

What's the big deal about Upper Memory Blocks? Well, for starters, that mouse driver software and possibly your disk cache and any sound card driver software can be loaded into the UMB area with either the DEVICEHIGH or LOADHIGH commands, thus freeing up even more conventional memory. I can free up as much memory with DOS using EMM386.EXE as I can with a third party EMM. The difference, however, is that I have to go through much trial and error with DOS, whereby the third party EMMs have special auto configuration software such as 386MAX's "Maximize" and QEMM's "Optimize." These programs still require tinkering, but if you are not comfortable "hacking" your configuration files, they're definitely worth looking into.

Third Party Memory Managers: Ghost in the Machine

Referring back to my closet analog, there comes a point where you have diminishing returns; when no amount of placing stuff up on the shelves will free the space below. When that happens, it's time to install new shelves. There are third party contractors who will come out to your home and completely rebuild your closet into an anal retentive shrine. Much in the same way, third party Expanded Memory Managers (EMMs) come in and do the organizing for you. Many people ask me what is the best one to get. My answer is that I have a "quiver" of them, because different games run with different

EMMs. I like to start with *Qualitas' 386Max* first, then *Quarterdeck's QEMM*, followed by *Neosoft* from *Helix*. Some games will crash with *QEMM* and work with *386MAX*, while others prefer *Neosoft*. When the dust settles, they all give me around 620K. That's a much more than you'll ever need to run a game right?

Wrong! There are now plenty of games that run off CD-ROM discs. The single most important feature of the average third party memory manager is that EMMs are capable of loading the software drivers necessary to run CD-ROM drives into Upper Memory. It can be done with DOS and a lot of trial and error, but the marginal utility of doing that, versus the implicit cost of just buying the third party memory manager software will become readily apparent. With some third party EMMs drivers, it is possible to load everything high and enjoy around 620K of precious memory. Without a third party EMM, your best configuration without a lot of hacking will most likely net you around 580K. Not bad, but I don't think that *Virgin's Seventh Great* CD-ROM will be particularly enjoyable without as much precious memory as possible. If you are having trouble with *MSCDEX.EXE*, it is most likely an out of date version. You can place *SETVER.EXE* in your CONFIG.SYS file, or obtain the latest version from your CD-ROM manufacturer. To update a file to run with a later version of MS-DOS, run *SETVER.EXE*, followed by its path (usually C:\DOS), then the program name (i.e., *MSCDEX.EXE*), and finally, the version of MS-DOS that the program is looking for (i.e., 3.3). If you did this correctly, you will not get the "Wrong DOS Version" message upon rebooting.

Rig for Smooth Running: Multiple Configurations

With all the possible configurations for running games on a PC (extended memory, expanded memory, extended memory with CD-ROM drivers, expanded memory with CD-ROM drivers, and then configurations from third party EMMs, not to mention your "normal" configurations for trivial things like work and stuff), it can become quite confusing as to how to manage all the different CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT files.

Working at CGW, I have amassed a huge collection of configurations, and to manage them, I have come up with this solution: I call them "rig for" or "RIG 4" batch files. These batch files copy a particular configuration file to my CONFIG.SYS and an AUTOEXEC.BAT and then call a small .COM program which reboots the computer. Refer to the sidebar for an example of a "RIG4" batch file. In this manner, several configurations may be created for individual games. If one wishes to run *Ultima 7* (with its own memory manager), then one may set up a RIG4U7 batch file to copy the specific configuration files for that particular game into your CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT files. Similarly, one may set up a RIG4W12Z to set up for *Wizardry 7*, RIG4ACES, to run *Act of the Pacific*. Additionally, I use these batch files to configure between Extended and Expanded memory by using RIG4EMS and RIG4XMS respectively. For readers who are not able to download a reboot utility, I have included one

in the sidebar in this article which shows how to write a small assembly program in a script file and use DOS's Debug program to assemble it. The source is Kris Janus's *1001 DOS Tips*, from Osborne/McGraw-Hill.

One question the reader may have is, "Why not just use a boot disk?" Simple. I have at least 20 different configurations. The disks would be scattered throughout my office in no time (or borrowed), and when I really needed one, it would be long gone.

What? Games that lock up? Nah, we've never seen that before. Therefore, I offer a solution to handling multiple configuration files on your rig.

As I write this article, I am aware that MS-DOS 6 will have memory management utilities, including Memmaker, which will configure your memory similar to one of the third party EMMs. From what I have seen so far, Memmaker configured EMS at 575K (may have been low because it was loading DoubleSpace software high), which would still require a third party EMM to fly *Aces of the Pacific* or *Falcom 3.0*. See the sidebar in this article for some simple configuration files created using the MS-DOS 6 Memmaker program. I am also aware that DOS 6 will support multiple configurations via a boot menu, and even run while stepping through your configs one driver at a time. Unfortunately, we went to press just prior to the release of MS-DOS 6 and while I haven't seen this portion of the software running, I'm confident that my batch file solution will still be applicable — it's fast and it doesn't require any memory to run so there's no potential for it to crash games. More advanced users may wish to search the online services and BBSs for a program called BOOT.SYS. This program will present you with a menu upon booting allowing you to select your configuration files at startup. The multiple configuration feature in MS-DOS 6 should be similar to this. If you want a menu (and a delay) at each bootup, then this is for you.

Help, I've Reconfigured My Rig, but I Can't Boot Up!

Before you reconfigure your system, you should make at least one emergency boot disk. Copy your AUTOEXEC.BAT and CONFIG.SYS file to the disk and then, enter the following command from your DOS directory: SYS A:

This will copy the MS-DOS hidden system files IO.SYS and MSDOS.SYS to the disk along with COMMAND.COM, the command interpreter. If you think that at least one boot disk is for sissies, keep in mind that, without a boot disk of this nature, you may configure yourself into a situation from which you may not be able to boot again — your system will just hang. Abandon all hope, ye who reconfigure here without a boot disk.

Vanilla

Sometimes, certain games will just refuse to run. One option is to configure with a "vanilla" AUTOEXEC.BAT and CONFIG.SYS. This means that you don't load any programs upon

startup, but you load DOS high (either into the High Memory Area or the Upper Memory Blocks, or both). My CONFIG.XMS and AUTOEXEC.XMS examples under the MS-DOS 5 section of the sidebar in this article would be good "vanilla" configurations if you leave out the Mouse driver. (To exclude a statement from executing in either of the configuration files, place the word "REM" in front of it). If your game still doesn't run, you probably have a sound card conflict. This one's good for 75% of game crashes. Reconfigure your game, using the hardware configuration routine found in either the setup or install program that came with your game and select PC speaker or No sound.

Here's a few more tips for running games. Set SMARTDRV.EXE to 256K. Why do this? Let's say the average "Gameframe" rig has 4MB of RAM. Write off your first meg for your game to run in and for DOS. If SMARTDRV.EXE is running, it defaults to 1MB. That leaves you with 2MB to configure as either XMS or EMS, depending upon your game. Certain games coming down the pipeline will require 2.5 MB minimum of XMS or EMS to run. That is why you may need to put a leash on SMARTDRV.EXE (just place the number 256 after SMARTDRV.EXE in your AUTOEXEC.BAT file). If SMARTDRV is running with its writeback cache enabled (default), make sure you type SMARTDRV /C before you shut down your rig. This "flushes" the cache, writing anything remaining in memory (like your save games), to the disk. To disable the writeback cache in SMARTDRV.EXE, place the letter of your drive (without a colon) after the SMARTDRV.EXE command in your AUTOEXEC.BAT file. For quick configuration file editing, try the MS-DOS editor. Type EDIT at a dos prompt to bring it up. Also, you may wish to try the MS-DOS program DOSKEY.COM. This program will allow you to recall and edit your command line entries using the arrow keys (like an Amiga). This can be quite handy.

Why Does The TV Have to Be on Channel 3?

Most people are unconformable programming a VCR. Configuring a computer, however, does not have to remain in the realm of rocket scientists. I hope that after reading my article, you will have the tools necessary to manage your computer's memory and configure it. As a result, you should spend more time playing games than playing with your computer. Refer to the various examples of system configuration which I have included in the sidebars of this article to see generic examples of configuring for Extended memory and Expanded Memory, and also third party memory managers.

For more information, check out Kris Janus's *1001 DOS Tips* (Osborne/McGraw-Hill). This book is a must have for anyone interested in learning the fundamentals of MS-DOS computing. There's something in here for the novice to the hacker. Additionally, the manuals that accompany both Quattro's 386MAX and Quarterdeck's QEMM contain a wealth of information regarding this subject. **csw**

CONFIG.ECD (Memmaker EMS with CD-ROM drivers)

```
DEVICE=C:\DOS\HMMEM.SYS
DEVICE=C:\DOS\EMM386.EXT RAM HIGHSCAN
X=C800-CBFF
BUFFERS=0-0
FILES=30
DOS=LOADHIGH
LASTDRIVE=Z
FCBS=4-0
DEVICEHIGH L3,1204 <C:\DOS\SETVER.EXE
DOS=HIGH
DEVICE=C:\MOUSE\MOUSE.SYS
DEVICEHIGH L3,2784 <C:\CDROM\FCD.SYS
/DMSCD000
SHELL=C:\DOS\COMMAND.COM C:\DOS: /P
DEVICEHIGH L2,64176
<C:\DOS\CBS.PACE.SYS /MOVE
```

AUTOEXEC.ECD CONFIG.ECD (Memmaker EMS with CD-ROM drivers)

```
@ECHO OFF
PRICMPY %*%
PATH=C:\DOS\C:\WINDOWS
SET TEMP=C:\WINDOWS\TEMP
SET SOUND=C:\SOUNDPRO
SET BLASTER=A220 I7 D1 T4
LH L2,310256 C:\DOS\MSCDEX /DMSCD000
/M:10
LH L1, 2,42384 /S C:\DOS\SMARTDRV.EXE
LH L1,1,8400 C:\DOS\DOSKEY.COM
```

Debug script to create BOOTME.COM

Use an ascii editor (like your MS DOS editor) to create the following file. Save the file as "BOOTME.SCR". To assemble this file using the MS DOS debugger, type "debug <bootme.scr bootme.com". The resulting BOOTME.COM file will cold boot your computer whenever you type "BOOTME". Make sure that this file is in a directory located in your path such as C:\DOS.

```
N BOOTME.COM
A 100
MOV BX,40
MOV DS,BX
MOV BX,1234
MOV [2],BX
JMP FFFF0
R CX
11
W
Q
```

Example of a "RIG4" batch file using BOOTME.COM. This batch file will copy the necessary configuration files for Expanded memory to your CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT files and then reboot your rig. The SMARTDRV.EXE line is included in this example to show you how to dump the writeback cache (if it is running). Without this line, the batch file would copy the files to their respective places, however, the system would reboot before the files were actually written to the disk, which would result in no change taking place in your configuration. So, if SMARTDRV is running and the disk cache is enabled, don't forget to dump it!

```
Save the following file as
"RIG4EMS.BAT"
@ECHO OFF
COPY C:\WINDOWS\CONFIG.EMS C:\CONFIG.SYS
COPY C:\WINDOWS\AUTOEXEC.EMS
C:\AUTOEXEC.BAT
SMARTDRV /C
BOOTME
```




PLACE YOUR BETS!

Capstone Bets A Bundle—And Loses — While Konami Makes Their Point

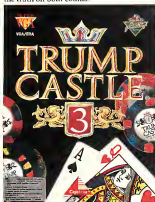
by Mark Alan Willett

Two recent entries in the computer gambling genre couldn't do more to demonstrate the yin-and-yang of software design gambits. Capstone has released its relatively giant *Trump Castle III* (TC3) while backing it with seven games, SVGA graphics and network play to boot. Then, almost as a side bet, Konami put *Beat The House* (BTH) on the shelves with one little high-density diskette, five VGA games, and—Surprise!—it comes up the big winner.

The difference can be put in a sentence: TC3 attempts a lot and fails at much of it; BTH does less but does most everything very well.

Getting Past The Doorman

The installation of TC3's four 5-1/4" HD diskettes took more than 55 minutes on my 386/33 clone. One develops an expectation that all the decompressing graphic files *must* be terrific. BTH, on the other hand, loads so quickly that one tends to figure the program is a real loser. Nothing could be farther than the truth on both counts.



TITLE:	Trump Castle 3
SYSTEM:	IBM
GRAPHICS:	SVGA, VGA, EGA
PLAYERS:	1, 2 (by modem, 2-4 (local) network)
PRICE:	\$99.95
PROTECTION:	None
PUBLISHER:	Capstone Moore, FL 800-646-7226

At face value, the fact that TC3 has no password protection seems to be a plus. Yet, the password protection of BTH consists of strategic questions about the games themselves (accompanied with a page reference from the manual) and seems relatively inobtrusive. The protection actually reinforces gaming strategy, and one should find that they won't often need to refer to the manual in order to get into the casino. The manual itself is a full-sized book with half its pages dedicated to sharp gaming strategy.

Into The Lobby

Both programs use the larger environment of a casino as the framework for their game subprograms. Once one enters the TC3 casino, however, the graphic disappointment continues. While treatment of the casino walls is often rich, just as often the test is primitive. Indeed, one quickly becomes aware, while wandering through the casino's rooms, that bad artwork in SVGA detail is still bad artwork. The artistic conceit is that the SVGA staircases and doors lead to rooms with baccarat, blackjack, poker, slot machines, craps, roulette, and keno.

With *Beat The House*, one enters through the gaudy neon-lit doors of a typical Vegas-strip casino. The main casino environment is an overhead graphic with blackjack tables, craps tables, a roulette table, a bank of slot machines, a bank of video poker machines and a registration desk. Unlike the dry and occasionally confusing option menus of TC3, BTH's registration desk is a quaintly effective point of entry to the casino.

From here, it's on to the games themselves...

Blackjack: Splitting Tens

Tables in TC3 are selected "realistically"—that is, by the size of the minimum bet. Unfortunately, whenever one is playing with more than one human player and those players happen to have unequal wallets, either the poorer player has to artificially pad his or her pocketbook to play at the more expensive tables or the richer player has to play down to a lesser table to accommodate the others.

In this sequence, *Trump Castle III*'s graphics really shine for the first time. The overhead view of the five-seat table is rendered in such loving detail that one can feel the felt beneath the finger tips. Unfortunately, my every for

such artwork was quickly deflated by the rough-drawn graphics of the chips and by the oddly-cartoonish shuffling of the single-deck of cards that precedes and, later, interrupts play.

Blackjack here is played by Atlantic City rules. (The major difference between Atlantic City and Vegas is that one may double down on a split.) As a game, my preference is for Atlantic City rules because the additional doubles are simply more fun to play.

In *Beat The House*, the game is played by traditional Vegas-strip rules, but there are other differences. The tables are designated by number-of-decks played by the house. Tables with one, two, four, or six decks are available. The program will take bets from \$1-\$1000. Not only does this allow human players with diverse bankrolls to retain the continuity of their cash and play together, but *Beat The House* has a quite effective on-line tutor which may be employed for recommendations and instruction through play. The focus on the number of decks used allows the program to tailor its advice to the strategies of



TITLE:	Beat The House
SYSTEM:	IBM
GRAPHICS:	VGA
PRICE:	\$59.95
PROTECTION:	One (randomized) Load-Up
DEVELOPERS:	Spirit of Discovery
DISTRIBUTOR:	Konami Baldwin Cross, IL 6788 255-0114

basic play and to assist slightly more elaborate card-counting routines. *BTH* is a program which should assist every non-professional gambler to become a more successful one.



Trump Castle 3 - Blackjack

Beat The House uses a four-seat table and a truly unique arrangement. The screen is divided into perspective views of each player's position at the table, and the game rotates between each view as if each were its own menu. In the center is an overhead view of the entire table, which becomes a mirror of the hands played as the graphic players wave the cards on or push them off when their human or computer counterparts decide to hit or stand.

TC3 is prettier, but *BTH* more effective. In the long run, it's the addition of the on-line tutor that makes the big difference. Sadly, neither package allows for the surrendering of a hand (early or late). Since I want to be a better bettor, my preference leans to *Beat The House*.



Beat The House - Blackjack

Roulette: One Double-Aught And One Big Winner

Most consider roulette a risky bet with those zeros and double zeros giving the house a big break. Still, there's some real excitement to be generated when a single-number bettor hits paydirt. It's hard to imagine that anyone could do anything wrong with a roulette display. There's the table, the chips and the wheel. What else is there?

Imagine my amazement, please, when I placed \$300 down on black in *TC3*, watched

the wheel pop-up on the screen, watched the ball circle round, watched it land in a black space, and then was promptly told I had landed on 19-RED! Where is the precision of those SVGA graphics when it's really needed?

Imagine my equal amazement when, in a virtually identical graphic design, I placed the same bet in the all-VGA *Beat The House*. The wheel popped up, the ball circled, and it landed in a black space. Not only was it black, but it matched the number the program said was the winner. Attention to detail isn't always a function of the graphics display.



Trump Castle 3 - Craps

Craps: Shooter-Out And Pay-The-Line

In *CGW*-editor Alan Emrich's online review of *TC3* for Prodigy, he carefully delineated a number of technical problems associated with betting in craps. But there are still more problems associated with *TC3* craps. First, the documentation does not reference "No Call Bets." Also known as "odds or "free odds" bets, they are additional bets placed on existing Pass and Come line wagers and are critical to the game since no percentage is given to the house. If one knows the game already, this is no problem since odds bets are accessible at the table. If one is uneducated in craps, their existence or importance in *TC3* might not be apparent. None odds bets for the Come line are accessed through a pop-up menu on the "No Call Bets" line, but only at the point that a bet is placed on that line.

A unique piece of programming is *TC3*'s



Trump Castle 3 - Craps

reliance on craps "lappy news." If one has three \$25 bets down and loses two on a dice roll, *TC3* gladly trumpets the news that the player has won \$25 on the third, ignoring the \$50-loss.

For those who wish to learn about craps, there are few better mechanisms than *BTH*'s online tutor. Both single-odds and double-odds tables are available. With craps, *BTH* also makes the finest use of digitized voice in either package. The stickman's chimes add a color to computer play that makes the game more fun and more immediate.

Slots: Lemons And Cherries

Slot machines are another sucker's bet. Odds, for example, in Atlantic City are a minimum 83%. That's an incredible 17% house edge. One doesn't play slots to win really, one plays because they're bright and moving and fun.

But house odds are set across the entire casino. One machine may be paying 93% while the machine next to it is paying 73%. In fact, putting a high- and low-paying machine next to each other is a common play in casinos since so many bettors play machines in tandem. "Serious" slots players study action on the casino floor before they put up their quarters and dollars.

By numbers alone, *TC3* has an incredible 36 slot machines. Unfortunately, there is no way to intelligently determine which machines are paying and which are not. So, playing them is an even worse risk than in a real casino. Adding graphic-insult to betting-injury, the design of all those machines is virtually identical, all looking like a tribute to ancient one-armed bandits. None of a modern slot's light, gaudy and compelling nature is captured. If ever there were a group of slot machines created for a funeral home, these are the ones. To add to the funeral atmosphere, the reels on *TC3*'s machines toll UP!

BTH fudges its slots in favor of entertainment. The two modern machines (a three-wheel/five-line option, and a four-wheel progressive) are colorful, attractively gauche...and set at very generous percentages (96% and 94%, respectively). They're not completely unrealistic either, though. One should assume these are the ones near the door which have been set favorably to attract passers-by. Nevertheless, there are still long losing streaks on these machines.

Another nice *BTH* touch: The progressive jackpots gain in value, albeit slowly, even when one is not playing, as if others were also playing the machines in the casino. In *TC3*, the only gamblers in the casino are the human and computer players of your choice. The progressive jackpots grow real sloooooowly there.

The favorable odds found at *BTH* make the

slots enjoyable, if not a very educational experience.

Poker: Know When To Hold And When To Fold

TC3 brings on "real" poker with 5- and 7-Card Stud, 5-Card Draw and Texas Hold 'Em. Yet, any real player of the game knows that half of its strategy is the evaluation of the other players. Few gambling games have as much "human" interest as a good evening at a poker table.

Unfortunately, *TC3's* computer players are unable to present a truly human face. So, unless one is playing with friends (at which point, why not get out a deck of cards and earn money the old-fashioned way?), one might as well be playing a machine.

This, of course, is exactly what one does in *BTH*. Four video poker machines (Jack-or-Better, Tens-or-Better, Joker Wild, Deuces Wild) are the offering. Also, there is an online tutor and a manual to educate the gambler into realizing that video poker is really a strategy game, too.

Fold *TC3*, and hold *BTH*.

Baccarat: Betting With The Dealer

Giving credit where it's due, the result is simple. *TC3* has baccarat, and *BTH* doesn't. Again, the beautiful felt table fights with the remainder of the graphics in *TC3*, but I don't

care. I love this game, and its absence in *BTH* is duly noted.

On an odd note, *TRUMP CASTLE II* went out of the way to explain that 5% of winnings are lost when the gambler bets "with the dealer," and that profit-sharing was incorporated in the program. *TC3* ignores it.

Keno: Not Enough Numbers

Keno is another fool's bet. Still, as has been pointed out by others, there's no other game where one can win thousands with a \$1.30 bet. Again, only *TC3* has Keno. If anyone wants to call it that.

Keno is, in part, noted for the many ways that the gambler's number choices may be selected, split and regrouped into multiple bets from a single ticket. Not in *TC3*. One



Trump Castle 3 - Keno

picks 2-15 numbers, coughs up \$1-to-\$5, and waits for a few minutes for the keno girl to inform one of the results.

Gone is the pleasure of scoring a copy of one's own ticket as the numbers are drawn. One cannot even see the numbers drawn in *TC3*. There is no Keno parlor to visit. Even if *TC3* is the program which has it, it just isn't keno.

T And A: Tutoring And Atmosphere

Ultimately, *TC3* is atmospherically artificial. It pretends to provide a realistic casino experience which simply doesn't live up to its billing. Maybe the nadir of this program is the "drinks girl." With this option on, a bar maid in a low-cut outfit will arrive every few minutes to ask if you want a drink. The high point of her visit seems to be that certain parts of her anatomy jiggle. Actually, it's a bad jiggle at that. Say "No" and she, thankfully, goes away. Say "Yes" and a \$5 tip is automatically deducted from one's bankroll. Does she deliver a drink? No way. I've been pandered before, but not like this.

Fortunately, with its documentation and the online tutor, Konami's *Best The House* delivers a gambling reality that can spell a difference the next time the amateur gambler goes to the casino. That makes *Best The House* a sure bet. **EW**

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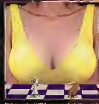
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* HEY, IT WORKED ONCE! This story is a true removal of a dog in 1973. We're happy to report the dog died of natural causes. Grim Reaper Service #94



Letters from Paradise



Bard's Tale Score

What is happening with *Bard's Tale IV*? I have heard it briefly mentioned in articles, but that's all. I am dying to know more about whether or not *Bard's Tale IV* is in the making!

Greg MacMartin
Kanata, Ontario, CANADA

The tale behind Bard's Tale IV is probably more convoluted than that within the game design itself. Once upon a time, Electronic Arts viewed its strength as being in "interactive stories." They had several developers who produced these games for them, and an in-house staff that loved to play CRPGs and adventure games, as well as develop them. Then, the throat of the company shifted and some of those developers became publishers under their own aegis.

Bard's Tale IV was on the drawing boards during this shift and, because of its successful past, was saved when many projects were canceled. However, it underwent a series of several false starts, design team changes, and producer reassignments. Right now the company is faced with taking the product through another personnel shift or committing software enthusiasm. We will let you know when the future is clear.

Your Wish Upon Command

When is MicroProse going to do an East Front game in the "Commander" series?

R. Doyle
St. Louis, MO

The "Command Decision" series is no longer in print. Though the products were extremely well-received in their 8-bit incarnations, there are currently no plans to produce such games for current platforms.

Imagine

I no longer have the need to purchase games. Years of vaporware tides have taught me that it's much more fun to just imagine them.

T. Madden
St. Louis, MO

And the compatibility problems are solved.

too! It's just so hard to show them off to your friends.

Gotta' Know When To Mold Them

I happened to pick up the January issue of *Computer Gaming World* and was intrigued by your Homegrown Hardware Review. You said those guys "represent the vanguard of flight simulation enthusiasts" and "this is, by far, the most significant



attempt at a realistic fighter cockpit that we've seen." Well, you'd better look again at the enclosed photos and then, give me a call.

Although my cockpit has been around for only about eight months, it really began in the fall of 1991 when I spotted an ad for surplus military ejection seats from an outfit called "Aviation Artifacts" in Missouri. I purchased a Vietnam era, McDonnell Douglas "Escapac" ejection seat from an A-4Skyhawk for about \$400 and had it shipped to San Diego by bus. Although, originally, I had intended only to make a nifty office chair, I later fell upon the opportunity to obtain an F-18 canopy! Well, things got a little involved after that and several months later, I had an entire cockpit in my office. The entire thing is about 11' x 5' x 3.5' wide and incorporates two separate CPUs (I had an old Texas Instruments Professional computer that was just collecting dust). Follow me, I'll give you a tour.

After sliding the aft canopy back, you reach inside and hit the switch for the internal lighting, grab your helmet off the seat, retract the pyrotechnics safety-lock (no, the ejection rockets aren't really live) and climb in. Place the helmet on your noodle and

then strap the oxygen mask to the helmet. Forced air is fed through the mask to give the feel and sound of real oxygen.

On the right-hand console is mounted a Thrustmaster FCS, along with the main system power switches. One switch and both CPUs begin to boot up. The primary system is a Gateway 2000 386/33 and the secondary is the old T1 Pto (which doesn't even have a hard drive) which I've programmed to run through a simulated APU (Auxiliary Power Unit) start, INS Alignment (Inertial Navigational System), acquire GPS references (Global Positioning System), and provide information to the pilot for initializing the simulations and appropriate hardware settings.

On the left console is all of the audio and communications equipment. Certainly not an authentic component, I've found that a telephone is a must since the whole rig is difficult to get out of in order to answer a call. And a household intercom serves to provide ground communications with the "Airboss" (my wife) if I fly too far or too long. It really ruins the realism when I'm in the heat of a dogfight and she taps on the side of the canopy to announce she's going to leave me if I don't get out soon. At least the intercom gives me a sensation that I'm truly isolated. My audio setup isn't as powerful as Jeff Jeessel's, but it does provide



Our Fly is UnZIP-Coded

It is with pleasure that I'm writing this letter. I recently received my April 1993 issue. I impatiently opened the envelope. At the bottom of the envelope, there was a beautiful smashed fly (really). I am so happy with my new friend that I always keep it with me (no!). I love to receive free surprises once in awhile!

To show you my gratitude, I'm sending you this authentic (dead) Canadian fly, ideal for fly collectors, to feed your cat, or simply to throw it away.

Seriously, I just want to congratulate you for your excellent magazine. I read each article carefully, it is very helpful when buying a computer game. Keep up the good work!

Hugo Trempeier
Lachute, Quebec,
CANADA

Oh, no! Now, you've given away the secret of why Canadian subscriptions cost more. I suppose that now everyone will want a fly. CEN



about 6 warts to my Sound Blaster. Also on the left console is a Thrustmaster WCS. Because of the many different functions of all the buttons in various simulations, I've programmed the T1 Pro with a pre-flight checkout mode to help refresh my memory each flight.

High and in front of the pilot is the main system monitor which functions as the HUD or outside world in the simulations. Below it and inside the cockpit is the second monitor slaved to the T1 Pro system. Simulations like *Falcon 3.0* and *F-15 Strike Eagle III* have become pretty complicated and the pace is too fast to keep looking at pages in the manual. Since I am only a part-time pilot (contrary to my wife's opinion), I use the T1 to provide me with several different pieces of information accessible during my flights:

1. RWR (Radar Warning Receiver) symbology, radar ground mapping symbology, etc.
2. Bomb-drop tables. Select your unguided free-fall weapon from the list and the computer will determine the correct weapon release range from target versus your speed & altitude. This is very useful in sims such as *Fightfighter II* which lacks a CCIP (Continuously Computed Impact Point) mode.
3. Thrustmaster WCS functions and fuel consumption information.
4. Flight cards. These present information such as takeoff and landing checklists, X-15 flight profiles, etc.

Between the pilot's legs is a 5" diagonal, color, moving map display. Actually, it's a TV tied to my home camcorder and mounted to a geared motor-driven tripod rig of my own design. It allows me to feed in actual ONC (Operational Navigation Charts). This might seem like overkill for now, given the limited ground detail in most simulations, but I'm planning ahead. It really is nice to know when you've crossed

into hostile territory and also, the quickest way to get out! The rig allows me to control both vertical and horizontal scan position on the maps and zoom in for detail when necessary (I can also watch my favorite cable channel).

My wife hated the cockpit at first, then I let her fly *Microsoft Flight Simulator 4.0*. She lasted about 10 minutes before her first Cessna crash. She climbed out with a few beads of sweat on her forehead and exclaimed, "I think I like it honey."

Anthony Kutz
San Diego, CA

Trust us, Anthony. You'll never get it off the ground.

Bag Guy Is A Pushover!

In issue #105, the Rumor Bag Guy does us an injustice. Proofreading notwithstanding, we (military) who work on the island refer to it as Parris Island, not Parris Island. However, because the Rumor Guy is alright, he won't have to get down and do 50.

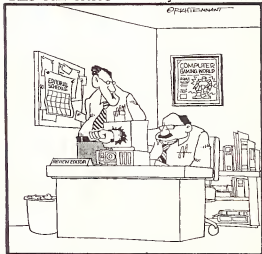
Jerry Westfall
Parris Island, SC

It's a good thing he doesn't have to do 50. We don't think he could survive 5!



The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"DO YOU WANT ME TO CALL THE COMPANY AND HAVE THEM SEND ANOTHER REVIEW COPY OF THEIR FLIGHT SIMULATOR, OR DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO WRITE?"



Roger Wilco Takes The Fifth



Space Quest V

by Charles Ardai

Some people have a soft spot in their hearts for Abbott and Costello movies, some for *Mad* magazine. I have a soft spot for the *Space Quest* games. Such guilty pleasures all have at least this much in common: once one has built up a taste for their brand of silliness, nothing but repeated exposure can sate the appetite. So, no one could be happier than I to see a new Roman numeral tacked onto a *Space Quest* box.

Space Quest V, the latest in the improbable exploits of Roger Wilco: Janitor-to-the-Stars, is more of the same...only more so. What does this mean? It means "more" in both senses: "another helping of" and "a larger helping of." There are more pratfalls and misadventures, more skin-of-the-teeth escapes from the slaving jaws of death (and boy do some of those jaws slaver!), and more silly asides that tweak every science fiction icon from *The Fly* to *Alien* to *Star Wars*, with stops in between at *Star Trek*, *Star Trek*, and, well, *Star Trek*.

Yes, if one has to identify a target that gets hit more often than any other, it would be the late Gene Roddenberry's brainchild. The subtitle of this latest adventure, "The Next Mutation," is a near-pun on "The Next Generation," and when we first see our gallant hero this is performing the much-noted "Picard Maneuver" (tugging down his tunic to get a better fit) to the strains of a barely modified version of the theme music from the original TV series. From there on, there is almost no scene that goes by without a *Star Trek* reference, including a bit where Roger's crusty chief engineer refuses a request to provide medical assistance. "I'm an engineer," he exclaims, "not a doctor!"

Also on board Roger's first starship command is an *Ulthra*-esque communications officer named Flo; a mildly *Sulu*-ish helmsman named Droole; and, eventually, a science officer, but I am not going to give away any surprises here. Roger's nemesis this time is a square-jawed heavy named Captain Quirk (no, this is not subtle humor) who is involved in a nefarious plot to pollute the heavens by illegally dumping toxic waste.

Roger's mission, initially, is simply to take his ship to three galactic garbage pick-up points and return to Starcon with the refuse. Things go wrong, of course, almost from the

very beginning, and by the time Roger gets to the third planet it is clear that something fishy is afoot. He investigates, discovers a program of genetic engineering as ugly as anything Dr. Morau ever concocted, and decides to put an end to it. The last third of the game consists of Roger's game of cat-and-mouse with the turncoat crew of the U.S.S. Goliath, Cpt. Quirk, and the garbage monster their actions unleash.

Roger and crew also make a stopover at an R&R station (the "Spacebar") during which the player gets to challenge Quirk to a game that is basically a 23rd Century version of *Battleship*. Later on, a set of access tunnels on board the Goliath function as the obligatory irritating maze sequence, and a trip into an asteroid field leads to an exasperating real-time "docking" game. In other words, *Space Quest V* even has the little games-within-a-game that fans of the series have come to know and dread.

People with long memories will recall that every Abbott and Costello movie had an obligatory, boring romantic subplot that engendered a couple of obligatory, endless musical numbers. No one in the audience cared

about these scenes — they just wanted to get back to the comedy — but the studio said that the romance had to go in. So, in it went. This is the downside to "more of the same" — the bad stuff gets repeated, too.

For the most part, though, the stuff that gets repeated here is good stuff: the endless stream of gags, the high-adventure plot, and the first-rate graphics and sound. There are also innovations introduced in *Space Quest V*, including a refined interface and a longer, less-linear storyline. Another innovation, unfortunately, is the game's unprecedented number of typos ("ther" for "there," "pods" for "pod's," "your doomed is sealed"); but, then, what can you do? Not every change can be an improvement.

Make It So

Among the revisions to the interface are some changes in the icon bar at the top of the screen. Gone are the useless nose and tongue icons. (How many things were there to smell and taste in *Space Quest IV*? That's right, none.) Instead, there are two versions of the "Talk" icon: the ordinary one and one that contains an exclamation point. The latter is used to issue a command.

This handy icon enables Roger to take control of his ship and fly it to all corners of the galaxy. While there is a best order in which to visit the available planets, the player is allowed a certain amount of leeway to come and go as he chooses. Similarly, while there are only certain situations in which such commands as "Cloak ship," "Fire," and "Hail planet" make sense, the player has access to them any time Roger sits in the captain's chair. This gives the player the feeling of being much more in control than in any of the previous *Space Quest* games. Roger is not fate's plaything anymore. He and the player are in command.

There are also specialized icons that appear in certain unusual situations (such as the "fly" icon when Roger is turned into a guess-what) and menus of dialogue choices that pop up now and then so that Roger can have conversations with members of his crew. This variety of interfaces keeps the gameplay lively. It is good to see that the folks at Sierra (actually, Dynamic) have not gotten so used to the way things have always been that they are unable to try something new.



TITLE: Space Quest V: The Next Mutation
 SYSTEM: IBM (386/16 MHz recommended)
 PRICE: \$49.95
 PROTECTION: Occasionation Lock-up
 GRAPHICS: VGA
 DESIGNER: Mark Crowe
 PUBLISHER: Sierra/Dynasty
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Unlike the interface, not a whole lot is new about the game's puzzles. This is not very surprising, not particularly disappointing; the puzzles have always been secondary in the *Space Quest* series. There is plenty of the usual: Roger finds a roll of antacids and a creature who is spewing acid all over the ship; Roger finds a glass of liquor and a packet of dehydrated aliens with a "don't expose to alcohol" warning; Roger finds a laser torch and later comes up against a thick metal bulkhead. At one point, Roger has to use a cryo-freeze chamber, but not to worry, there are instructions printed on the side. The designers have not gone out of their way to tease the player's brain.

On the other hand, there are a few sequences that rise above the norm. The chase between Roger and a sexy robot Tectminatrix across the landscape of Kiz Uragubi is intricate and inspired. The ploy Roger uses to win his command is clever and takes a bit of thought to figure out (unless one sees the solution in the partial walk-through printed in the documentation). The final moments of the game, in which Roger has to find a way to deal with a giant garbage blob, require quick thinking and a few leaps of logic. Even the easy puzzles are fun, if one goes into the game knowing what to expect.

Souls more jaded than I might wonder why there are still laughs to be mined from a character in a sci-fi spoof saying, "Captain, she cannot take much more of this!" Still, the fact is that there are. Sarcinists have been going back to this particular well for a quarter of a century, and it hasn't run dry yet. *Space Quest V* may not be for everyone, but people who find this sort of thing funny will find this variant very funny indeed.

Energize!

Part of what makes *Space Quest V* so enjoyable is that it's not just funny. It's also exciting and suspenseful, due in large part to its movie-quality score, its atmosphere-enhancing sound effects, and its remarkable visuals.

The soundtrack is calculated to pull all the right strings, from the "Now it's time to panic" string that gets plucked just before Roger is attacked, to the "Your true love is dying and you may never find another" string over which composer Chris Stevens lightly runs his bow after Roger's beloved Ambassador Wankmeister is infected with the highly mutagenic "Primordial Soup." It's not Mozart, but it is better than most of what passes for scoring on network television. Stevens has a marvelous ear for musical wit and reference and his contribution to the game is no less substantial than designer Mark Crowe's.

"Wit" might not be the best term to describe Tim Clarke's sound effects; certainly, he is appealing to a baser set of responses when he places the sound-effects equivalent of a

whoopee cushion in the seat of Roger's command chair. This gag wears thin after a while, especially given that it is repeated every single time Roger sits down.

However, the effect is realistic, as is every other sound in the game. Doors hiss open and clank shut, transporters hum and twit, the controls on the various control panels give off highly suitable blips and bloops. Maybe most satisfying of all is Roger's loud "Duhhh!" whenever he becomes the victim of his own



stupidity. (If they ever make a movie out of *Space Quest V*, they'll have to cast Homer Simpson in the lead.) The sound effects give the game a richness and a texture it would not otherwise have and are largely responsible for creating the sense that the player really is interacting with, and having an effect on, the simulated environments he visits.

As for the visuals, while it would not be accurate to say that they are the best yet seen in the series, they are certainly up to snuff, which I mean as high praise. One interesting point is that more close-ups are used than in previous games to supplement the standard side-view and medium-range perspective. This may sound like a good thing, but it is and it isn't. In close-up, the artists clearly draw (no pun intended) from a comic book sensibility. As styles go, this is fine — perfectly workmanlike — but while the results are nice enough, they are usually something short of stunning.



In the standard scenes, however, one finds the combination of gorgeous painted backgrounds and detailed, well-animated foreground action for which Sierra has become known. The result is that this game, like most of Sierra's, is worth playing if only to see each new setting as it appears.

The fourth element, which clicks just as

neatly into place as the music, graphics, and sound effects, is the writing. It's not so much that the story is great — there barely is any story, just the flimsiest pretext for a series of adventures — as it is that the dialogue and narration are written with a dry wit and a sense of character that makes them a pleasure to read. The banter between Flo, Droole and Roger is, for lack of a better term to describe it, a hoot. Even if one takes away the comic references to everything from Bugs Bunny to *Raiders of the Lost Ark* to Dana Carvey's George Bush, the text of the game is great fun on its own merits.

Where *Space Quest V* is something of a letdown is in the gameplay. For one thing, the game demands cursor placement so precise that one can click the "Command" icon on Flo or Droole and get a "You are trying to order the wall around" response just because the icon isn't placed exactly where the computer wants it to be. Along the same lines, one can position an oxygen mask entirely over Roger's head only to discover that the computer will only accept it if clicked on Roger's torso.

At one point, I assumed that the game would not let me transport off a planet because when I placed the communicator icon on Roger and clicked, it didn't work. As it turned out, I had just chosen the wrong portion of Roger's anatomy to click on. This kind of problem would seem to be easily corrected and I am surprised that Sierra let it get through to the final version of the game. Of course, typos are easily corrected, too — but only if one bothers to catch them.

Other nagging annoyances include the fact that trips from planet to planet start to seem interminable after a while (even at "lite speed"), and that Sierra's decision to render all icons in black-and-white, as opposed to full color in previous chapters of the saga, makes them hard to see against some of the backgrounds.

However, the bulk of *Space Quest V* is very good and, like the silly jokes and excellent graphics, the occasionally irritating gameplay is part of the package. It's what people expect when they buy a *Space Quest* game. They might even miss it if they were gone.

When you think about it, it's the same way with the musical numbers in those old movies. No one really wanted to see them, but some of them weren't half bad: "My Dreams Are Getting Better All The Time," "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy," "Let's Play House." If nothing else, they gave you a chance to catch your breath before you started to laugh again.

Space Quest V, too, is fine just the way it is. It certainly has its share of quips (Capitans included) but it's got more than its share of laughs, thrills and delicious scenery, too. I think even the most demanding Wilcofilites will be pleased. **CRAW**



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Terminator Emulation Mode

"Terminator 2029" from Bethesda Softworks

by Gordon Goble

It is with fondness and perhaps a tear in the eye that we remember the compassionate character study of 1984, *The Terminator*. Featuring a hulking beast of a man with a tenuous grip on the English language as a hulking cyborg with an equally tenuous grip on the English language, this stunt-filled special effect showcase painted the bleakest of futures for the human race, at least in the good city of Los Angeles.

Both *The Terminator* and its eminently successful sequel revolved around critical current events that would eventually have a bearing on humanity's fate in the face of a 21st cen-

tury mechanized rebellion. Yes, there was much in the way of destruction, mayhem, and death in both movies, but aside from a few glimpses into the next century, most all that good stuff took place in today's world.

Closer scrutiny of the man vs. machine fight-to-the-death world of the future was possible only in one's imagination. But now, with the aid of an IBM-compatible 386 or faster computer with at least 1 MB expanded memory, one can experience firsthand the Bethesda Softworks version of life on the rubble-strewn battlefield of the year 2029.

Like the star of the two movies, and the magnitude of the fictional war itself, *Terminator 2029* is awfully large, although its installed size of 12 MB is a tad smaller than the 14 stated in the game manual. Fortunately, in an effort to clear up any installation or operational problems before they arise, Bethesda has thoughtfully included a small diagnostic program that can be run right off disk #1 before the somewhat lengthy install procedure is initiated.

Blood on the Circuitry

Terminator 2029 opens with a series of animated scenes depicting the L.A. war zone of that year, bearing a strong resemblance to the first movie and providing a taste of what's to come. And certainly, what's coming isn't for soft, sensitive gamers; blood, burnt circuitry, and spare parts will fly with wild abandon. Most graphically disturbing will be the repeated animation of one's self when things haven't gone quite right, powerful plasma blazes ripping through one's lower body followed by a particularly violent decapitation. Needless to say, life juices will splatter and drain over and over again.

Before the gore, however, a little background and some game basics are required learning. The plot is basic good vs. evil; evil being the intelligent machines of "Skynet," and good, of course, being represented by the

human Resistance movement. Led by one John Connor (Sara Connor's little boy all grown up), the Resistance has recently made a stunning discovery central to gameplay. While probing a Skynet vault, a prototype of a fully mechanized Terminator unit was found intact. With a few modifications and improvements, the Terminator is now ready to be used against its computerized creators.



There's just one catch. Only a few precious individuals are physically and mentally able enough to don the "Advanced Cybernetic Exoskeleton" (ACE). That's where the gamer comes in.

The gamer's task is to run a number of incursions into enemy territory, laying waste to the bad guys and defending humanity. The ultimate objective of *Terminator 2029* is revealed only at the successful completion of the final mission, and that objective is...well, you'll have to play the game to find out.

In the meantime, an auspicious foray will capture more ground for the Resistance, while defeats will result in lost territory to the mechanized marauders. Fail several in a row, and the annihilation of humanity is assured.

Following the aforementioned opening animation (which inevitably will be bypassed after two or three viewings), a very visual main interface is served up. From this screen representation of our hero's subterranean lair, monies can be created, games loaded and saved, statistics viewed, etc. Unfortunately,



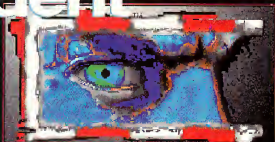
TITLE:	Terminator 2029
SYSTEM:	IBM 386 with at least 1 MB expanded memory (strongly recommended; Mouse strongly recommended)
PRICE:	\$69.95
PRODUCTION:	Discussions Lock-Up
DESIGNER:	Vil Lukshmin
PROGRAMMER:	Jillan Lelay
PUBLISHER:	Bethesda Softworks Rockville, MD (301) 525-9300

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this is the *only* spot in which a game can be saved and, since certain individual missions are particularly difficult (not to mention lengthy), alternate saving techniques should have been incorporated.

A Brief Exchange

On to the briefing room, where John Connor and two other superiors explain the current situation, supply new mission orders, and give the run-down on available weaponry. Nor to appear prudish, but why is the one woman in the room (Technician Rachel Steiner), who is obviously an accomplished scientist, not only physically endowed beyond all natural proportions but garbed in the scintiest of clothing as well? Is this sexist? Are Arnold's pecs chemically enhanced?

The briefing room leads to the ACE Ordnance Bay where various weaponry is loaded aboard. Six separate weapons can be carried for each mission, and choices will logically vary depending upon designated assignment. Advanced players will have a whole lot more to choose from, but all armament can be grouped into three primary categories: plasma cannons, fusion grenades and missiles.



As each mission is completed, more advanced armament becomes available and Technician Steiner becomes increasingly more friendly, offering a dinner invitation as reward at one point, which is just peachy-keen if one enjoys a little female companionship with his radioactive fried rars.

Ace of Spades

Off to war, and the first cool thing to notice is the pseudo-virtual reality of the game, tempered somewhat by the fact that movement is possible only through the keyboard's cursor keys. Each step—forward, backward, or sideways—is in pre-designated increments, while turns are made at 90 degree angles only. There's nothing in between. This doesn't seem to be the optimal implementation of movement, especially considering that the movement system of last year's *Wolfenstein 3D* did a much better job and offered both mouse and joystick support.

Aside from the real-time eyeball view of the surrounding landscape, the screen is jam-packed with informative displays, revealing unseen enemies, damage taken and inflicted,

presently selected weapons, gridmaps of the immediate area, and more. The amount of stuff going on at any one instant is impressive, and getting a grip on it all requires some experience.

Each mission combines elements of arcade shoot-em-ups with fighter jet navigation, weapon selection, and mayhem to the eyeballs, as well as adventure games with the occasional branching decision and labyrinthine environment. It ain't easy, but nobody ever said the salvation of humanity would be.



Once engaged in battle, primary and secondary weapons can be co-selected and triggered by either left or right mouse buttons. The targets blow up so well that there are no decimated remains to crunch underfoot. Airborne Scorpions and Dragons, land based vehicles, and terminators alike: all just seem to evaporate.

By the way, care must be exercised when targeting, as fellow resistance members are on the field as well. Sadly, they will not recognize the ACE battle armor as an allied weapon, and will attempt to fire upon Mr. ACE. If these game little warriors become a might too pesky, wasting one or two seems to be all in a day's work, but any more and the commander will issue a stern warning. Many is the time I've been tempted to...ah, forget it, weapons aren't allowed in headquarters.

Fortunately, the ACE suit is self-repairing, to a point. Minor damage (and much will be suffered) can be repaired on the run simply by depressing the "r" key. But repairs can take some time (several minutes in extreme instances), and this is unfortunate for two reasons: 1) one must be wary of approaching fiends during the repair procedure, and, 2) one must be careful not to drift off to sleep during the repair procedure because it's just plain b-o-r-i-n-g. Although a schematic diagram in the corner of the screen features flashing circuitry, this ceases to be a source of amusement after the first few minutes.

Another battlefield complaint has to do with the radar system, which would be just great if it worked properly! Too often Mr. ACE is in the clear, only to be converged upon from all angles by bad guys — without any advanced radar sightings. Insanely materializing doom machines weren't supposed to be part of the deal.

The Seventh Mission of Synthbad

Each mission has a distinctly differing purpose, from recovering wounded compatriots to recovering important data, or triggering massive explosions in the heart of an underground enemy bunker. It is when approaching elevator shafts to descend beneath the surface that questions are posed, such as, "You see an elevator. Do you take it?" An interesting element of *Terminator 2029* that could have used some expansion is the venerable adventure game, and I found myself hoping in vain for a little more of this type of challenge and a little less fire-fighting/labyrinth resolution.

This brings us to an important point. Normally, a dedicated gamer wants desperately to finish and "win" his or her selected game, but it *may* be interesting en route. Unfortunately, along about the 1,000th destroyed target (and twentieth max), *Terminator 2029* lost this reviewer. It ceased to be totally engrossing, and began to feel like a glorified shooting gallery. Sure things looked (and sounded) great when being blasted to junk metal, but how much "killing machine" can one person be? The answer is: *not this much*.

Those who are able to win the game in the optimal seven mission path, may not become as stazed as this reviewer, but I would have liked to see this product serve as more than a shoot-'em-up. The fact is that *Terminator 2029* shines graphically, features an interesting premise, and supplies ample audible realism and thunder. It runs as a good computer game should, bereft of any annoying mid-play screen freezes.



Unfortunately, the accompanying manual, though designed in camouflage khaki and written to get one in the spirit of the game, falls shy in a number of areas such as equipment explanation, general troubleshooting tips, and an adequate index.

Finally, a better method of movement control (namely, joystick) would have immeasurably improved my perception of this game.

I don't know...maybe if the bodacious technician offered to take me dining and dancing in the rubble of post-war L.A., I'd feel like suiring up once more...they say love does funny things.... **EDW**

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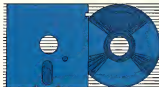
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COMPANY REPORT



The Legend Of... Legend

A Company Profile of Legend Software

by the CGW Staff

During the dismal gray decades of the Cold War, a monstrous economic sector reached its fullest stature. President Eisenhower warned us about the Military-Industrial Complex in his farewell address, but the specter of an evil empire in the East continued to feed its growth. When, after decades of an uneasy stand-off, the Berlin Wall was dismantled, the gigantic sector gradually began to deflate.

One part of that sector is American Systems Corporation, a high-tech firm that builds systems for Trident submarines and other military purposes. As the monumental military expenditures of the Cold War began to be reduced, the executives of ASC decided to invest in non-defense-related ventures. One area of investment was cable television. Another area was entertainment software.

Mike Verdu, who serves as CEO of Legend Software, was an employee of ASC during their period of diversification. Actually, Mike had run his own company, Paragon Systems (no relation to MicroProse-Greenburg, the former Paragon Software) prior to its acquisition by ASC. Verdu's Paragon Systems developed systems architecture that ASC wanted so badly that it purchased the entire company. In addition, Verdu's company had done some of the programming work on *Sherlock: Riddle of the Crown Jewels* for Infocom. Bob Bates, the designer of *Sherlock*, and Verdu became friends at that point. So, when Verdu became aware of ASC's desire to diversify, he and Bates presented a business plan wherein ASC would establish a subsidiary to publish entertainment software.

The new company was originally slated to be known as "Gamesworks," but Borland objected because of an old package which they had published under the same name. The company name was changed to Legend Software and the original deal looked very good. ASC knew enough about start-ups that they only expected a small return on investment if one product shipped in the first year. Yet, they expected so much of a return on two products that Legend could not possibly have met the terms for a second round of funding.

As Verdu and Bates were soon to learn, no entertainment software company is currently making that kind of return on investment. The partners looked at affiliated label deals, realizing that they were trading profit percentage for distribution, and eventually signed as an affiliate with MicroProse. Later, when MicroProse was putting its energy into going public, Legend elected to move to Accolade's growing affiliate program.

Cast of Characters

Legend's modest goal is to produce four to six quality software packages per year. To accomplish this goal, the company has assembled a core of vital personnel. Two of these long-term core workers are Duane Beck, designer/maintainer of the systems architecture for the company's products and Glen Dahlgren, the assistant producer, composer and programmer who helped clean up the system.

Duane was one of the originals at Legend, having worked with Bob Bates on *Sherlock*. He worked with Infocom's in-house ZIL (Zork Interactive Language) during the *Sherlock* process and remembers ZIL as being similar to the programming language known as LISP. According to Beck, the code used to construct Legend products is similar to C. In fact, he says that most of the outside software libraries they use are in C, but notes that they utilize some graphics libraries which are written in assembly language.

Having seen code of all shapes and sizes at various software houses, we expressed surprise at how clean and easy to read the Legend source code appeared on the screen. Beck explained that Glen had cleaned

up and commented the system architecture so that all of the game designers could create a pristine code that is easy to read. Then, they looked at each other and elected to share a disclaimer. Everyone at Legend agrees that Steve Meretzky is an exception to this rule of attempting to create pristine, commented code. Meretzky still writes code as though he is trying to get as much on the screen as possible (probably because ZIL's editor only allowed about 12 lines on the screen at a time).

When we asked Duane's co-workers what they thought his most significant programming triumph was, they uniformly answered that the data compression routine

was the nearest trick. Because games take up lots of space with text (in which seven bits are used per character with the last bit usually getting wasted), Legend's technical team would manually extract the ASCII strings and compress them with Duane's modified version of Huffman Encoding. By *Spellcasting 201*, Duane had automated the entire process. Now, the text compression offers slightly better than a 50% compression rate. *Gateway's* 600K of raw text compressed to just under 300K.

Glen Dahlgren does triple duty. Not only does he manage all outside artists and testers, but he wrote almost 1/3 of *Gateway* (including the game concept which kept mulling throughout the design process),



Mike Verdu, chairman, Peggy Otsani, director of marketing, and Bob Bates, president of Legend.

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composes most of the music (ca. 40 pieces per game), and implements the sound effects.

Another key member of the cast is Mark Poesch. Mark does most of his work on the Macintosh and then moves it to the IBM. At the time of our visit, he was working on problems related to SVGA. He expressed frustration at the lack of standards within the industry and noted that there were at least five different chip sets for SVGA. He went on to state that VESA works, but insists that there is significant degradation in quality with others. His stated objective during the interview was to integrate high-speed animation into the Legend games and use more rotoscoping in the future.

Producer and Director

The management team for the company consists of Mike Verdu, Bob Bates and Peggy Oriani. The men manage the company, while Peggy manages all production schedules, public relations, package and promotional design and marketing from her office. Fortunately, Peggy had run her own design firm prior to helping form Legend. As such, she is used to dealing with freelance artists and is able to be as directive or non-directive as she needs to be in getting an interesting variety of cover work for Legend products. For *Spellcasting 301: Spring Break*, for example, she enlisted Hollywood poster artist Craig Nelson to provide the glitzy feeling she wanted in the box art.

Bates as president and Verdu as CEO make an interesting complement to each other. Bates is the de facto creative director and Verdu



The Legend beantrout at work.

is the bean counter. Bates knows game design from the standpoint of past experience. Verdu wants the games to push toward higher sales volume and a more polished interface.

Verdu thinks that the text-heavy look of Legend games gives them an archaic, outdated feel. Bates believes in storytelling, insisting that text is necessary. Verdu has a graphics orientation in terms of interface; Bates has a verbal orientation. Together, they hope to keep evolving the Legend interface until it becomes software that appeals to both orientations.

Raising the Curtain

The one thing that both Bates and Verdu agree upon is the necessity of careful risk management. Both have seen production costs, burgeoning staffs, and extravagant facilities put other companies on the market or out of business. So, the immediate goal of the management team is to hit the point of releasing four products per year, making the graphics more attractive, and developing a more transparent interface. An even better piece of news is the fact that ASC is planning to sell the company back to Verdu, Bates, and two other partners over a period of time.

Perhaps, though, the most ironic factor in the legend of Legend is that the little company that was begun by a defense contractor has itself become a government contractor. The U.S. Department of Justice has contracted with Legend to develop an adventure game which will teach the implications of the government's ethics code to Justice Department employees. Sometimes, even in software legends, the story comes full cycle. **CGW**

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"I Came, I Played, I Conquered"

The Board / Computer Wargaming Transition

by Alan Enrich

Remember when a CRT was a Combat Results Table and TSR stood for Tactical Studies Rules (before they discovered *Dungeons & Dragons*)? Actually, both Gary Gygox and Dave Arneson were excellent wargamers in their day, especially in the field of miniatures. Now these abbreviations, like so much in this wargamer's life, have been taken over by computers. Okay, so I've learned that a CRT is also a computer monitor and a TSR is something I need to get rid of to run my computer games. I can live with that. Adapting the "ancient" hobby of board wargaming to the computer age hasn't always been a smooth transition, but I will admit to being better for it.

For instance, my circle of wargaming buddies has more than doubled since I discovered what a computer modem could do when plugged into a network. About half the war and strategy games that I play are on computer and a good many of these are played with another wargamer via modem. I download errata and read player's opinions on GEnie and other networks. GAPS (Game Assistance Programs) will be truly coming of age over the next few years. It's just getting better and better, right?

Well, that's not what I've heard. Not everyone agrees with such a rosy assessment. Just as there have always been prophets of doom and gloom in the boardgame industry (where even I have joined the chorus in hopes of there being more introductory level games that could be used for hobby recruitment), so there are those who say that computer wargaming can't survive. That strikes me as odd since the average board wargame will do 2,000 - 5,000 unit sales where computer wargames tend to start at 5,000 and, with the likes of *Command HQ* and *The Perfect General* as examples, can easily weigh in at around 75,000 copies sold. If you count *Sid Meier's Civilization* as a wargame, I wouldn't be surprised to hear that it had sold around 200,000 copies.

Frankly, I'm not worried about the death of wargaming. I'm too busy enjoying them and trying to keep up with the plethora of new releases every year. When I started out in this hobby back in the early 70s, it was easy to buy every new release and eat your losses on the turkeys. With the price and quantity of new wargame releases these days,

like you, I read the reviews carefully and really appreciate a good strategy article or replay to help me get the most value out of my wargame purchases. I just wanted everyone to know that I'm not kidding when I say we're all in this together — wargamers bound by our love of this hobby.

Old Business

At press time, we were a few names away from filling the roster for the *Empire Deluxe* tournament. Next issue, look for the who's who in computer wargaming tournament play to be posted in these pages. Those who have registered early have been practicing and sending in feedback by Email and I am pleased to say that this is shaping up to be quite an exciting event.

The feedback is just coming in on the *Pacific War* coverage. Generally, it seems that it was enthusiastically received. There was a lot of material presented and the vast majority of you felt it made an excellent inclusion for the game. We have no other features of that girth planned for any time soon, by the way.

New Business

I've been spending some time with *Aide de Camp* from HPS Simulations. The more I fool around with that program, the more I like it. Hopefully, I'll get a full review in soon. Without even reading the documentation, I've managed to put the entire map for GDW's popular board wargame *A House Divided* on my hard drive and have almost finished the counters. Soon, I'll have a complete, graphic play-by-Email kit. It works for virtually any board wargame and rumor has it that the publisher/designer, Scott Hamilton, has been in touch with many board wargame companies concerning this product. Perhaps the "big crossover" between board and computer wargames is closer than many think.

In the meantime, I'll be heading up to *The Computer Game Developer's Conference*. There, I'll meet with the likes of Sid Meier, Mark Baldwin, Dani Bantzen and so forth. Whatever wargaming dirt is to be found there, you can bet yours truly will be nolling in it to keep our readers abreast. Until you turn to these pages to "read all about it," try to remember what CRT's and TSRs are. **EW**



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The Gaming Connection BBS in Everett, WA specializes in connection modern-to-modern players. Give it a call at (206) 742-4044, 24 hours a day. Join a Gaming Ladder and make new friends to challenge. *Empire Dealer* and *Harpoon* scenarios, plus access to *Legend* (including over 5,000 files) available on your first call.

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Conventions

Adventure GameFest '93 will be held May 21-23 in the Portland, Oregon area. Board, computer and miniature gaming of all genres, both tournament and open gaming, will be featured. There will be door and event prizes, a games auction and a miniature painting contest. Pre-registration is \$15 for 3 days, \$12 for 2 days or \$7 for 1 day. To be held at the Oregon Convention Center, 777 Millie Dr. Blvd. (Union Avenue), Portland, OR. Contact: Adventure Games Northwest, Inc., 6517 NE Alberta, Portland, OR 97218, 503-282-6896 or 206-576-7486.

The Gen Con Game Fair will be held August 19-22, 1993 at the MECCA Center in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Meet some of your favorite editors from *Computer Gaming World* magazine, live and in person at their exhibit booth! For more information, write to Gen Con Game Fair, PO Box 756, Lake Geneva, WI 53147 or call (414) 248-3625.

Origins '93 will be held July 1-4, 1993 at the Tarrant County Convention Center in Fort Worth, Texas. For more information, write or call: Gencon, PO Box 609, Randallstown, MD 21133; (410) 298-3135.

By Area Code

Seeking opponents for *Global Conquest*. Please call Steven H. in Wilton, CT at H-(203) 762-0541.

Local opponents sought for *The Perfect General*, *Commander JK*, *Empire Dealer* and other in the Seattle-to-Arlington area of Washington state. Call voice at (206) 252-4838 and ask for Leonard Oople. The 24-hour modem number is (206) 743-4044.

New York City gamers seeks opponents for *The Perfect General*. Please call Sean at H-(212) 661-2330.

Looking for opponents in modern gaming: *Perfect General* (with the WWII disk), and *F-15 III*. Call any time, leave a message if not home or ask for Jerry. H-(315) 622-2204.

Opponents wanted for *SVGA Air Warrior*. Call Mark from Bryan-College Station, TX at H-(409) 764-9599.

Seeking local opponents in the Pittsburgh area to play *The Perfect General*, *Commander JK* or *Global Conquest*. HJ please call Jim K. at H-(412) 886-7197.

San Francisco area gamer seeks modern opponents for *Air Warrior*. H-(510) 525-0930.

I am seeking opponents to play any of the *Viper* variety pack and/or *The Perfect General*. I live near the Pentagon (North Virginia/D.C. area codes 703, 301 and 202). Call me, Roben Merrick, at H-(703) 243-3598 or send me E-mail on Glinc at [J.Merrick].

Seeking local opponents in the Charlotte, NC area to play *The Perfect General*, *King of the Hill* or other strategy/light sim games by modem. Contact George "Bubsy" Miller at H-(704) 567-9718.

Seeking opponents for professional football simulations, *Tom Lawley Strategy Football* and *Harpoon* area only. Contact me at H-(800) 423-9877.

Sergeant "Shifty" Parre challenges you to his bank "In The Middle Again" for *The Perfect General*. Leave public message on Electric Enters BBS (815) 886-0109. I live in Chicago, IL. Contact folder welcome!

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All Code Leads to Rome

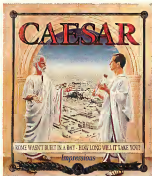
Impressions' Caesar

By Allen L. Greenberg

Caesar offers players a chance to become a respected leader in ancient Rome—the civilization which formed the basis for our modern western society. Just as a modern city contains a startling contrast of remarkable accomplishments and social discrimination, so did a city of ancient Rome contain a similar variety of achievements and injustices. Coincidentally, just as it is difficult

to resist comparing a Roman city with a modern one, it is also difficult to evaluate *Caesar* without also drawing comparisons to Maxis Software's *Sim City*. At first glance, the similarities between the two games are more striking than their differences, and the newer game could easily be mistaken as a sequel for the older favorite. However, for those who enjoyed *Sim City*, yet wished for more buttons to push, knobs to adjust and wires to reroute, *Caesar* will provide all of these things and quite a bit more. *Caesar* is a major strategy exercise. Indeed, as one minor empire official was said to have remarked, "If you can't start an imperfect, flourishing society here, then brother, you can't start an imperfect, flourishing society."

peaceful years, and requires the player to rule such a province. Given some limited cash, the amount of which depends on the level of difficulty selected, players must begin to es-



TITLE	Caesar
SYSTEM	Amiga, IBM PC/MSX recommended
GRAPHICS	VGA
PRICE	\$59.95
PROTECTIONS	None
DESIGNER	David Lester
PUBLISHER	Impressions Farmington, CT 03031-671-9032



Playing Pontius Pilate

Rome, at the time of the birth of Christ, was enjoying its success as an unchallenged, rapidly expanding empire. Opportunities to expand Roman rule to unsettled provinces were plentiful. *Caesar* takes place during those

peaceful years, and requires the player to rule such a province. Given some limited cash, the amount of which depends on the level of difficulty selected, players must begin to establish order. The major portion of the job involves setting up that province's capital city—wherein *Sim City* veterans will feel most at home. However, matters such as inter-city trade, connections with the empire, and defense against barbarians, are all handled outside the city's protective walls. Players who successfully govern a province are rewarded with a more difficult area to supervise, along with a more restrictive budget. Waiting at the end of this line of provincial governorships is the title of "Emperor" and the presumed ability to then exploit other provincial rulers. Others may find themselves figuratively exiled to Gaul like Pontius Pilate.

Taking place in rapid-motion real-time, *Caesar* uses an intuitive point-and-click interface. Construction is accomplished by selecting an icon representing a structure, and then placing that structure on an overhead view of

the terrain. Unfortunately, players must often switch to another menu of icons in order to remove unwanted objects. An ever-present "bulldozer" function, such as that available in *Sims City*, would have been highly appreciated.

There are many structures from which to select and over 40 icons are required to cover all of them. The icons are separated into four sub-menus, so as not to appear too confusing. In addition to these icons, players will also be dealing with lists of buildings, industries, barbarians, soldiers and more. Initially, this seems a burdensome amount of information through which to plow. However, once *Caesar* is up and running, most players will be delighted with the degree to which the small pieces come together as a well-orchestrated whole.



What Did The Romans Ever Do For Us?

Within the capital city, players must establish and maintain a system of roads, protective walls and plumbing. Collected under the heading "infrastructure," these represent the city's blood and circulatory system. Roman populations were dependent on an extensive water system and were very fond of their baths. Other such vital structures include soldier barracks and prefectures, towers, wells and fountains. A very important facility, also included here in several varieties, are the public forums which act as centers for government and information. Overlaying this infrastructure, the government is responsible for providing housing, industry, amenities, schools and major centers of entertainment. Without enough of these, a region of romantic Romans may soon become a roost of rowdy rioters.

The goal is not simply to flood the Romans with buildings and institutions. Quality housing and jobs are vital to success in *Caesar*, and this calls for some careful planning. Eight different types of factories may be constructed, depending on the economic advisor's research. These workshops require a nearby industrial center to supply raw material, as well as a market to sell their products. All of these centers also require nearby housing for workers. Unfortunately, these nearby houses are destined to become

the city's slums and will fail to enjoy the same increase in value as will other housing. Disgruntled factory workers are also more prone to violence, and so extra police and religious influence should be close at hand to control this group of unhappy campers.

Adding to the city's resources are the Plebeians, or "Plebs." Not considered citizens of the empire, these unfortunates have been drafted into public service and must therefore be given proper care. The Plebeians, who around this time in history were demanding a voice in government, are responsible for such mundane tasks as construction, maintenance and fire prevention. They are also available to serve as soldiers, although their limited qualifications clearly mark them as the "Gomer Pyle" of the Roman army.

The analogy between a city of ancient Rome and one of modern times breaks down, of course, at the capital's borders. Thirteen different races of barbarians wander the province, all of whom await the opportunity for a most unfriendly visit. Soldiers, organized into cohorts, must be given instructions for their patrol as well as how to respond to approaching barbarians. Any army which engages an enemy must also be given strategic instructions for each round of battle. Impressions indicates that players will soon be able to mount a miniature-based, fully realized battle with their forthcoming *Cohort 2* an independent strategy game which will interlock with *Caesar*.

Should the barbarians beat at the city's gate, a well-fed militia is vital if the city is to be protected; otherwise, buildings will quickly begin to crumble. Investing heavily in the armed forces is both an effective and popular way of strengthening the city against disaster. Drafting citizens is less costly, though far less popular with the population. In any case, the barbarian threat is one which will plague players throughout their career in *Caesar*.

Quality of leadership is rated at the forum in four categories: Peace, Culture, Prosperity and Empire. However, money speaks far more eloquently than any forum member, and rules, through taxation, must show a profit each year. This essential ingredient for

success may be the most elusive goal in *Caesar*. The empire demands an annual tribute which increases with each payment. Rulers may draw a salary for their efforts and then donate their savings to the city when it is needed. Aspiring leaders who are unable to pay off the empire after several years may finally be forced to donate their heads to the Roman hierarchy.



Lend Me Your Ears

Players with an *AdLibit SoundBlaster* compatible sound board will be treated to isolated, though frequent, sounds of the city. Water flows, factories hammer, and the population converses loudly. A somewhat repetitive music score is also available. The graphics are quite pleasing, and include enough animation to make the city seem lively. The number and variety of buildings which appear in the city, however, is so great that players may easily become confused as to each one's identity.

Regulating the flood of information and minutiae in *Caesar* is its thorough, 135 page instruction manual. A separate tutorial is also included which painstakingly guides the beginner through such subtleties as the difference between right and left mouse-clicking. There is also an admirable amount of on-line help in the form of text-windows which describe the function of each of the game's many icons. While *Caesar* is indeed a major project, all aspects of the game are clearly explained somewhere in the game's packaging. In addition, Impressions has also been very active on various bulletin boards (including CompuServe, GEnie and Prodigy) and the telephone, offering players technical and strategic advice.

Forum or Against Him

Early on, many players may find themselves leaping onto their CPUs, fiddle in hand, while their province collapses in flames beneath them. With time and effort, however, *Caesar* provides that rare quality in strategy gaming — an experience whose rewards prove equal to its challenges. While the casual gamer may view the program as a meal with one too many courses, *Caesar* goes far beyond its *Sims-City* origins and provides the serious player with a real lion's feast. Hail, *Caesar!*



SHOOTOUT AT THE MILKY WAY CORRAL

A Review of New World's *Spaceward HO!*

by Martin E. Cirulis



Your engines thrum through the last few seconds of touchdown burn. You crack the cockpit and take a deep breath of an alien world, the exotic air is still thick with the stench of laser fire and burning metal from your recent victory. Somewhere a cow moos.

This is the wide and woolly universe of *Spaceward Ho!* from New World Computing, a space exploration and exploitation strategy game with a decidedly Old West theme. Apart from the novelty of its chrome, this game deserves a closer look for three reasons: it's designed to be played by up to 20 human or computer players; it can be played on either one computer or a network and has a version specifically for use with Windows; and, in this reviewer's humble opinion, it is the Holy Grail of strategic computer games — the entertaining, introductory strategy game.

HO! is about exploring alien worlds, spreading colonies, and pummeling those sheep men from the system over yonder. The entire game, in both DOS and Windows versions, is driven by a point-click-drag mouse interface that's both highly intuitive and highly graphic. There's nary a tedious step in the game. This game is meant to be learned while playing. As the manual states in the Ultra-Quick Ho! Instructions: "Play with the bar charts to adjust spending. Click on the messages in the map to make them go away. Drag from one star to the other to move ships. Experiment. Conquer the Galaxy." That's pretty much all one needs to know in order to get started.

In keeping with the galactic cowboy theme, the graphics and sounds immerse the player in a Gunslinger-gone-mad universe. Some fighter ships bear slingshots or have dog's head nose cones. All the player's planets have white cowboy hats to mark them, while enemy worlds wear sinister bandannas or som-

bereros, and ships acknowledge their movement orders with a shout of "Hya!" or "Whoa." A melancholy cowboy even draws "Shucks!" when a player's world is destroyed.

In keeping with the designer's philosophy, combat is simple and straightforward. It consists of a number of automatic combat rounds in which each surviving ship gets one shot. The higher tech the weapons, the bigger chunk of ship that can get wiped away; the higher the shield tech, the smaller the chunk that is wiped away. Worlds are destroyed in the same way, except that it is chunks of population that are lost, and the entire planet only gets one shot per round. The winner is the last one standing. There are no retreats.

"Thar's Metals in them thar Planets!"

The only resource in *HO!* is metal, and its only purpose is the building of ships. Unless one wants to feel like Custer in a space-suit, one shouldn't run out of metal. The only way to acquire metal is to form a colony on a planet and then mine the heck out of it. There are no points for environmentalism in this game, though putting too much money into mining is less efficient than spreading it around to terraforming and shipbuilding. These are the only three activities that can occur on a world.

The initial size of the galaxy one chooses and the number of players involved in the game will determine whether metals are plentiful or scarce, and no matter what, they will always get scarcer as the game goes on. Keep this in mind when creating a game — a crowded galaxy is a lean and hungry galaxy.

As to the ships one can build, there are only four basic types but each has a seemingly endless supply of shuffle-card graphics based on one's tech-level. My initial feeling was disappointment when I learned that I could

only construct Fighters, Scouts, Colonizers, or Defensive Satellites, but with play came the realization that the tech-level angle gave me an incredible variety of choices. Yes, the only real combat ship is the Fighter, but within that class I could design anything from a cheap, fast gunboat to a lumbering battleship as long as I kept up the research. The longer the game goes, the more design choices one is given; and of course the ship graphics are entertaining as all heck. I have seen friends pour all their empire's money into research, not because they needed the tech advantage, but just because they were dying to see what the next tech-level fighters would look like.



TITLE	Spaceward Ho!
SYSTEM	IBM PC/XT & Windows version
GRAPHICS	SVGA, VGA, EGA, Hercules Mono
PRICE	\$59.95
PROTECTION	None
DESIGNER	Joe Williams and Peter Connors
PUBLISHER	New World Computing Hollywood, CA 0804 325-0999



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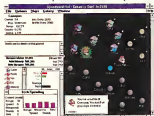


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"Whaddya mean they got Repeater Rifles?!"

In any kind of warfare, the technology level of one's various weapon systems is at least as important as the number of those weapons (as a certain snappy dressing Persian Gulf Dictator recently discovered). This law is reflected heavily in *HO!* and the price for ignoring it is usually severe. Tech-levels are achieved by investing an empire's finances into research. Of the five ship characteristics, weapons and



shields are the most important ones to keep up with the Jones' (though the other three have some important and sometimes very subtle effects on combat and exploration). Four fighters can defeat almost 20 fighters that are unfortunate enough to be three tech-levels behind in guns and defense. I've seen it happen; it's not a pretty sight. Luckily the game supplies a player comparison chart that allows one to see graphically how far ahead or behind the pack a player is.

Further on the subject of technology, here is an important tip for any novice cowpoke out there that the advice section of the manual doesn't stress quite enough: *A fast ship is a happy ship!* You can embroider that one into your chaps, little buckaroos.

"We don't need no steenkin' Grognards!"

This game, while fast, furious and amusing, is not a paragon of subtlety and detail. The primary objective here is for a number of people to have a laugh and be able to play a game out in an hour or two. (This assumes every player has their own terminal. Doubling or tripling up players on a single computer slows things down correspondingly, as they play musical chairs). If one feels that in order to conquer the stars one needs to command the loading and unloading of every can of Zippy rocket fuel and carry every colonist screaming and kicking in their individual travel bags, such a gamer should probably avoid *HO!*.

Tactics here are superficially simple. Tech is good. Numbers are very good. Protecting worlds is good. Achieving these things has been kept purposely quick and abstract in order to speed up play. To quote again from the documentation: *Flou is our number one*

goal, and we have sacrificed realism for fun everywhere we could.

I have been a wargamer for most of my years and a big fan of Spaceploitation computer games since the glory days of the C-64, and I found myself nowhere near as disappointed by the simplicity of this game as I thought I might be. In fact, the only thing that I have difficulty with is that the turns are over so quickly. The urge to ponder each and every little planet and ship is almost overpowering when one first plays this game, but one soon realizes that it's all being handled and it is sufficient to just get along with enjoying the game. Even at the maximum size and complexity of an empire, an average turn shouldn't take more than five minutes at the outside. This is "beer and pretzels" gaming at its finest.

"The gang's all here!"

Though this game can be played quite well as a single player game, its real strength and beauty lies in its connectivity. I have been running it on a Windows for WorkGroups network and it plays like a charm. I can only assume it runs as well in other network environments. Organizing a multi-terminal game is quick and easy, and the turns compile very quickly on 386 machines. This game's developmental history on the Mac shows in its smooth functioning in an icon-driven, multi-user environment. New World has taken great pains to make computer players blend in with their human counterparts so that a large game in the workplace becomes a game of guessing who is an artificial intelligence and who is the real McCoy. The computer players take on ordinary first names, will



name their ships using human names from previous games, and will adopt their own strategies. This is a game that can give Bill Gates nightmares; a 20 player game of *HO!* means an entire Microsoft team gets nothing done on a Friday afternoon.

Even with multiple players on a single machine it is enjoyable, however. In fact, *HO!* makes a great "companion" game whenever one is playing one of those boardgames that has long, complicated turns with a bunch of friends. Just set up *HO!* on the old computer in the corner and everyone can do their turns while waiting for action at the kitchen table.

One can finish in the time it takes to play an average game of *Monopoly*.

The Big Round-Up

Even a game as well made as *Spaceward HO!* has some minor drawbacks, the largest being the way some games can grind down due to lack of metal. I think this flaw is pretty much intrinsic to the design, but most times there is a smart player who has stored away enough raw metal to administer the *coup de grace* to most of his or her opponents. One should



keep this in mind during any long, drawn out fights with other players. It is very frustrating to have a great fight for an hour or so and then realize one is stranded because there isn't enough metal to build a new colony ship. This can even happen to experienced players if they get caught in the middle of the map.

Also, considering this attrition factor, there should have been a command to force the computer to declare a winner based on holdings and technology. As it is now, a player has to wipe out everybody else in order to win and end the game, which rarely happens in larger games.

The lack of modem support is odd and slightly bothersome in a game that stresses a multi-player environment. Perhaps this oversight can be corrected in later versions. A mythical upgrade might also give a player a couple more combat options; I know it would be awfully nice to screen those valuable colony ships or retreat from combat altogether sometimes. But perhaps this is the wargamer in me asking for unneeded complexity.

Apart from this, *HO!* does what it sets out to do and makes no apologies. In these days of dubious marketing techniques for software it is refreshing to have a product that delivers exactly what the box advertises. Here is a game that is simple to learn and difficult to master. The entertaining chrome and light feel of this product draws in many people who don't usually enjoy strategic computer games. This alone makes it unique in the realm of Spaceploitation games and certainly worth its space on a hard drive for a long, long time.

Now, if you'll excuse me, I got a wild ship to catch and a galaxy full o' hombres to tame.

cow

MICHAEL WINTERBAUER

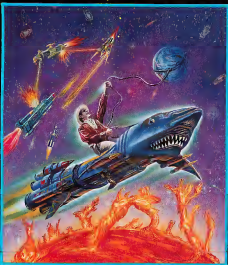
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General Grog Nard Woos Victory

Successful Strategy in *Spaceward Ho!*

by Roger-Tzu White

"Sir! This Command Center isn't Spartan, it's Nouveau Français!" announced General Grog Nard.

"Oui, Oui," announced his aid, Bernaise. "But you are not here to admire my etchings ... I don't think. You are here to learn the secrets of mastering *Spaceward Ho!*, no?"

"Ho! know? Yes," says I.

Grog Nard grinned and leaned back. "I think of Victory as the rich merchant's daughter, and myself as the young officer with overdue gambling debts she *must* be courted. You will find your way of courting Victory, but here are three secrets I employ to winning her hand: spend lavishly on technology, be coy in early colonizing, and be chintzy with metal."

Tech, Always More Tech!

"To fight efficiently you must have technology superior to your enemies. Of course, you may win a desperate engagement here or there without it, but, like good health and French wine, there is really no substitute.



"It is so," chimed in Bernaise.

"Technology has a hidden benefit as well as the obvious ones: your planet-based technologies improve immediately upon reaching a new tech level: no ship redesigning or upgrading is necessary. When a half million people fight with national will and superior technology, no puny half-dozen-ship fleet can overcome them!"

"This National Will, he is a good general, no?" chimed in Bernaise.

"I recommend that technology never be any less than the longest bar on your budget chart, and over half your spending most of the time. The only time to deviate is when getting your first colony ship built. Colonies are important, and to make them you need a colony ship."

Maintaining Colonies

"Colonies provide you with the good things in life: metal, money and bases. But, *Mon Dieu*, they are expensive at the start! It's important to keep up the appearance of great growth, but, regrettably, you must not live beyond your means. Think of each new colony as a mistress. Start with one that is easy to develop — one with a temperature in the 100-140 degree range. As long as it is colonizable, don't worry about how favorable the gravity is on this first world; gravity doesn't affect how fast a world can become profitable — temperature determines that."

The general smiled and continued, "Lavish money on this charming child-world. Make it grow quickly so it will cease to burden you quickly. Start another colony only when this first child is moving toward self-sufficiency. Your second colony can be either another attractive colony world or a metal world. If it's a metal world, move in, mine it quickly, and then move out. In the early game be quick to abandon colonies. Extract what you desire from them and leave without a second thought."

The great strategist pondered for a moment. "Under some circumstances, your early exploration will uncover a world like this: .95G, 350 temperature and 20,000 metal. The attractive gravity means this will be a great world for you some day, but the hostile temperature means it will take a long time to develop. In the early years, treat this world as just another metal world: mine it, then move out. Come back later, after you have turned

one or two other worlds profitable, to terraform this gem."

"Why, monsieur?" interrupted Bernaise. "Because," the general patiently explained, "Your earliest goal must be to build a technological lead over your neighbors and a modest, two to three world economic base. Ideally, you can do this with a small pack of scouts and a single colony ship, all at technology level two or three. The temptation is strong, but don't build any more ships than you absolutely need."



"Oui, mon general, but why not build a fleet to extend your great glory to all the stars?"

"Don't get saucy with me, Bernaise! You don't build *Le Grande Armada* early because it's another drain on your resources — resources that need to be spent on colonies and technology, technology, technology! An early fleet will soon be a puny fleet. It will use up precious metal, and it will become obsolete before it leaves the design table.

If an opponent launches a determined assault, or occupies a key world, build enough fleet to foil him or her. Other than responding to threat, build only enough fleet to protect your colony ships and open worlds for them. Move around enemy strong points rather than through them. "The galaxy is a big place."

"But when, mon general?" asked Bernaise. "The middle phase is the time to build large

fleets, to mine extensively, and to colonize worlds you passed up in the early years. This is the time to have two or three colony ships active and an armada of fighters for each to clear the way. As critical as the beginning era is, the middle phase is just as critical. The middle game is when you establish how much metal you will have for the end game and how large an income base you will have to keep pushing your technology. There will be many large fleets cruising the galaxy in the middle game. Your computer opponents will show up on your planetary doorsteps with armadas of six to twelve fighters with five- to seven-level technology. You need to either kill these fleets outright or stay out of their way by marooning them."

Bernaïse's eyes widened, "How do you maroon an armada?"



"Simple. Keep colony ships away from it. The enemy will jump as deep as his or her technology allows. If such an armada jumps deep into your territory and you can identify where it came from, take that launching world and hold it. If a colony ship can't follow the armada, the enemy ships will sit harmlessly until you can bring up a more powerful fleet to 'salvage' its metal."

A slight pause accentuated the import of the previous advice. Then, the general continued the lecture. "To win the middle game, you must have a technological edge. To finance the technology you need profitable worlds, but the more colonies you have, the more money and metal it takes to ring them with defensive ships. The balancing of these necessities is a most delicate task. So, when in doubt, spend on technology. A technology lead will accomplish the same defensive role as launching satellites, but without using metal or extra money for equipping each planet. Technology saves metal, and you need to be chintzy with your metal in the middle phase if you are to be a leader in the end."

The End Is Near

Bernaïse could contain his curiosity no longer. "When does the end game begin?" he asked.

"The end game begins when metal runs out. Most of the galaxy's metal will be in ships or treasures about the time computer players

start making 7th to 9th level fighters. When the metal runs out, the average technology of a silicon opponent fleet skyrockets, but the number of ships in the fleet declines. And once the metal runs out, recovering from a large fleet loss becomes very difficult.

The general, pointing to a flickering computer screen, continued Bernaïse's education. "The end game has three distinct characteristics: First, there is no free metal left. If you want more metal, you must scrap your own ships or destroy an enemy fleet over a world you either own or will take at the end of the battle. In the end game metal is power. How much metal you own completely determines how large a fleet you can muster."

"Second," he elucidated, "worlds lump into three categories: mature-friendly, dead and mature-enemy. The mature enemy worlds sport 200,000 or more people armed with high technology weapons. Even though they have no ships around them, they are safe from your fleets unless you attack with a dozen or so technologically superior fighters. Sending small scouting expeditions becomes expensive in the end game. The scouts will either live to report a dead world or die reporting an enemy-occupied world and leave their metal to the occupier."

"Third," pontificated the officer, "it takes forever to jump technology levels, and even longer to design a ship that takes advantage of the new technology once you've acquired it. For instance, I often find myself using the first third of my budget for building 10th level ships; the second third devoted to finishing my first 12th level fighter, and the remaining third devoted to researching 13th level technology. I am building 10th level ships simply because I don't have enough money to spend to finish the 12th level in time to fight the battles that need to be fought. Once the first 12th level comes on line, I cut off 10th level production immediately, build 12th level ships, and start designing the 13th level ships my technology can finally support. If my metal needs are acute, I stop fighting, scrap the 10th level fleet and reconstitute the metal as 12-level ships."

The general winked conspiratorially and continued, "If you have the metal and technology to make one 'hammer' fleet for the end game, you will win. If not ... stalemate is not an uncommon ending."

"What's a hammer fleet?" queried Bernaïse. "A fleet so large and technologically advanced that it can hammer mature worlds into submission without the loss of a ship. This fleet then moves from world to world followed by a colony ship. Use this fleet to reduce and colonize planets. The more mature planets you control, the more income you will have to devote to technology and the faster your technology will progress. The one thing you want to avoid above all is breaking your hammer — either by facing an opposing

large fleet or a mature world so large and advanced that your fleet is destroyed. Even if you have the reserves to replace this fleet, you have given thousands and thousands of units of scarce metal to one of your opponents. This metal will come back against you as a high technology fleet hammering your worlds.

Human versus Silicon opponents

"I understand this game can be played by many people," commented the younger officer.

"Many people? True indeed! This is one of the finest games this year for many-people play! To have a game that is so easily played yet supports such subtle tactics is a most pleasurable breakthrough."

"The designers have cast off the shackles of accommodating *NerfBios* and modems. They have designed purely for *Windows* and use a shared file on a network drive as the communications medium. The result is a game that's surprisingly easy to start, accommodates perhaps ten players without getting bogged down (I've faced as many as five at one time), and does an excellent job of camouflaging the human-computer difference. It's an excellent multiplayer game."



"In fact," asserted the general, "the game's major weakness is that with many players, there will be early losers, and these people will be looking for something else to do. But there is a solution. One of the virtues of *Windows* is that it can multi-task, so start a second game of *Spaceland Ho!* All the players can enter this second game, but those that haven't lost in the first game can invoke robot play in the second game and concentrate on playing in the first game. As people fall out of competition in the first game, they can take over their position in the second and keep playing there. If a person is a fast mover, he or she can play in both games."

"Thank you, General Nard."

"Any time, mon frere, and remember—"

"Your etchings? I'm not sure when I'll have the time—"

"No, No!"

"If I may, mon General, remember: Technology, toujours technology."

"Thank you, Bernaïse." **cow**



Playing the Process

Behind the screens with Jim Dunnigan's *Victory at Sea*

by Alton Enrich

In early February, I sat in on meetings that the press rarely gets to be a part of. Production meetings for games are generally not very exciting and, except for obtaining "tumors of wars," not very newsworthy. However, when the subject is a particularly ambitious wargame design like *Three-Sixty's Victory at Sea*, and when one of the personalities involved is the dean of board wargaming and celebrated military author, James F. Dunnigan, there could easily be a story. Such was the case during a critical stage in the development of *Victory at Sea*.

Defining *Victory*

Victory at Sea may well be the most ambitious wargame project from *Three-Sixty* to date. Since the game is to be built on an entirely new game engine, as specified in Dunnigan's design notes, the primary purpose of these meetings was to translate Dunnigan's boardgame design into a computer game design.

Jim Dunnigan has designed over 120 board wargames, most of which appeared during the 1970s. Although he is well versed in computer technology (his latest book, a 1993 revision of *The Complete Wargames Handbook*, shifted a great deal of its focus to computer wargames), he is not a state-of-the-art computer programmer (he considers it "a spectator's sport"). Therefore, when he designed what was to become *Victory at Sea* "on spec" (putting together spread sheets, tables and some rudimentary algorithms) with co-designer Al Nofi (who Jim describes as the

"primary data digger" for the game), they put three months of research into a multi-page information package that the programmers of *Three-Sixty* were to work their magic on.

Unfortunately, programming a computer game from what is essentially a boardgame design is not exactly a snap. There are things that are easily done (and easily corrected when

done wrong) in a boardgame design that are a nightmare to program. When programming *The Perfect General*, for instance, Mark Baldwin and Bob Rakosky of White Wolf Productions told me of the many challenges they faced translating Bruce Williams' home-brew strategy boardgame that he had played and evolved over many years of playtesting. Now, try to imagine programming a boardgame design that doesn't even exist as a boardgame. No matter how talented the two sides are, there will be some integration problems, and that's where things started getting interesting.

Lights, Camera, Action

At these meetings, Jim Dunnigan was in his element. Holding court for the programming team in the same way he does at all his lectures and in his guest spots on television, Dunnigan explained the entire war in the Pacific, subject by subject. How were land-based air units transported to island bases thousands of miles from where they were produced? Dunnigan explains that "keep carriers" were built on merchant ship hulls and used to ship disas-

sembled fighters packed in crates. Lectures on Japanese merchant shipping losses and their submarine supply system emphasized some of the gaming issues to be solved. Once all of the issues were on the table, it was time for everyone to put their heads together and try to find as many solutions and elegant implementations as possible.



Jim Dunnigan,
"Dean of Analytical History"



Victory at Sea design group

Fortunately, for every problem, the solution was to turn to history and use it as a baseline. With Dunnigan serving as a walking encyclopedia on the subject, his quick moves to the wall map or computer screen resolved these matters and set the direction of every problem's solution with some ease. Occasionally, there would be "game play" element problems. With so much board and computer gaming talent in the room, many solutions were suggested and "ease of use" features devised by the assembled crew.

Where's the Steak?

Naturally, as the dialogue went back and forth, additional game features were considered or reluctantly dropped due to various



constraints. Philosophically, Jim Dunnigan believes that "The player should have access to everything that won't blow up the game." Currently, *Victory at Sea* is slated to run continuously at about an hour per "tick." The scale, however, will telescope between a strategic map (akin to that found in SSI's *Pacific War*) and an operational or tactical game where players have more direct command of the individual battles. Every ship is named and tracked individually except for PT boats and Japanese DTs (anti-submarine patrol boats). Land units are all named at the division level, although there are many independent brigades, regiments and even some battalions. The modeling of leaders, leadership and politics will be, if included, a remarkable system.

Victory at Sea, in the campaign game, assumes that the Japanese cannot win the war in absolute terms. Basically, victory will be measured by bearing the historical result. The Japanese must hold on longer than they did historically, and the Allies must bear the time clock and keep their casualties down. Once Japan is isolated by Allied air control and its



merchant shipping sunk, either the Emperor will surrender or there will be a coup in which the Japanese military leadership decides to fight to the last man (which would force the Allies to conduct their "Operation Olympic" plan—the invasion of the Japanese home islands). In the scenarios, objectives will be "weighted" along historical values.

Fans of modern and PBEM gaming could find no good news in the discussions along that line. Implementation was described as "difficult" and the chances of including such features "remote." The tactical game should offer a lot, assuming it all makes it into the game. Tactical naval battles (there is little

chance of a tactical air or land combat game) should show task forces from a top-down view. Two options were discussed, "realistic" and "player enhanced" modes. In the realistic mode, the player is glued to his flagship and can only issue orders to other ships which those ships may or may not follow. Sighting will be restricted to whatever that ship could see, including enemy gun flashes at night if the smoke and weather are not too heavy. In the player enhanced mode, one can jump from ship to ship, selecting targets and ordnance for them and seeing the world from each individual ship's perspective. With any luck, there will be a film replay of the battle, lifting the fog of war and showing what actually happened.

Finally, fans of *Gerry Griggby's Pacific War* have not been ignored in the production of *Victory at Sea*. Mr. Dunnigan is a major presence on GENie (he is the designer and organizer of GENie's *100 Year War* game) and has closely followed the discussions of *Pacific War* there. When discussing potential features to add or remove from the *Victory at Sea* designs, the feedback of wargamers on GENie was heard loud and clear. "Oil is popular," Jim Dunnigan commented between sips of a highly calcified soda, "So is politics." What will become of these and other wargamer requests in the finished product of *Victory at Sea* remains to be seen, but one thing is certain; both the designer and the programming team would love to put it all in, if they could.

A Theme (and Theme Music)

Of course, the best design in the world isn't going to matter much if it doesn't sell. So, Dunnigan met with the Marketing Department at Three-Sixty, as well. His mission was to explain in his inimitable style what *Victory at Sea* was supposed to be and why it would be special. During the engaging monologue which ensued, the picture became clear: *Victory at Sea* was to be a wargame with an on-line history book included with it. It could be just as easily sold as an on-line history book with a complete simulation included with it. For those who have not made the connection yet, Jim Dunnigan was the editor of *Strategy & Tactics* magazine for eleven years (1969-1980) during the "glory" days of board wargaming. That magazine's philosophy, beginning the day Jim took over as editor, was to be a military history magazine with a game included which would underscore the lessons covered in the main article of the issue. *Victory at Sea* has set out to be the modern day, computerized equivalent of those classic issues.

Using a hypertext system similar to that used in popular encyclopedia programs, players can interrupt the real-time play and call up relevant historical text for any point or action occurring on the map. This text will

have key words highlighted so that players get more detailed information on them, and a complete table of contents and index will organize the approximately 100,000 words of text. (Dunnigan did mention that, "four books from now" — equaling two years on his schedule — his publisher, Morrow, will publish the text as a separate c.400 page book.) Sadly, it does not look as though Dunnigan's on-line history book will be able to be printed and merged at this point (word processing code, apparently, is not a game programmer's bailiwick). The marketing types, of course, were intrigued with this whole concept, but the hard-core wargamers will also be pleased to know that they are getting two Jim Dunnigan/Al Nofi products in one, a dynamically designed computer wargame and a complete history book packed to the margins with data and written in their articulate and concise style.



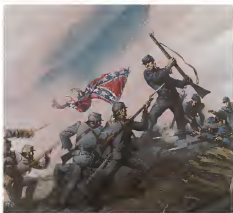
The crowning touch came when Project Manager Rod Graves announced that the copyrights to the moving, Richard Rogers soundtrack from the late 1950s TV series, *Victory at Sea*, had lapsed and would be available for the game. This soundtrack, combined with the ambient video and the hypertext reference, is designed to add a lot of "sex appeal" to *Victory at Sea*, potentially moving the product into the broader reaches of the market.

Where Credit is Due

Three-Sixty certainly deserves a nod for allowing us to observe their design and marketing meetings. Seldom does the press get to sit in meetings concerning the difficulties of design integration or the schemes of marketing. Ironically, one of Jim Dunnigan's books is entitled *Dirty Little Secrets*. That's what I felt I was getting for this story. All the sources were opened, everyone spoke freely about the good, bad and ugly of the design and marketing of a major wargame release. Having been witness to the 99% perspiration involved in the creative process, I believe that most wargamers should be thankful that theirs is the most enjoyable part of the process—playing the finished product. If Jim Dunnigan and Three-Sixty can translate their ideas and ideals into program code, *Victory at Sea* should be a decisive victory for every wargamer. **cow**

An Annotated Listing of Pre-20th Century Wargames

by M. Evatt Brooks



A survey of games based in this period was originally published in *CGW* #75 (October 1990). With the large number of new games being released annually, we felt an updated version necessary. The pre-20th century period continues to be a neglected wargaming realm, with the games that are published emphasizing a few specific periods. But there are large periods of history which have yet to be touched: the Peloponnesian Wars, the Thirty Years War (1618-1648), Byzantine warfare, and the "Age of Sail" for example.

Even in the short time since the first appearance of this list, the character of the computer market has change dramatically. The gaming industry is no longer shifting as rapidly among different computer types as it once was. During the 8-bit era, games had to be produced for different machine types, each of which was completely incompatible with its competitors. Today, the MS-DOS machine has gained a virtual domination of the market, but incompatibilities within the MS-DOS market itself are becoming more varied than the 8-bit market ever was. DOS 5.0 and expanded memory have become necessities; CGA graphics are extinct, and newer games require SVGA graphics cards; clock speeds below 33 MHz are becoming unsupported, and it is likely that the machine of the near future may be the 486-66. The games themselves are growing ever larger, and it is not unusual to have a game with ten high-density disks. Sound support also causes a disconnect between machine use, and there is no fix likely to appear.

In checking the *CGW* Hall of Fame, be sure to understand the obsolescence built into the ratings. It illustrates games that were unique and successful when released, and not

necessarily those on the "cutting edge" today. It is doubtful if the computer world will ever develop its classics like Monopoly of the boardgame genre. Those games that do achieve classic status will only be seen by newer generations of users if the simulations are converted into newer machine formats. Thus, surveys such as this are updated and revised so that the user may have some indication of what is/was available. It should be noted that the ratings are an individual preference, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the publisher of this magazine. Ratings deteriorate over the years, since the "half-life" of a computer game can often be measured in months.

Please note platform availability; a five-star game on an Atari 800 that is several years old is not of the same sophistication as a new product designed for an SVGA PC 486-33. However, it has been given its rating for what it did, to a lesser extent what it still does, and perhaps for the place it holds in this reviewer's heart and memory. Of course, the designers look askance at these ratings, and often deluge the magazine with voluminous complaints. Again, these are intrinsically subjective, and a discriminating reader should be able to temper the ratings with this writer's noemal reviews in order to ascertain the inherent biases. In all candor, I have intentionally taken steps to reduce the ratings of older games; the computer market's "flavor of the week" simply cannot sustain an older platform vehicle and product.

Prices are difficult to determine for older games, since they are so heavily discounted, assuming they can be found at all. Thus, be aware that the prices are only a rough guideline. Also, since this guide is for reference, one

should be aware that prices shift downward rapidly.

If any readers have additions/corrections/modifications, please send them to me in care of this magazine or via modem (on GENie, address: M.E.BROOKS; on Prodigy, HFTN43A).

LEGEND (NA = Data not available)

LINE 1 — Title

LINE 2 — Machine Format: (Atari)/(Commodore)/(Apple II)/(TRS-80)/(GS)/(Amiga)/(ST)/(Miscintosh)/(IBM);

CGW Articles: Issue #'s in which game was mentioned (**bold print** refers to major article);

Company/Designer/Date of Publication/Price (O/P = Out of Print)

Rating:

- 0 = Good use as a magnet holder
- ** = Avoid
- * = Marginal
- *** = Average to Good
- **** = Very Good
- ***** = Highly Recommended
- N-R = Not Rated

LINE 3 — Difficulty Level: (Bq)inner/(Int)ermediate/(Adv)anced

Emphasis:

(Land)/(Nav)al/(Air)/(Dip)omatic/(Econ)omic Level of Command: (Tactical)/(Operational)/(Str)ategic;

of Players (M = modern play)

Tactical: man-to-man up to company level (turns represent seconds to hours)

Operational: battalion-level to division-level (turns represent hours to weeks)

Strategic: corps-level to theater army or higher (turns represent weeks to years)

- Military Organization:
- Fire Team 2 - 3
- Squad 9 - 12
- Platoon 40 - 50
- Company 120 - 150

- Battalion 500 - 1,000
- Brigade 3,000 - 5,000
- Division 10,000 - 15,000
- Corps 20,000 - 80,000
- Army 100,000 - up

AIDE DE CAMP

(I) HPS; Scott Hamilton; 1993; \$79.95; N/R
Int/Land-Nav-Air/Tac-Op-Sim/1

Not a game as much as a gamer's aid. This utility program will assist one to convert any board war game to computer output, albeit without the AI. Once files are created, games can be played by E-mail. A library of boardgame conventions by veteran gamers is already under way.

ANCIENT ART OF WAR

(Ap/I/M); #5.2) Broderbund; Dave and Barry Murray; 1984; \$44.95; **
Beg/Land/Tac/1

A tactical rendition of various "battles," this product was an enjoyable game, but any relation to history is purely coincidental. Some of the scenarios are unbalanced, but the game is easy to learn and has its own scenario editor.

ANCIENT ART OF WAR AT SEA

(Ap/I/M); #41, CGF Winner 1987) Broderbund; Dave and Barry Murray; 1987; \$44.95; **
Beg/Nav/Tac/1

Using a system similar to *Ancient Art of War*, it plays well as a game, but not as a serious study. In fact, optimal tactics herein encourage use of single ships to defeat enemy fleets as opposed to fleet actions. Sad to say, it is the only game of the "Age of Sail" on the MS-DOS platform.

ANCIENT BATTLES

(I; #59) CCS; R.T. Smith; 1989; \$39.95; ***
Int/Land/Op/1-2

One of the more serious simulations, this covers the Battles of Hydaspes (326 BC), Zama (202 BC), Cyncephalae (197 BC), Pharsalus (44 BC), and Chalons (451 AD). The graphics were not inspiring when released, but they are functional, and a scenario generator allows user expansion.

ANNALS OF ROME

(Am/C/IST; #58) Electronic Arts; PSS; 1988; \$29.95; ***
Int/Land/Sim/1

A grand strategic view of the Roman Republic/Empire, this simulation offered many innovative concepts. However, it was graphically dull and suffered from a lack of completeness. Despite its flaws, it succeeded on many levels. (Note that the 16-bit versions are much more playable than the 8-bit ones)

ANTIETAM, BATTLE OF

(Ap/A/C/I); #27) Strategic Simulations, Inc.; Chuck Kroegel and David Landrey; 1985; O/P; ***
Adv/Land/Tac-Op/1-2

A detailed simulation of the Civil War battle, *Antietam* is a relatively accurate historical depiction (although the map is reversed, with north being perceived as the bottom of the map). McClellan's "slows" are depicted in a frustrating lack of command control which reveals just how glib was his opportunity to destroy the Army of Northern Virginia in a set-piece battle.



ARMADA

(I/ST) PSS; Peter Turcan; 1990; O/P; **
Adv/Nav/Op/1

A British product, this covered the defeat of the Spanish Armada (1588) by a motley crew of English adventurers, opportunists and patriots. Using a "commander viewpoint" and typed-in commands, it is somewhat difficult to learn the basic system, but it presents a unique perspective. cf. also *Waterloo, Borodino*.

AUSTERLITZ

(Am/C/IST; #70) Cornerstone; Stephen Becker and Steven Krenke; 1990; \$49.99; **
Int/Land/Op/0-2

The Napoleonic Battle of Three Emperors, it is a logical successor to Krenke's earlier products (*Napoleon At Waterloo* and *Borodino: 1812*). Incremental improvements did not disguise the fact that the graphics were obsolete when released.

BANDIT KINGS OF ANCIENT CHINA

(Am/I/M); #65, 88) Kaoci; Kou Shihstawa; 1989; \$59.95; **
Adv/Land/Op-Str/1

A "simulation" of 12th century China, the game utilizes magic as well as Chinese medieval strategic play. One of the more esoteric computer games



ever designed insofar as subject matter is concerned.

BATTLES OF NAPOLEON

(Ap/C/I); #57,60,83) Strategic Simulations, Inc.; Chuck Kroegel; 1988; \$49.95; ***
Adv/Land/Tac/1-2

A detailed tactical study of the Napoleonic Wars, this product may lack the graphic flash of some more popular designs, but its play value and historical accuracy mandated its acquisition for anyone interested in the period. Included scenarios are portions of the Battles of Borodino, Austerlitz, Quatre Bras, and Waterloo plus a scenario editor.

BLUE & GREY, EDWARD GRABOWSKI'S

(Am/I) Impressions; Edward Grabowski; 1993; \$69.95; N-R
Int/Land-Nav/Op-Str/1

A forthcoming simulation of the entire American Civil War.

BLUE POWDER/GRAY SMOKE

(Ap/C/I); #35, CGF Winner 1987) Garde; Ralph Bosson; 1987; O/P; *
Int/Land/Tac-Op/1-2

A Civil War tactical game covering portions of the Battles of Sharpsburg, Gettysburg, and Chickamauga. It utilized an interesting graphical approach, but one which became tedious and distracting. An ambitious design, but one which did not meet with critical or consumer success.

BORODINO: 1812

(Ap/C/I); #41) Krenke; Steve Krenke and Stephen Becker; 1987; \$59.95; **
Int/Land/Tac-Op/1-2

The Napoleonic battle covered in an operational approach, the game is playable, although the graphics are not state-of-the-art.

BORODINO

(I/ST) PSS; Peter Turcan; 1990; O/P; **
Adv/Land/Op/1

A British simulation of the Napoleonic battle utilizing the "commander's-eye" approach (cf. *Waterloo, Armada*). Never released in the United States.

BROADSIDES

(Ap/A/C; #4.3) Strategic Simulations, Inc.; Wayne Garis; 1983; O/P; ***
Beg/Nav/Tac/1

Probably the most successful ship-to-ship simulation of Napoleonic warfare, it had good entertainment value. While some maneuvers are over-simplified (e.g. incling), it remains the standard. Whole load time can be time-consuming, this writer still plays it on an Atari 800.

BY FIRE & SWORD

(I) Avalon Hill; Steve Estvanki; 1985; O/P; 0
Int/Land/Op/1-2

A semi-historical abstraction of medieval warfare that's simply not worth the disk it's copied on.

CAESAR

(Am/I); 103,104) Impressions; David Lester; 1993; \$59.95; ***
Int/Land/Op-Str/1

Seven Cities in Rome. Begins as a low ranking Roman bureaucrat and work up to "The Purple." More of a game than a simulation, but it can be fun.

CASTLES

(Am/I); #79,86) Interplay; Scott Bennie; 1991;

\$59.95; **
Int/Land/Tac/1

Construction and defense of Middle Ages upscale residential housing; graphically well-done and initially fascinating to watch. *Castles* can quickly become somewhat tedious. Is there a game in here, or is it a software toy?

CASTLES: THE NORTHERN CAMPAIGN

(I) Intercity; Brian Fargo; 1992; \$29.95; **
Int/Land/Tac/1

An expansion to *Castles*, with additional scenarios.

CASTLES II: SIEGE AND CONQUEST

(I; #96.99, 102, 103, 105) Intercity; Vince De-Nardo; 1992; \$59.95; ***
Int/Land/Op/1

The sequel to *Castles*, only emphasizing gameplay at a higher level. Much more of a wargame than the former, and worthy of examination by anyone interested in the period.

CENTURION: DEFENDER OF ROME

(Am/I); #74, 85) Electronic Arts; Kellyn Beck; 1990; \$24.95; **
Int/Land/Op-Str/1

A graphical tour de force—a historic tour de force. Chariot racing, gladiatorial combats, and detailed military battles would seem to be the answer to an Emperor's dream. However, its relation to historical verisimilitude is coincidental.

CHAMPION OF THE RAJ

(Am/ST/I; #78) Level 9; NA; NA; NA; N-R
Int/Land/Str/1-6

A strategic struggle to achieve British control and

dominion over the Indian sub-continent in the heyday of Imperialism.

CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER

(Am; #4.3) Mac-II; R.C. Chiofalo; 1983; C/Op; **
Int/Land/Str/1

An economic simulation of the British Empire, this is a text-intensive product. Very dated, but it remains an interesting simulation.

CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE, THE

(Am/ST/I) Impressions; Edward Gembowski; 1991; \$69.95; N-R
Int/Land/Tac/1

A recreation of one of the most idiotic military "battles" ever fought. Mediocre graphics and poor user interface; available in Britain only.

CHICKAMAUGA

(At; #5.3) GDW; Worlds to Conquer; 1985; C/Op; **
Int/Land/Tac-Op/1-2

A boardgame company's foray into the computer simulation market. The game was marred by poor graphics and slow play.

CHICKAMAUGA, REBEL CHARGE AT

(Ap/Am/C/I; #40) Strategic Simulations, Inc.; Chuck Kroegel; 1987; \$14.95; **
Int/Land/Op/1-2

Another of SSI's Civil War battles, this covers the subject quite well, although the battle itself often degenerates into a confused slugfest through the ubiquitous heavily-wooded terrain.

CIVIL WAR

(I; #51) Avalon Hill; Steve Estvank; 1988; \$35;

0+
Adv/Land/Op-Str/1-2

Based on the Victory Games boardgame of the same title, this product covers the American Civil War (1861-1865). It shows how one can take a highly playable boardgame and turn it into an unplayable computer "product." Marred by incomplete rules, incomplete graphics and incomplete programming, *Civil War* stands out clearly in any "Crown of Losers." Interestingly enough, Avalon Hill promised a corrected disk, but don't hold your breath.

SID MEIER'S CIVIL WAR (working title)

(I; #105) MicroProse; Sid Meier; 1993(?); N/R
Int/Land-Nav/Op-Str/1

Not even the title is finalized, but maven designer Sid Meier is expected to produce another blockbuster. Only the Eastern Theater will be covered; historically, the East was a stalemate, while the theater of decision proved to be the West. Like *No Greater Glory*, victory will be determined by whether or not Lincoln can manage to win reelection in 1864.

CIVILIZATION

(Am/MI); #92, 93, 94) MicroProse; Sid Meier; 1991; \$69.95; ****
Int/Land/Str/1

A "Sid Meier classic" covering civilization from 4000 BC to 2100 AD. More addictive than crack, it should come with its own warning label. The only deficiency is that it is so rich and textured that the documentation is incomplete, thereby almost necessitating the purchase of a companion book.

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CLEAR FOR ACTION

(Ar; #4.6) Avalon Hill; Michael Stadley; 1984; \$5.00; 0-Int/Nav/Tac/1-2

Napoleonic naval warfare, this "Age of Sail" simulation may still be overpriced at the current asking price. Marred by poor graphics, poor interface and marginal entertainment value.

CLIPPER

(Ar) PBI; John Bayes; 1982; O/P; *Bep/Nav/Tac/1

An "educational" simulation (with all the baggage that entails), this simulation represents a voyage of an 1850 Clipper ship attempting to deliver its cargo and maximize its profits. Its high point (?) lies in teaching the player basic compass direction (0-360 degrees).

COHOR

(Released in the United States as *Fighting For Rome*. See below.)

COHORT II

(I) Impressions; Edward Grabowski; 1993; \$29.95; NA Int/Land/Tac/1-2

An upgrade of *Cohort*. For those owning the first release, an upgrade is available for \$14.95. Aside from an upgrade of graphics and gameplay, the new version is part of an interlocking game system module with *Cesset*, allowing the user to "drop down" and play out the tactical battles.

COLONIAL CONQUEST

(Ar)Ap/C/S; #5.5) Strategic Simulations, Inc.;



Dan Cernak; 1985; O/P; **Bep/Land-Nav/Op-Str/1-6

A strategic simulation of the European attempt to dominate the globe in the 19th Century, this is a very playable, albeit ahistorical, game. Supply and logistics are non-existent, and some strange results occur (e.g. Japan invading Africa with 1,000,000 troops), but is a light diversion. *Colonial Conquest* can be fun.

COMPUTER NAPOLEONICS: The Battle Of Waterloo

(Ap) Strategic Simulations, Inc.; John Lyon and Joel Billings; 1980; O/P; N/R Adv/Land/Op/1

The first computer simulation of Napoleon's most famous battle. Being one of SSI's very first games, it is clearly dated.

CONQUEST OF JAPAN

(Am)I Impressions; Edward Grabowski; 1992; \$59.95; ** Int/Land/Tac-Op/1

Pseudo-historical game of medieval Japan. It is marred by a user interface that is difficult to use and a random setup which makes any pretense to history purely coincidental.

CONQUERED KINGDOMS

(I; #100,102,103) QQP; Bruce Williams and Thurston Searfoss; 1992; \$59.95; ** Int/Land/Op-Str/1-2; M

A game of medieval strategy and fantasy. While gameplay is high, this reviewer admits to a distaste for obscuring decent wargames with fantasy elements.

DAWN OF CIVILIZATION

(Ar; #4.2) SuperWare; George Schwenk; 1984; O/P; N-R Bep/Land/Tac/1-4

Players lead a band of primitive hunter-gatherers in their daily struggle to feed themselves and fight back marauders.

DECISION AT GETTYSBURG

(I; #72) Taplog; Jeffrey R. Wickersham; 1990; \$49.95; * Adv/Land/Op/1-2

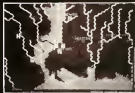
An operational simulation of the Gettysburg Campaign, its "new" graphics (VGA) were not sufficient to overcome the lack of a friendly user

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interface. Being the first VGA wargame did little to render this other than a market flash-in-the-pan.

DECISIVE BATTLES OF THE CIVIL WAR I (Ap/C/M/I; #49) Strategic Studies Group; Roger Keating & Ian Trout; 1988; \$40.00; ***
Int/Land/Tac-Op/0-2

The *Battlefront* system adopted for the American Civil War. SSG products inspire either vast admiration or marginal distaste, with their emphasis on "fog of war" and lack of command control. Covers the Battles of Bull Run I-II, Shiloh, Antietam, Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville.

DECISIVE BATTLES OF THE CIVIL WAR II (Ap/C/I; #54.65) Strategic Studies Group; Roger Keating and Ian Trout; 1989; \$40.00; ***
Int/Land/Tac-Op/0-2

See above. Covers the Battles of Gaines. Gold, this product is an arcade-like African explorer game. It owes its ancestry more to Hollywood (Rug's *Solomon's Mines*) than to history.

HIGH SEAS (Ap/I; #43) Garde; Ralph Bosson; 1987; \$49.95; **

Int/Nav/Tac-Op/1-2

An Age of Sail simulation, this product emphasizes joystick maneuverability. Graphics are somewhat convoluted, as is overall game play.

HOUSE DIVIDED, A: BULL RUN (M/I) Three Sixty; Atomic Games; 1993; NA; N/R
Int/Land/Op/1-2

Part one of a series to debut in 1993. Similar to *V for Victory* WWII design.

HUNDRED YEARS WAR (All; #100) GENie; Jim Dunningan and Al Nofi; 1992; \$6.00/hour; ***+
Int/Land/Op-Str/1-300; M

The English-French Wars (1337-1453), with emphasis on all facets of society — both strategic, operational and tactical (ranging from individual jousting to attempting to produce an heir). A thoroughly rich and textured ambience produces a unique gaming experience, but one that will require extensive time for full play. Estimated total cost per game may be in the range of \$300.

INCUNABULA (I; #5.3) Avalon Hill; Steve Estevanik; 1985; O/P; ***

Int/Land/Str/1-4

A *Civilization*-type simulation, one must attempt to found a lasting culture. Political/military from the macro-scale, with marginal graphics.

JOAN OF ARC: Siege & The Sword (Am/ST/I; #68) Broderbund; Carlo Perconti; 1989; \$44.95; **+
Int/Land/Op/1

The first game released covering the Hundred Years War (or an aspect thereof), *Joan Of Arc* is more of an arcade game than a serious simulation. Adequate graphics and coverage of a hitherto neglected period of warfare do not fully make up for a series of arcade sequences couched in a historic milieu.

LEGIONNAIRE (Ap,C; #2.6) Avalon Hill; Chris Crawford; 1982; O/P; **+

Int/Land/Tac/1

A Chris Crawford sequel to *Eastern Front*, it was



not a commercial success. Easy play and adequate graphics could not otherwise overcome a marginally historical simulation of Roman tactics.

LEGIONS OF ROME

(Ap/I) Aegis Circle; NA; NA; NA; N/R
xxx/1

L'EMPEREUR

(Am/I; #92.95) Koel; Kou Shibusawa; 1991; \$59.95; *+
Adv/L-Nav/Op-Str/1-2

Napoleon's career as seen through a very different perspective. Most of Koel's previous efforts had been devoted to the East (cf. *Gravels Kissa*, *Nobunaga's Ambition*, etc.), and this was their first product to cover a period more familiar to Western culture. As such, it was a failure. There was little of the ambience of the Napoleonic Era, and tactical combat seemed to yield artillery with ranges of 20 miles.

LIBERTY OR DEATH

(I; 101) Koel; Kou Shibusawa; 1993; \$59.95; NA
Int/L-Nav/Op-Str/1-2

Koel tries again in a Western orientation. Ranged fires seem to be a continuing problem given the scale of combat, and naval invasions become somewhat protracted.



LORDS OF CONQUEST (Ap/C/ST/I; #32) Electronic Arts; Eon Software; 1986; O/P; ***+
Beg/Land-Nav/Op/1-4

A classic wargame, this abstract simulation is easy to learn and play. It comes highly recommended, although its age and later conversions to 16-bit systems have been mediocre at best.

LORDS OF THE RISING SUN (Am; #60.61) Cinemaware; Doug Barnett; 1989; \$49.95; ***
Int/Tac-Op/1

A graphical masterpiece, it is only marginally a game of the unification of Japan.

MAN OF WAR

(I) Simulations Canada; NA; NA; NA; NA; N/R
Int/Nav/Tac/NA

A "promised" forthcoming game with minimal graphics, but one that covers a period conspicuously omitted in the 16-bit world, the "Age of Sail."

MEDIEVAL LORDS

(I; 85.86) Strategic Simulations, Inc.; Martin Campton; 1991; \$59.95; ***
Int/Land/Str/1-10

Storm Across Europe transposed to the Middle Ages. Strangely enough, it succeeds better than the original. While the graphics are less than inspiring, the game play and history present interesting challenges.

MERCHANT COLONY

(Am/ST; #86) Merit; Impression; 1991; \$49.95; **
Int/Nav/Op-Str/1-2

Hudson Bay, British East India Company — the age of Trader Barons. The game is marred by poor graphics, a poor interface and marginal historical accuracy.

NAPOLEON AT WATERLOO

(Am/C; 4.35.2) Krentek; Steve Krentek; 1985; O/P; ***
Int/Land/Op/1

An early version of Napoleon's Waterloo, the game is commendable for ease of play, but marred by abhorrent tactics necessary for victory.

NAPOLEON'S CAMPAIGNS, 1813, 1815

(Ap; #2.1.2.2) Strategic Simulations, Inc.; Paul Murray; 1981; O/P; *+
Int/Land/Tac/1-2

As a computer-moderated board game with intense fog of war, its obsolescence is clearly visible.

NAPOLEON I: THE CAMPAIGNS 1805-1814 (Am/ST; #98) RAW; Frank Hunter; 1992; \$49.95; ***
Int/Land/Str/1-2

A campaign game of the Napoleonic Wars, with "functional" (i.e. minimalist) graphics and the capacity to integrate minorities.

NOBUNAGA'S AMBITION

(Am/M/I; #51) Koel; Kou Shibusawa; 1988; \$59.95; ***+
Int/Land/Op-Str/1-4

A fascinating simulation of the attempt to unify Japan under the rule of an effective leader, this product emphasizes diplomatic and economic as well as military perspectives.

NOBUNAGA'S AMBITION II

(I; #78) Koei; Kou Shibuzawa; 1990; \$59.95; ****
Int/Land/Op-Str/1-4

An updated version with improved artificial opponents and much improved graphics.

NO GREATER GLORY

(I; #90) Strategic Simulations, Inc.; Ed Bever; 1991; \$59.95; **
Int/Land/Op-Str/1

Ed Bever's follow-on to *Resolution 76*. A military and diplomatic strategic simulation of the American Civil War (1861-1865), it had all the "bells and whistles" but was definitely a case where the whole was less than the sum of its parts. Perhaps it tried to do too much, mixing military battles and political machinations into a difficult game to win. The lessons of history were well done. Also, the computer "cheats."

NORTH & SOUTH

(Am/ST/I; #72) DataEast; Stephane Baudet; 1990; O/P; **
Beg/Land/Str/1

The comic-book version of the American Civil War, this product leans heavily to arcade-type play and graphic sequences. A French import, it is just about what one would expect from a country which has made Jerry Lewis a national icon and cats cheese that smells like people's feet.

OLD IRONSIDES

(Ap; #3.3) Xerox Education; Jack Rice and Richard Hefner; 1982; N-R
Beg/Nav/Tac/2

A simple introduction to Age of Sail tactics.

PARIS IN DANGER

(Ar; #3.5) Avalon Hill; John Bell; 1983; O/P; *
Int/Land/Str/2

A computer rendition of the 1814 Napoleonic Campaign, it was marred by no computer AI, a clumsy interface and slowness.

PARTHIAN KINGS

(Ap; #4.2) Avalon Hill; David Bradley; 1983; O/P; N/R
Int/Land/Op-Str/1-4

Strategy and magic in a fantasy setting.

PERFECT GENERAL: CIVIL WAR

(I) QQP; Bruce Zaccagnino; 1994(?); NA; N-R
Int/Land/Tac-Op/1-2; M

A successful design released for an earlier period, it should prove interesting.

PIRATES

(C/GS/Am/ST/M/I; CGF #2) MicroProse; Sid Meier; 1987; \$44.95; ****
Int/Nav-Land/Tac-Op/1

A genre break-through, this is a fascinating simulation of the Age of Piracy. This reviewer's initial impression was somewhat muted, in that he did not know if the product had "legs," but it stands up far better than most computer simulations. "If I had one review to change..." Be aware that the various versions differ in quality.

PIRATES GOLD

(M/I) MicroProse; Sid Meier and Paul Murphy; 1993; NA; N-R
Int/Nav-Land/Tac-Op/1

An update of the MicroProse classic, this has the potential to be a true "Five-Star" release. Anxiously awaited.

PIRATES OF THE BARBARY COAST

(At/ST/I) TDC Distributors; Hal McCreery, Craig Mouthouse; 1986; O/P; *
Beg/Nav/Tac/1

An arcade-like game with mediocre graphics and minimal gameplay. Rescue the merchant's daughter, kill the pirate, "in like Flynn" but without his panache and élan.

POPULOUS

(Am/I; #60,61,62,66) Electronic Arts; Bullfrog; 1990; \$29.95; ***
Int/Land/Op-Str/1-2

A quasi-arcade game, but one with sustained play value. The major problem is that one cannot find "new worlds to conquer" without being successful at the predecessor levels.



POPULOUS II

(Am; #94,97) Electronic Arts; Bullfrog; 1992; \$49.95; ***
Int/Land/Op-Str/1-2; M

An updated release, more attuned to Mount Olympus. One must transmogrify himself into a deity (query — "deus in machina"?). Similar play value, but with added graphics and options.

POWERMONGER

(Am/I; #78) Electronic Arts; Bullfrog; 1991; \$49.95; ***
Int/Land/Op-Str/1-2

Populous with a military emphasis and an economic basis.

RAM

(I) Avalon Hill; Steve Eastvank; 1985; O/P; *
Int/Nav/Tac/1-2

A tactical simulation of trench warfare in real-time. An often-ignored subject in wargaming, the treatment herein renders it *hors de combat*.

REVOLUTION '76

(GS/I; #65) Britannica; Ed Bever; 1989; \$49.95; ***
Int/Land/Str/1

A thought-provoking look at the American Revolution, involving both political and military aspects. Different regions have different perspectives, and the user must forge the "Clamorous Colonials" into a unified and effective nation.

ROAD TO GETTYSBURG

(Ap; #2.5) Strategic Simulations, Inc.; Paul Murray; 1982; O/P; **
Int/Land/Tactical/1-2

A computer-modernized boardgame for the Civil War, its obsolescence is clearly visible.

ROMANCE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS

(Am/I; #49,51) Koei; Kou Shibuzawa; 1988; \$69.95; ***
Int/Land/Op-Str/1-4

The unification of China is gamed via the same system as *Nobunaga's Ambition* and *Genji Shiro*, it emphasizes aspects of role-playing to a larger degree than the former product.

ROMANCE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS II

(Am/I) Koei; Kou Shibuzawa; 1991; \$69.95; ****
Int/Land/Op-Str/1-4

Updated version with better graphics, sound, AI.

ROMANCE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS III

(Am/I) Koei; Kou Shibuzawa; 1993; NA; N/R
Int/Land/Op-Str/1-4

Upcoming, updated version with better graphics, sound, and more scenarios.

ROME AND THE BARBARIANS

(At/C; #4.3) Krennek; Steve Krennek; 1984; O/P; ***
Int/Land/Op/1

A strategic approach to the Roman Empire, it remains a challenging simulation. Graphics are marginally adequate, but play value is high.

ROURKE'S DRIFT

(Am/I) Impressions; Edward Grzybowski; 1990; \$24.95; N/R
Int/Land/Tac/1

Previously released in Britain, a graphically updated version is planned for a 1993 American release.

SARATOGA

(A) APX; NA; O/P; *
Int/Land/Op-Str/1

An unabashed clone of Chris Crawford's *Eastern Front*, this product proves that a World War II game system does not necessarily transfer well to the American Revolution.

SEVEN CITIES OF GOLD

(At/Ap/C/M/I; #4.3,4,5) Electronic Arts; Dan Buntin; 1984; \$14.95; ***
Beg/Land-Nav/Tac-Op/1

An arcade-type rendition of the Exploration and Conquest of the New World, this is a classic game. Graphics on the 16-bit machines are poor, but on the earlier releases, the game remains a classic.

SEVEN CITIES OF GOLD II

(I) Electronic Arts; Dan Buntin; 1993; NA; N-R
Beg/Land-Nav/Tac-Op/1

Originally planned for the Columbus Anniversary, it is obviously late, but it should still garner a heartfelt welcome from users familiar with its predecessor.

SHATTERED ALLIANCE, THE

(Ap; #2.1) SSI; NA; 1982; O/P; **
Int/Land/Tac/1-2

Tactical antics using fantasy units. The game featured seven pre-built scenarios and an editor.

SHILOH, THE BATTLE OF

(At/Ap/TrS-80; #2.1) Strategic Simulations,



Inc.; David Landrey and Chuck Kroepf; 1981; O/P; *

Req/Land/Op/1-2

SSI's first rendition of the Civil War battle, it is a true beer-and-pretzels type of game. Easy to learn and play, it is marred by marginal graphics and abstruse results.

SHILOH: GRANT'S TRIAL IN THE WEST

(A/C/I/S; #43) Strategic Simulations, Inc.; David Landrey & Chuck Kroepf; 1987; \$39.95; ***

Adv/land/Tac/Op/1-2

SSI's more recent and more accurate rendition of the Battle of Shiloh.

SIEGE

(E; #99) Mindcraft; Ali Atabek; 1992; \$59.95; **; Int/Land/Tac/Op/1-2

Castle warfare for the fantasy-minded.

SIEGE: The Dogs of War

(E; #100) Mindcraft; Ali Atabek; 1992; \$29.95; N-R

Int/Land/Tac/Op/1-2; M

Expansion disk for *Siege* offering new castles and a modern-to-modern option.

SIX GUN SHOOTOUT

(A/C/Ap; #5.4) Strategic Simulations, Inc.; Jeff Johnson; 1985; O/P; ***; Int/Land/Tac/1-2

A Western simulation, owing more to Hollywood than history, it is easy-to-learn and even more fun to play. Do not expect to learn any historical insights into the Old West; just sit back and go along for the ride.

SONS OF LIBERTY

(A/C/Ap/1; #46) Strategic Simulations, Inc.; David Landrey and Chuck Kroepf; 1987; \$14.95; **

Adv/Land/Tac/Op/1-2

SSI's Civil War engine simulates the American Revolution. Covering a somewhat neglected period, this simulation is both accurate and detailed.

SPOILS OF WAR

(A/I/L; #99, #105) RAW; German Design Group;

1992; \$59.95; ** Int/Nav-Land/Op-Str/1-2

The "Age of Exploration" dated a century later, with mediocre graphics and gameplay.

SWORD OF ARAGON

(I/A; #65) Strategic Simulations, Inc.; Russell Shilling; 1989; \$39.95/\$49.95; ***; Int/Land/Tac/Op/1-2

A medieval sword-and-sorcery simulation, this game yields a high playability factor, although its graphics and user interface are only marginal.

SWORD OF THE SAMURAI

(I; #67) MicroProse; Lawrence Schwick; 1989;



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A Review and Strategy Guide For Suffering Addicts

by Sean Jeffers

News flash: The California Journal of Psychiatric Medicine announced that Dr. Watta Quack has developed a radical new theory in the treatment of incessant megalomania. The story of his discovery rivals even the most bizarre manifestations of the disease, which afflicts nearly 30% of the population with delusions of grandeur. Naturally, this statistic includes victims whose symptoms have yet to progress to the point where they seek treatment, such as the Reverend Al Sharpton. Faced with an expanding list of patients that was rumored to include Yeabho Amifaf, an elderly gentleman from Argentina that insisted on being identified as "Dolphie" and an endless string of Elvis impersonators, Dr. Quack found that treatment of megalomania occupied the majority of his practice. Burdened with the tales of hundreds of wanna be power brokers, Dr. Quack took a vacation to Las Vegas, to attend the annual convention of Adult Video Film makers (an amateur hobby of his). As his thought processes were so muddled, he wandered instead into the gathering halls of the Consumer Electronic Show. Confused by the sudden change of scenery, Dr. Quack "came to," so to speak, in front of the New World Computing booth. It was there that he was first exposed to *Empire Deluxe* and, in an instant, realized that this "tool" would provide a vicarious outlet for even the most demented sufferers of the disease. Today, Dr. Quack's patients sing the praises of *Empire Deluxe*. Dr. Quack closed his presentation to his colleagues with a 10 second film clip (slightly grainy and out of focus) of a freshly shaven Dolphie, who held up the game manual, winked at the camera and stated, "It has changed my life."

Granted, this fictional portrayal of the lunatic fringe isn't representative of most addicts of the original *Empire*, but some of them are bound to cross the line with *Empire Deluxe*. For the benefit of those who missed the Sneak Preview (Issue 101, page 152), some brief background is in order. *Empire Deluxe* is not a sequel to the original, rather it is a re-design to incorporate some user feedback on the original product and update the interface and graphics. *Empire Deluxe* now sup-

ports up to an SVGA standard and all of the major sound boards. Each unit type has individualized theme music that plays during its turn, and combat between units has been spruced up with explosions, machine gun fire and ricochets. These "Bells and Whistles" are nice, but would not, by themselves, justify a new rendition of the original game. Of far greater significance are the interface and connectivity improvements.

I Came...

Empire Deluxe supports up to six players, any number of which may be human controlled. As it is difficult to gather six megalomaniacs together in one room (excluding Dr. Watta Quack's waiting area), many players will take advantage of the modem and play-by-mail features of the game. With regard to the former, a live six player game would re-

quire more phone lines than most people own (a possible solution later, however). As to the latter, the original game developed a tremendous play-by-mail (PBEM) following on numerous national bulletin boards. As such, the design team anticipated a similar phenomena with *Empire Deluxe* and streamlined the interface which supports this type of interaction. Failing to find sufficient human opposition, the player may activate vacant positions with computer opponents whose skill level may be set at easy, standard or expert.

Returning to the highly desirable, but currently hard to configure, issue of live six player games, the solution is less difficult than it might first appear. Given the following that *Empire* has already established on-line, any of the national BBS's could rely on a strong market base of users if they fielded a host version of *Empire Deluxe*. It appears that the source code would support such a development with only minor revision, and one of the services currently offers a six player strategy war game the magnitude of *Empire Deluxe*. The only issue of concern would appear to be that of turn delays, which might also be solved through some configuration changes.

Until players come in contact with one another, which can take between 100-200 turns on a full size board (200 x 150 tiles), all players could be resolving turns, or blocks of turns (10-20) simultaneously. When the computer detected that the buffer zone (determined at five tiles, for example) was touched, the player who was ahead in turns would be frozen until the other player caught up. Following that, each player would have five seconds to move each unit, cumulative based on the number of units in the field. By using the automate features of the program, the player would speed game play as well as allowing himself a little additional flexibility with the remaining units.

These suggestions should not be considered all-encompassing, but are offered only as food for thought on how such a configuration could be approached. Should one of the services accept and succeed with this challenge, the end result would be beneficial to all con-



TITLE	Empire Deluxe
SYSTEM	IBM
GRAPHICS	SVGA, VGA, EGA
PLAYERS	1-6 (Modem, Network, and E-Mail options)
PRICE	\$59.95
PROTECTION	Documentation lock-up
DESIGNER	Mark Bellows and Rob Schaefer of White Wolf
PUBLISHER	New World Computing Hollywood, CA (800) 999-9607



cerned. If not, rest assured that *Empire Deluxe* is still capable of inducing "blackout" syndrome, an irrevocable condition where victims look from the CRT screen to the clock and find themselves incapable of explaining the loss of entire blocks of time to their spouses, or other concerned parties.

I Saw...

The worst thing for any depot to discover is that they actually control a lot less of the world than first believed. This condition, spawned by the incessant meddling of explorers, has led many a sovereign to dip in the coffers and begin building armies of conquest. Naturally, if one must tolerate exploitation at all, at least it should be thorough, so as to know what one is getting into. The "New World" has always conjured images of poor, innocent, ignorant civilizations ripe for exploitation, but occasionally one awakens a sleeping dragon by mistake.

In *Empire Deluxe*, any unit can be used for exploration, but some are better suited than others. Within a land mass, Armor units are the best explorers because they have twice the movement rate of infantry on clear terrain and equal movement on all other terrain except mountains, where they are prohibited. Further, if they encounter a neutral city, they can attack it and, if successful, will provide an infantry unit as "change" in the next turn. This unit can continue exploration from that point in lieu of having to bring another unit from the originating city to the front (which can take a lot of turns on large continents).

The largest continents are still islands, however, and control of one of these does not a conqueror make. Exploration of the seas is a necessary evil, and only one unit distinguishes itself in this category, the destroyer. One or two destroyers should be sent abroad at the earliest opportunity. Using the "auto-explore" feature is desired, while retaining the ability to intervene and directly control their movement at any point (such as when an interesting enemy coastline appears). Manually outlining enemy coasts will reveal much of the interior, depending on the size of the island or continent and will allow the player to begin estimating the required size of the invasion force.

No successful military campaign ever occurred, however, without sufficient economic

and logistic support. In fact, most aspiring world conquerors, such as Alexander, Napoleon and Hitler, saw their hard won Empires decline because they had grown so large that the simple logistic problem of moving troops and supplies to every possible point of incursion became insurmountable. They eventually collapsed under their own weight. The next section will explore some of the options available to players for rapid efficient movement of troops to the front, but first it is necessary to examine some important aspects of production.

In *Empire Deluxe*, the economic model of the original game has been modified to reflect the dynamic impact of fat flung ambition on once stable economies. The first revision is that each city begins the game with a production efficiency rating, which can vary from 60-160%. The rating acts as a modifier on the base number of turns required to produce each unit type. Instead of remaining static, making possession of some cities always more advantageous than others, the efficiency rating can change throughout the game. Every time a city is attacked, for example, the rating is lowered by a random amount. Thus, a border city that is highly contested may be



reduced to rubble, figuratively speaking, so it is not economically viable for either side to possess it. Such cities may improve their efficiency very slowly by selecting "no production" from the city menu, thereby allowing inhabitants to concentrate on reconstruction instead of supporting the war effort.

Secondarily, players may mount a strategic bombing campaign on enemy cities. When a bomber "hits" a city, and no other units are present in the city, whatever unit is in production is destroyed, and the city's production efficiency is reduced by a flat 10%. If other units are present, there is a random chance that they will be selected in lieu of the city as a target. A single hit in this fashion destroys the unit outright, even if it is a lengthy investment such as a Battleship, which would endure 12 hits in other types of combat. It is important to note that strategic bombing campaigns are often costly in terms of aircraft, but are extremely efficient in softening up particularly tough opponents. Who knows, one might find a virtual Pearl Harbor waiting to happen.

To complicate a similar campaign being mounted against oneself, the player has a couple of options. The first involves employing several fighters stationed in the potential target city conducting sweep patrols (now an automated function, with the player specifying only the patrol points) in the hope of picking up and engaging incoming bombers outside the range at which they can do damage. As fighters move six spaces in a turn, and have a sighting range of two spaces, this allows intermittent coverage out to eight squares, the range at which a bomber would need two entire turns to arrive. This time delay is often sufficient to evacuate important units, such as capital ships under repair, should the bombers penetrate the fighter screen.

A less effective, but less costly, alternative for non-coastal cities is to place infantry picket units five squares away from the city in the direction of the perceived threat. These units would detect incoming bombers and fighters one full turn before their arrival, allowing the player to scramble one or two city-based intercept fighters. The infantry would provide the added benefit of being ready to counteract any land threat to the city. Although these tactics are defensive, and no one ever ruled the world by defense alone, protecting critical rear areas from attack can preclude one from having to draw resources away from an offensive at the worst possible time. Consequently, it is important to discuss a few more defensive principles before defining a strategy of conquest.

As each continent or island is secured, all possible incursions must occur from the sea. To prepare for and defend against amphibious assault, it is imperative that one have the earliest possible warning. Players should utilize as many of the following options as are geographically and economically feasible. First, each land mass is surrounded by waters which will have different characteristics based on the proximity of other land masses. For the purpose of this discussion, gaps between land that are three tiles or less in width shall be referred to as straits, four to six tiles as channels, and greater than six tiles as open ocean. Posting a submarine in a strait virtually assures detection (if not destruction) of approaching transports. If the transport is escorted by a destroyer or cruiser (traveling two tiles in front of it) then the submarine





may be destroyed, but the player will still be aware that an amphibious assault is imminent. Destroyers are the best choice for channels, as it can cover the entire width in two turns or less because of its speed. It is still possible, however, for lucky transports to bypass a destroyer screen undetected, but no system is foolproof. Using fighters and/or bombers on patrol routes is the best option for open ocean surveillance. Naturally, the bigger the area to be covered, the more aircraft that are required.

I Conquered...

The first step in any plan of global conquest is to develop an offensive weapons mix and a means to mobilize it through proper production. Securing one's starting continent is the first order of business and it should be pursued exclusively with infantry and armor. Once accomplished, production of a transport is the next order of business. Usually, at least one other land mass is visible from friendly shores and it will be the target of the first excursion abroad. If the friendly continent has at least two cities other than the starting city, six infantry units or two armor and two infantry should be available by the time the transport is finished. These units can be assembled at the port of embarkation via the "move to" command. Once loaded, the transport can be ordered to the debarkation point via the same command.

Initially, on larger boards anyway, the player will only come in contact with neutral cities. As such, it is too early to worry about counter-attack or even defending the somewhat helpless transports. A fully loaded transport will usually be capable of conquering two or three cities, which may be the total number on the first invaded continent. If this is the case, the first new unit the player should produce is the bomber, for immediate use in scouting the surrounding areas of the two continents under control. Another city on the newly defeated continent can be ordered to produce destroyers, for long range exploration. The transport should be ordered to return to its original city, where another load of units should be awaiting its arrival.

When several new areas have been identified by exploration, the player can establish convoy routes to rapidly ferry troops to the front. A convoy is set up by selecting patrol

for a transport located in the port of embarkation and specifying a target city on a new continent as the point of debarkation. The transport will then leave the port of origination with any units that are available and travel to the invasion point, continuing the cycle to reinforce the beach head until the player provides other orders. It is vital that the player continue moving newly produced armor and infantry to the port of embarkation as the transport will not wait until it has a full load to depart. If it is discovered that the enemy is using convoys, and has also failed to set up protection and early warning as discussed previously, it is possible to conduct a naval blockade. Station several destroyers or capital ships off his coast and destroy the fully loaded transports as they depart, thereby inflicting a much more critical blow than strategic bombing of the same port could achieve.

As the waters of the world become more deadly, protecting fully loaded transports becomes vital. This is initially accomplished by providing a destroyer or cruiser escort. Subsequently, the player may want to build task forces of several transports, escorted by cruiser/destroyer screens, battleships to counter surface threats, and even aircraft carriers whose air wing can provide early warning. Forward looking screens are best, with only minimal protection to the rear against the occasional marauding destroyer (the only unit with sufficient speed to catch up to the task force).

The presence of close air support on the battlefield is not as decisive in *Empire Deluxe* as in the real world, but they can aid in softening up tough amphibious objective areas. It is fairly easy to move aircraft to the front by hopping from city to city for refueling. The optimum spacing between cities or air bases (which can be built by infantry units) is 12 tiles. This distance is spanned in two or three turns by fighters and bombers respectively. As such, they begin and end turns without wasted movement and can reach the front in minimal turns. Close air support remains the weakest of all the mission areas for fighters and bombers, with a fighter equal in strength to an infantry unit, but taking up to three times as long to build. Bombers fare slightly better because their ability to inflict two hits puts them on equal footing with armor, and they have roughly equivalent



build times. If one is uncertain how such determinations are made, it is necessary to consult the following table and subsequent discussion on the mechanics of the combat routine.

Unit Characteristics				
Unit Type	Attack	Defense	Damage/hit	Damage
Infantry	2 ¹	2	1	1
Armor	2 ²	2	1	2
Fighter	2 ³	2	1	1
Bomber	2 ⁴	2	2	1
Transport	1	1	1	3
Destroyer	2 ⁵	2	1	3
Submarine	2 ⁶	1	3	2
Cruiser	2 ⁷	2	2	6
Battleship	2 ⁸	2	3	12
Carrier	1	2	1	6
Albore	N/A ⁹	2	1	1
City	N/A	2	1	1

¹ vs. shore bombardment, ⁴ defending against armor in a river tile or any non-infantry unit in mountain or forest tile.
² armor defense
³ when bombing cities
⁵ for attack and defense vs. fighters
⁶ vs. air units (all naval units have some limit)
⁷ vs. shore bombardment

The Unit Characteristics Table displays the chances of victory for any possible encounter. The attacker's strength is always divided by the sum of the attacker and defender's defense ratings and expressed as a percentage. For example, assume that an infantry unit is defending a river coastal hex against attacking armor. The resulting equation would be $2/(2+4)$, which equates to a 33% chance of success for the armor unit or a 67% chance that the infantry would stand its ground. Subsequently, let's assume a cruiser conducts shore bombardment on the infantry. In this instance, the equation would be $2/(2+1)$, or a 67% chance that the Cruiser would destroy the infantry unit. As one can see, the math is simplistic, allowing quick tactical decisions in the heat of battle. The only difference for computer AI opponents is that their algorithms will often commit forces to attacks with a low percentage of success. By understanding the combat model, the player will not make the same mistakes and negate any advantage normally possessed.

I Had Lunch...

World conquest can make a player very hungry. Hungry for physical sustenance (a natural byproduct of the time involved in being a dictator), hungry for additional strategy and tactics to use in the game, or even hungry for more worlds to conquer. It is hoped that this primer will whet the appetite of novice despot in their quest for glory. One thing is certain, however, *Empire Deluxe* will be a welcome addition (sic) to the library of every serious strategy gamer. **CNW**

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The Gods Are Definitely Crazy

UbiSoft's *Mega lo Mania*

Megalomania n. 1. *Psychiatry: a mental disorder in which the subject thinks himself great or exalted.* 2. *A tendency to magnify or exaggerate.* 3. *A really big Chinese noodle.*

by John Brassil

Which of these applies to the game in question? Read on.

The latest offering from UbiSoft is a conversion of a Sensible Software game called *Mega lo Mania*. Splitting up the word "megalomania" into three parts for no apparent reason (if there's some sort of pun or other wordplay involved, it's beyond me) symbolizes the game as a whole. A lot of attention has been paid to things which aren't that important and the main elements have been neglected.

The credits and opening screens are nicely done and help to establish the setting of the game. The fictional set-up describes the process through which civilizations are assigned their eternal supreme beings. At the edge of the universe are gathered "gods and all round nasty pieces of work" to participate in the "game of the power crazy." Here, in the coliseum at the end of the universe, four teams of human pawns led by vying deities slug it out using whatever weapons evolution has granted them, be it stick and stones, or nuclear warheads.



Ah'll Do The Thinkin' Around Here!

Gamers have a choice of four roles to play. The red team is led by Scarlet, Demigoddess of the Pleiades, who is "fiery and aggressive." The yellow leader is Oberon, Self-Appointed King of Algal (some sort of programmer, I suppose), who is "backstabbing and ruthless." Leader of the green team is Caesar, Godfather of the Trapezium Mafia, reputed to be "vindictive and unpredictable." Finally, there is the blue team, led by Madcap, Andromedan Mercenary Supreme, known to be "cunning and deadly." The computer will play the three teams not chosen. I used Madcap most of the time (I like blue), but there seemed little difference between the computer players.

There are nine "epochs" of three islands each. Each island has a name starting with a different letter of the alphabet, from "Aloha"

on up. (What's the 27th letter? I'll never tell. It's not a new one, though.) The islands can be played in any order within the epoch, and the gamer-as-conqueror is given 100 men with which to accomplish the task. Any men not allocated to islands in the current epoch are carried forward and placed in a "fresh blood bank." This is important, because gamers will need more than 100 men in some of the later epochs. Also, it is a wise idea to start putting men in stasis during the last three epochs in order to get ready for the 28th island, known as the "Mother of Battles." Each island is composed of two to sixteen sectors.

After one allocates the number of men to be used on the current island, the starting sector is selected. Sometimes the human player moves first, sometimes the computer moves first. If there is more than one computer opponent, the human might even move between the artificial opponents! The number of computer opponents varies from island to

TITLE: Mega lo Mania
SYSTEM: Amiga, BM
REVIEWED ON: IBM
GRAPHICS: VGA, EGA
PRICE: \$49.95
PROTECTOR: Documentation Look-up
PUBLISHER: UbiSoft
Sausalito, CA

island, by the way, and less is not always easier. One reason is that it is possible for one to form alliances with the computer players (who can also ally amongst themselves), which prevents them from attacking the player, and also prevents any member of the alliance from building new towers. Incidentally, it is important to pick the right starting sector, since the distribution of resources on a given island is not equal. The only way to do this is to pick a sector, look at the resources, and escape back to the island selection screen. The computer will taunt the gamer for doing this, both with a "Quitter" label underneath the player-character's picture and some nasty laughs if the sound is turned on. It would have been nice to be able to view the sectors without going through all that abuse.

Each epoch has a starting tech level and requires the player to research new inventions in order to advance beyond that level. Epoch One starts out in 9500 B.C. with rocks and



sticks. That may not sound like much, but it's better than the pebbles unarmed men must fight with. No matter what the tech level, one must gather resources to build weapons. At first, this harvesting of material resources can be accomplished right off the landscape, but it isn't long before it is important to build a mine and start digging for minerals with comic names like "planctarium" and "parasic."

In addition to the mine, one also will need a factory in order to build more complex weapons. Labs are required to research new advances, which come in three flavors. First, there are four levels of shields used to repair damaged buildings. Second are the defensive weapons. Each building has from one to four defensive towers in which defensive troops can be placed. The defensive arsenal can be stocked with anything from sticks to bazookas to SDI lasers. Lastly come the offensive weapons, which are used to beef up attack strength, and run the gamut from the aforementioned rocks, through catapults and fighter planes, and up to the flying saucers of 2001 A.D.



Of Course, This Means War!

Battles are resolved by placing unallied armies in the same sector. This is done by drawing troops from a tower and pointing to a sector adjacent to one already controlled. (Unless they are air units which do not have to be adjacent to the destination territory.) Fights are generally to the death, as there is a severe penalty for removing an army joined in battle. The animation depicting the battles is quite well done. Sadly, the on-screen figures tend to use their weapons in a random fashion, rather than looking purposeful.

An unfortunate design oversight is the way in which the game is saved. It is not possible to save between the three islands of an epoch. One might as well hang on for the last island battle once the first two have been conquered, since choosing the Save option gives the player an 11 character password for the current epoch. When one "restores" a game with the password, the game resumes at the beginning of the epoch, ignoring one's previous success on the other islands.

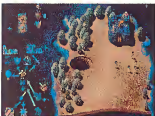
The basic strategy for the early rounds is to conquer each island with as few men as possible



to preserve them for the later rounds. Grow the armies, build new towers if needed, and crush those enemies. In the later epochs, when nuclear weapons become available, it is wise to expend all possible energy in building them as fast as possible, since that's what the computer is doing. So, the game becomes a matter of picking the right territory and

building these one-shot weapons of mass destruction as quickly as possible.

As mentioned earlier, troops which have been placed in stasis from earlier sectors are available for a big melee of an endgame known as the Mother of Battles (maybe Saddam has the trademark on "Mother of All Battles"), which is the 28th and final island. Well, that's what the manual says, anyway. There is supposed to be some sort of icon which appears on one of the menus which allows one to "shut down" a sector and carry the troops forward. I started looking in the seventh epoch and never did see it. When I successfully completed epoch number nine a message informed me that I had failed to "clear the final battle" because I had no troops to fight the final battle, and I was then rudely deposited in the first epoch.



Unfortunately, the initial version of the game was such that, not only is it not possible to finish the game, it is not possible to leave the game! I was forced to power down the computer in order to exit, suggesting a severe lack of quality control somewhere in the development process. The game is also fraught with other annoyances, such as the illegible reproductions of game components in the manual. In fact, the nicest thing that can be said about the manual is that it is printed on recycled paper.

That's All Folks!

Let's pretend for a moment that all these problems were rectified and that *Mega lo Mania* worked as the designers intended. While the graphics are actually quite good, not enough attention has been paid to gameplay. Each island follows the same general pattern of "Build infrastructure, amass army, and bash tower" until nuclear weapons become available. Then, the strategy becomes "Nuke thy neighbor." The game is sorta' cute, in a way, but cute is not at the top of my list of requirements for a good strategy or wargame. Maybe, it would be fair to say that I just wasn't too crazy about *Mega lo Mania*. **COM**



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Pinehurst - Links Course Disk



Eight Ball Deluxe

Amtek Software
PO Box 572
Belleville, Ontario, Canada K8N 5B2
(613) 967-7900

EIGHT BALL DELUXE: "Chalk up!" Amtek's original release, *Tristan Pinball*, won every sort of award from the Macintosh community for its realistic translation of pinball look-n-feel. Well, *Tristan* couldn't hold a flipper to their latest release. *Eight Ball Deluxe* incorporates all the sounds, all the lights, all the action of the real award-winning pinball machine. The digitized speech tells you to "Shoot the Eight-Ball," and "Rack 'em!" Even the spacy background noise that became standard on machines in the mid-80s is digitized and omnipresent. This product belongs in the same evil Desktop folder occupied by the likes of *Tetris* and *Software*. Mac (\$69.95). Circle Reader Service #2.



Inspector Gadget

Azeroth
3020 Issaquah-Pine Lake Rd. Suite 341
Issaquah, WA 98027-7255
(206) 392-9941

INSPECTOR GADGET: Go-go gadget disk drive! Dr. Claw and his M.A.D. badboys are keeping the Good Guys in jobs. They've stolen the U.N. delegates to the Council on the Environment and are out to wreak all sort of eco-havoc on the ecosystem—unless Gadget can stop them. The young player takes the role of both Penry (Insp. Gadget's niece) and Brain the Dog (man's best hacker), alternating between the two characters as they proceed through this adventure game that borrows its inspiration from *Carmen Sandiego*. Young sleuths will travel the world looking for the



Pax Imperia



Virtual Reality Studio 2.0

six lost U.N. delegates and foiling the plans of their six cybnetic replacements. The CD-ROM version adds music and speech, but this may not be enough to save the game from a clunky interface and dreadfully slow CD-ROM access time. Kids used to the quick thinking and even quicker acting Inspector Gadget may not recognize his computer analog as the same guy. IBM, IBM CD-ROM (\$59.95). Circle Reader Service #3.

Changeling Software
596 Elm Street
Windsor Locks, CT 06096
(203) 623-1963

PAX IMPERIA: THE GALACTIC EMPIRE SIMULATOR: Sometimes big games come in small packages—and *Pax Imperia* is one of those deceptively enormous gaming experiences. Macintosh owners who dream of micro-managing a galactic empire are in business with this product, which someone has glibly named *Spaceward*, *Ho!* cubed. The day-to-day tasks of ruling an empire—managing an economy, directing espionage, consulting advisors—are only half the game. Add to these responsibilities: the detailed design of one's own species as in *SimLife*; the direction of technological research; the design and construction of planets with a few *SimCity*-like development tiles; and, of course, leading troops into tactical ship-to-ship battles. Expect to spend some time wading into the detail of this real *war-er!* of a strategy game. For 1 to 16 players. A future version will support network play. Mac (\$69.95). Circle Reader Service #4.

Domark
1900 South Norfolk Street, #202
San Mateo, CA 94403
(415) 513-8929

VIRTUAL REALITY STUDIO 2.0: Ah yes, "virtual reality," the really cool buzzword that's meaning has been stretched to include just about anything on a computer. Despite their abuse of the term, Domark has created an interesting 3-D modeling tool for the average computing Joe. *VR Studio 2* is a real-time 3-D object/environment creation utility. The package includes a collection of ready-made objects, a sound effects editor, a simplistic animation creator, and a VCR playback function. After piecing together the 3-D environment, users can walk, drive, or fly through it, and can even record their trip for later playback with the VCR utility. A creative individual could have a good time with this package, but be warned—realizing the full potential of the program requires a bit of programming in a simple BASIC-like language. IBM (\$99.95). Circle Reader Service #5.

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Circle Reader Service #102

Mallard Software, Inc.
3207 Justin Road
Flower Mound, TX 75028
(800) WEB-FEET

JAPAN - SCENERY UPGRADE: This isn't just another chunk of *Flight Simulator* square-mileage with a polygon Mt. Fuji. No, Mallard has gone beyond their normal scenery offerings with this package. Sure, one can tool around the islands of Japan in their Pipet Cub, but why settle for that kind of hp when one can hop behind the prop of a Zero-Sen, a Hellcat or a Corsair. And if they're not enough, one can even pilot the supersonic F18 Hornet. Now, of course, Dynamix, Spectrum HoloByte, and MicroProse aren't losing any sleep over this new competition, but *Flight Simulator* aficionados may still find some thrills in this package; not the least of which is landing one of the WWII fighters on the *U.S.S. Yorktown*, *Enterprise*, or the Japanese *Akagi*. Banzai! IBM (\$29.95). Circle Reader Service #6.



Japan - Scenery Upgrade



Rome - Pathway to Power



Challenge of the Five Realms



Microsoft Video for Windows



The Journeyman Project

Maxis
2 Theatre Square, Suite 230
Orinda, CA 94563-3346
(510) 254-9700

ROME—PATHWAY TO POWER: All roads lead to Rome, but some are better paved than others. Hector, the player's character in this lightweight adventure game, has certainly chosen a rocky path—but no one said the rise from peon to Caesar was going to be easy. Hector begins this quest as a slave in the doomed city of Pompeii, that lovely port with the breathtaking view of Mt. Vesuvius. He can't hang around long, though, and must use any means necessary to escape; and if that means planting a knife in the back of a bourgeois fat-cat, then so be it. This is no goody-goody save-the-world quest. Hector's "Brutus" imitation sets the tone for the rest of *Rome* as he claws his way through six 3-D isometric environments to the ultimate seat of power and degradation. The tone is light and irreverent, the interface is point-n-clicky, the docs are sparse though entertaining (and in six languages), and the puzzles will best suit the beginning adventurer. *Rome* is certainly a departure from Maxis' usual fare; one should not expect anything Sim-like in this British import. IBM (\$49.95). Circle Reader Service #7.

MicroPlay
180 Lakefront Dr.
Hunt Valley, MD 21030-2245
(410) 771-1151

CHALLENGE OF THE FIVE REALMS: Based on an original story by Marc Miller, the creator of the *Traveler* people-and-paper RPG, this CRPG puts players in the boots of a character who is

confronted by a menace from another dimension (and, no, his name isn't "the Guardian"). To defend his homeland, the player must draw together the five realms of the title. The player is assigned one of four character classes (warrior, wizard, diplomat or thief) based upon a 12 question multiple choice quiz (and, no, the questions are not posed by a gypsy). Though the game is not terribly original (as hinted at parenthetically), it does have some new neat features. To wit: a point program that enables one to point their own character's countenance; the "PAL" player-character system which allows members of one's party to act as distinct personalities outside of the player's control; and two combat options, Quick and Descriptive, which give one the option of completely automating combat or explicitly giving orders step-by-step. Beyond the new features, it's more Hit Points, Halberds, and Hack'n'Slash on a grand scale. IBM (\$59.95). Circle Reader Service #8.

Microsoft Corporation
One Microsoft Way
Redmond, WA 98052-6399
(206) 882-8080 (ask for Bill)

MICROSOFT VIDEO FOR WINDOWS: Microsoft's Funniest Home Videos? Maybe. Computing videophiles can now import and edit video images from their cameras, VCRs, and videodiscs (with an appropriate video capture card). Cutting, pasting, compressing, even converting Mac *QuickTime* video into IBM format—all of these functions and more can be yours if the price is right. The package even includes a CD-ROM with stock video footage that can be incorporated into one's business presentations, multimedia projects, or summer vacation footage. (Geez, one could really impress the Jones' with skillful editing of the top to Poughkeepsie). IBM, CD-ROM optional (\$199). Circle Reader Service #9.

Presto Studios
PO Box 262535
San Diego, CA 92126-2535
(619) 689-4895

THE JOURNEYMAN PROJECT: It is well-known that the Macintosh has become the unofficial platform of choice for artists, and so it is that the most interesting creative developments in multi-media have all been developed on it. *The Journeyman Project* is, for the brief software moment, the pinnacle of these creative multi-media efforts. Unfortunately, its beautifully rendered "photorealistic" environment is the scene of an over-used plot: The player takes the role of a Temporal Security agent whose job is to time-skip around human history repairing future-threatening rips in the fabric of time. The

somewhat non-linear adventure unfolds as the player combines both adventure gaming problem solving with a quick action-gaming trigger finger. Though its story is trite, *Journeymen* is a landmark effort in multi-media development, offering a queer futuristic soundtrack, nice sound effects, well-performed video/voice acting, and the aforementioned, straining graphics. It's unfortunate that "Mac-heads" (affectionately used) are the only ones able to enjoy this beautiful piece. Mac II with CD-ROM and 8 megs RAM. (\$99.95). Circle Reader Service #10.

Sirius Publishing
7320 E. Butherus Suite 100
Scottsdale, AZ 85260
(800) 247-0307

PC KARAOKE: The ultimate exhibitionist's toy comes home to your PC, the included microphone begging to be plugged into your sound card and caressed with the lusty vibrato of your voice. Eleven classic sing-a-longs are included on the initial CD, including "Pretty Woman," "New York, New York," "Twist and Shout," among other pop pennants, and the package includes a catalog of dozens of other disks that can be ordered. Your sound board plays the music (sans lead vocals) and the back-up chorus, while the words to the song are highlighted on the screen. All you need to provide is your tassy, tone-deaf interpretation to embarrass your family and irritate your neighbors. IBM CD-ROM. (\$129.95). Circle Reader Service #11.

Sound Source Unlimited
2985 E. Hillcrest Drive #A
Westlake Village, CA 91362
(805) 494-9996

AUDIO CLIPS - TOTAL RECALL & TERMINATOR 2: The man who made his name with well-articulated pectorals and ill-articulated one-liners can now and forever be a part of your Windows environment. All of the best punch-lines from Arnold Schwarzenegger's two latest starring roles have been condensed and canned in two separate packages. No longer will you exit Windows with an unceremonious doop to the DOS prompt; now, Arnold will wish you on your way with an "Hasta la vista, baby" or "Your terminated." There's plenty of comic relief here for the humanoid who spends too much time with icons and mice. IBM (\$59.95). Circle Reader Service #12.

Spectram HoloByte
2490 Mariner Square Loop
Alameda, CA 94501
(510) 522-1164

CHESS MANIAC 5 BILLION AND 1: Puppies that piddle, body odors that



PC Karaoke



Audio Clips - Total Recall



Chess Maniac 5 Billion and 1



Q



America in the Atlantic

kill, breasts that jiggle, knights that brutally murder young maidens — ah, yes, it must be "humor" National Lampoon style. Calling itself "the world's first humorous chess game" (apparently not appreciating Interplay's attempts), this product offers a mediocre chess opponent in a rarely funny, occasionally offensive, and frequently lame context. The chess pieces are nicely rendered in live-action video, but the technical whiz-bang can't save it from its still-born concept. I though it bills itself as "bawdy" it is more often brutal, both in terms of truly senseless violence and its ax-murderer's sense of comedic subtlety. IBM (\$69.95). Circle Reader Service #13.

Star Graphics
1800 S.W. 1st Avenue, Suite 545
Portland, OR 97201
(800) 831-7611

Q: The "Q" is probably for "quick," "quirky" and "cute," as they best describe this inventive diversion for Windows owners. The game is played on a hexagonal grid formed into one Meta-Hexagon, wherein creep invisible alien ships. The player moves his or her laser cannon around the perimeter of the hex, firing occasional shots into the inky black. If a shot directly hits an invisible alien ship, the player is told so, but the location of the ship is not revealed. If the shot glances off of the side of a ship, the player is told that, too, and the entry and exit points of the laser blast into the Meta-Hexagon are shown. With this information, the player must figure out exactly where the ships are hidden. While it is nothing to go quazy over, it is a nice diversion of the coffee-break kind. IBM (\$19.99). Circle Reader Service #14.

Strategic Simulations, Inc.
675 Almanor Ave. Suite 201
Sunnyvale, CA 94086-2901

GREAT NAVAL BATTLES—AMERICA IN THE ATLANTIC: What if the Japanese had not been involved in WWII and America's Pacific fleet was used against Germany? The historian's speculations are now the computer gamer's playthings with this addition to SSI's simulation of large scale naval conflict, *Great Naval Battles*. This expansion disk includes several new ship types; the Penacola-, New Orleans-, Gearing-, and Fletcher-class destroyers, and the South Dakota- and Iowa-class battleships. In addition, these boats are pitted against Hitler's floats in three campaigns and several hypothetical battles promising the gamer "40 hours of all-new game play." The ships can also be integrated into the scenario builder (sold separately) for use in

CONVERSIONS

RECEIVED



Vikings



The Times



Stellar 7



Sim City



Casino Pack I



Cognito

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 Atrain (Maxis)
 The Bard's Tale Construction Set (Interplay)

IBM PC:
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historical situations of one's own device. IBM (\$29.95). Circle Reader Service #15.

Three-Sixty Pacific
2105 S. Bascom Avenue, Suite 165
Campbell, CA 95008
(408) 879-9144

V FOR VICTORY—MARKET GARDEN: V FOR VICTORY: Three-Sixty's series of popular *V For Victory* wargames continues to evolve, the interface and artificial intelligence improving with each new incarnation. This latest simulation recreates the bold Allied air drops behind German lines to capture a bridge across the Rhine in Holland. This battle ended up being immortalized as the Allied disaster that it was in the novel, *A Bridge Too Far*, but the course of events could have gone very differently. A good historical situation lovingly recreated, this looks like the best of the *V4V* bunch so far. IBM (\$69.95). Circle Reader Service #16.

Velocity Development
2161 Union Street
San Francisco, CA 94123
(415) 776-8000

SPECTRE: Macintosh networks have long been the sole domain of high intensity, multiplayer action gaming. Now, finally, IBM networkers can share in the shoot-em up fun. Originally released for the Mac, *Spectre* has made a seamless transition to the DOS world. Several players (we don't know exactly how many, though the manual speaks of 6-8) can race tanks around a poly-filled environment resembling the old coin-op *BattleZone*. The most scenarios include a good ol' slugfest where the most kills wins, a flag rally where the most flags grabbed wins, or a variant of Capture the Flag, called *Raid*. The action is very fast-paced, with tanks zooming every which way, bullets falling like rain, and the occasional tank leaping into the air. This one could very well have a group of friends "jacked into the net" for unhealthy periods of time. AppleTalk (Mac) and NetBIOS and Novell IPX (IBM) networks are supported. IBM, Mac (\$59.95). Circle Reader Service #17.

Villa Crespo Software
1725 McGovern Street
Highland Park, IL 60035
(708) 433-0500

FLICKS! FILM REVIEW LIBRARY: Although nine parts database to one part game, *Flicks!* is still enjoyable to use, if just for the database's subject matter. Not only do users receive a starting library of over 30,000 movies (with lots of information about each), but they can amend and edit it to suit their home use needs. (One of



V For Victory - Market Garden



Spectre



Flicks!



Virtual Reality Playhouse



Casino Video Poker

our editors is already busy logging his 400+ home video titles.) On the gaming end, *Flicks!* generates trivia questions with multiple choice answers, the subject matter of which is defined by the user (for example, players can define subjects like "Westerns from 1940 - 1960"). Highly recommended for serious flick fans. IBM (\$69.95). Circle Reader Service #18.

Waite Group Press
200 Tamal Plaza, Suite 101
Corte Madera, CA 94925
(800) 368-9369

VIRTUAL REALITY PLAYHOUSE: One in a series of books-with-software covering various fringe computer topics, Waite Group's *Virtual Reality Playhouse* introduces its readers to the young field of sensory immersion experiences—aka virtual reality. The book by Nicholas Lavroff lightly covers various VR-related topics like data-gloves, stereoscopic vision, tactile feedback, 3-D audio, and the potential applications of the technology. The collection of programs includes a simple 3-D modeling package, a collection of 3D wireframe objects that one can view with the included red-blue 3D glasses, a simplified version of DoMark's *Mig-29 Fulcrum* flight-sim (no combat), and a 3D "adventure game," among others. There's no real sensory immersion here, but the book does include instructions for modifying a pair of Sega LCD shutter glasses for use on a PC. All told, it's an accessible introduction to the topic. Recommended for budding cybernauts. IBM (\$22.95). Circle Reader Service #19.

Wilson Software
PO Box 612674
South Lake Tahoe, CA 96152
(916) 542-4854

CASINO VIDEO POKER: Thirty billion bucks were tossed into the ravenous gullet of the Five-Eyed Thief last year, and most of those pesos never again saw the light of day. Victims of this seductive bandit may want to do themselves a favor and take a few lessons from this program. Though its graphics are rather bland, it offers useful functions for those searching for an edge over the House. (Ok, you'll never, ever *legally* get an edge on them, but one can hope.) The game offers 32 payoff scales (though there's no deuces or jokers wild), progressive jackpots, and it tracks your strategic errors. The error tracker shows how much the strategic blunders have cost you, and even allows you to replay the blundered hands so you can have the answers to the gambler's ever present question, "What if?" IBM (\$24.95). Circle Reader Service #20.



COMPUTER GAMING WORLD HALL OF FAME

The games in *Computer Gaming World's* Hall of Fame 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.

- The Bard's Tale* (Electronic Arts, 1985)
Many formats
- Chessmaster* (Software Toolworks, 1986)
Many formats
- Dungeon Master* (FTL Software, 1987)
Amiga, Atari ST, IBM
- Earl Weaver Baseball* (Electronic Arts, 1986)
Amiga, IBM, Macintosh
- Empire* (Interstel, 1978)
Amiga, Atari ST, C-64, IBM
- F-19 Stealth Fighter* (MicroProse, 1988)
IBM
- Gettysburg: The Turning Point* (Strategic Simulations, Inc., 1986)
Amiga, Apple, C-64, IBM
- Gunship* (MicroProse, 1989)
Amiga, C-64, IBM
- Harpoon* (Three-Sixty Pacific, 1989)
Amiga, IBM, Macintosh
- Kampfgruppe* (Strategic Simulations, Inc., 1985)
Many formats
- King's Quest V* (Sierra, 1990)
Amiga, IBM, CD-ROM
- M-1 Tank Platoon* (MicroProse, 1989)
Amiga, IBM
- Mech Brigade* (Strategic Simulations, Inc., 1985)
Many formats
- Might & Magic* (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
- Railroad Tycoon* (MicroProse, 1990)
Amiga, IBM, Macintosh
- Red Baron* (Dynamix, 1990)
Amiga, IBM, Macintosh
- SunCity* (Maxis, 1987)
Many formats
- Starflight* (Electronic Arts, 1986)
Amiga, C-64, IBM, Mac, Sega
- Their Finest Hour* (LucasArts, 1989)
Amiga, Atari ST, IBM
- Ultima III* (Origin, 1983)
Apple, Atari ST, C-64, IBM
- Ultima IV* (Origin, 1985)
Amiga, Apple, Atari ST, IBM
- Ultima VI* (Origin, 1990)
Amiga, IBM
- War in Russia* (Strategic Simulations, Inc., 1984)
Apple
- Wasteland* (Interplay, 1986)
Apple, C-64, IBM
- Wing Commander* (Origin, 1991)
IBM, Sega
- Wizardry* (Sir-Tech Software, 1981)
Many formats
- Zork* (Infocom, 1981)
Many formats

Harpoon

(Three-Sixty Pacific, 1989)
Amiga, IBM, Macintosh



Harpoon is based on modern naval minutiae rules by Larry Bond, a retired naval officer and sometimes NATO naval wargames referee. The game quickly became a standard because of its vast and easily accessed database of modern naval intelligence, its unique user-determined staff assistant feature (which can be relegated to simple bookkeeping or participate in the game as an advisor) and continuing customer support (in terms of early bug fixes, later battlefret additions and scenario editor). The game offered a new look and feel, as well as proving that wargames could still sell.

Kampfgruppe

(Strategic Simulations Inc., 1985)
Many formats



Kampfgruppe was the tactical wargamer's dream when it was released in 1985. It allowed gamers to engage in tactical level armored conflict in the boardgame *PanzerBlitz* without having to perform all the bookkeeping. It was visually superior to Avalon Hill's *Tanktics* (essentially a computer-moderated boardgame which preceded *Kampfgruppe* by almost five years), did not have the distracting real-time mode ofSSI's earlier *Combat Leader*, had a better interface than Avalon Hill's *TAC* (Tactical Armored Combat), and featured a built-in mechanism for designing one's own scenarios. The Amiga conversion still has some of the more awesome sound effects ever heard on a computer wargame.

Top Adventure Games

RANK	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	King's Quest VI: Her Majesty...	Sierra	10.40
2	Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge	LucasArts	9.99
3	Indiana Jones: Fate of Atlantis	LucasArts	9.90
4	Sam & Max: Freelance Police	Accolade	9.73
5	SeaQuest 2002	Origin	9.70
6	The Secret of Monkey Island	LucasArts	9.70
7	Eric the Unready	Legend	9.68
8	Quest for Glory III	Sierra	9.56
9	Sherlock Holmes CD	ICOM	9.35
10	Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes	Electronic Arts	9.46

Top Role Playing Games

RANK	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Ultima Underworld	Origin	10.45
2	Ultima Underworld II	Origin	10.32
3	World of Warcraft	Blizzard	9.95
4	Wings of Fury: The Secret of Sarant	SoftTech	9.49
5	Might & Magic III	New World Computing	9.41
6	Ultima VI	Origin	9.34
7	Might & Magic: Courts of Xenon	New World	9.34
8	Eye of the Beholder	SSI	9.10
9	Base of the Creeping Foe	Str-Tech	9.05
10	Ultima V	Origin	9.00

Top Simulation Games

RANK	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	World Circuit	MicroProse	10.77
2	Falcon 3.0	Spectrum HoloByte	9.63
3	Comanche: Maximum Overkill	Novologic	9.61
4	Acies of the Pacific	Dynatrix	9.53
5	Shut Island	Dunery	9.34
6	Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe	LucasArts	9.27
7	Gunship 2000	Meridian	9.05
8	Chuck Yeager's Air Combat	Electronic Arts	9.04
9	Fixed Storm Rising	MicroProse	9.04
10	Shert Service II	MicroProse	9.03

Top Strategy Games

RANK	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Softwar Journey	MicroProse	10.73
2	Hoing Kong Mahjong Pro	Sierra	9.95
3	Dune II	Electronic Arts	9.85
4	Dune II	Virgin	9.79
5	The Incredible Machine	Dynatrix	9.41
6	Chessmaster: 3000	Software Toolworks	9.32
7	The Lost Admiral	Origin	9.03
8	Match Winner	Accolade	8.94
9	The Island of Dr. Evil	Sierra	8.91
10	Populous II	Electronic Arts	8.81

Top 100 Games

RANK	GAME	COMPANY	TYPE	SCORE
1	World Circuit	MicroProse	SI	10.77
2	Civilization	MicroProse	SI	10.73
3	Links 986 Pro	Accolade	SP	10.67
4	Ultima Underworld	Origin	RP	10.42
5	Conquered Kingdoms	Origin	WG,ST	10.42
6	King's Quest VI: Her Majesty...	Sierra	RP	10.42
7	Ultima Underworld II	Origin	RP	10.32
8	Front Page Sports Football	Dynatrix	SP	10.26
9	Wing Commander III	Origin	AC	10.26
10	Splinter's Journey	Origin	ST	10.26
11	Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge	LucasArts	AD	9.99
12	V for Victory: Volinje Luki	Three-Stary	WG	9.96
13	Indiana Jones: Fate of Atlantis	LucasArts	AD	9.96
14	Star Control II	Accolade	AD,AC	9.87
15	Hong Kong Mahjong Pro	Electronic Arts	ST	9.85
16	Wolfenstein 3-D	Id Software	AC	9.80
17	Dune II	Virgin	ST	9.79
18	The Perfect General	Origin	WG	9.75
19	Les Meris in: Lost in L.A.	Accolade	AD	9.73
20	The Secret of Monkey Island	LucasArts	AD	9.72
21	Falcon 3.0	Spectrum HoloByte	SI	9.63
22	V for Victory: Ugh Blesch	Three-Stary Pacific	WG	9.63
23	Comanche: Maximum Overkill	Novologic	SI	9.61
24	Eric the Unready	Legend	AD	9.60
25	Pacific War	SSI	WG	9.60
26	Quest for Glory III	Sierra	AD,RP	9.56
27	Eye of the Beholder II	SSI	RP	9.56
28	Sherlock Holmes CD	ICOM	AD	9.55
29	Great Naval Battles	SSI	WG,ST	9.54
30	Acies of the Pacific	Dynatrix	SI	9.53
31	Wazenty VII: Crusaders of Salvent	Str-Tech	RP	9.49
32	Links	Accolade	SP	9.47
33	Worlds	SSG	WG,ST	9.47
34	Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes	Electronic Arts	AD	9.46
35	Hardball III	Accolade	SP	9.44
36	The Incredible Machine	Dynatrix	RP	9.41
37	Might & Magic III	Virgin	RP	9.41
38	Shut Island	Diery	SI	9.34
39	Might & Magic: Courts of Xenon	New World	RP	9.34
40	Ultima VII	Origin	RP	9.34
41	Chessmaster 3000	Software Toolworks	ST	9.32
42	High Command	Colorado Comp.	WG	9.29
43	Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe	LucasArts	WG	9.27
44	Jack Nicklaus Signature Golf	Accolade	SP	9.27
45	Learnings	Physicraft	AC	9.21
46	Second Front	SSI	AC	9.17
47	Trinis Causee	Spectrum HoloByte	AC	9.14
48	Amazon	Accolade	AD	9.13
49	The Castle of Dr. Brain	Sierra	AD	9.11
50	Eye of the Beholder	SSI	RP	9.10



Top Wargames

RANK	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Conquered Kingdoms	GGP	10.42
2	V for Victory: Viking/Like	Three-Stix	9.96
3	The Perfect General	GGP	9.63
4	V for Victory: Utah Beach	Three-Stix Pacific	9.56
5	Pacific War	SSI	9.50
6	Great Naval Battles	SSI	9.47
7	World War II	SSI	9.29
8	High Command	Colossal Copy	9.17
9	Second Front	SSI	9.17
10	Conflict: Korea	SSI	9.09

Top Action Games

RANK	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Wing Commander II	Origin	10.26
2	Wolfenstein 3-D	M Software	9.80
3	Lemmings	Psygnosis	9.21
4	Tetris Classic	Spectrum HomeByte	9.14
5	Oh, No! More Lemmings	Psygnosis	8.92
6	Out of This World	Infoplay	8.57
7	Tomahawk 2025	Bathesda	8.41
8	Operation 2	Infoplay	8.10
9	Scorched Earth	Koch	7.99
10	Accent Act of War in the Glass	MicroProse	7.32

Top Sports Games

RANK	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Track & Field Pro	Accolade	10.26
2	Three-Strike Pro Football	Dynasty	10.26
3	Lyrinx	Accolade	9.47
4	Hockey III	Accolade	9.44
5	Jack Nicklaus Signature Golf	Accolade	9.27
6	Indianapolis 500	Electronic Arts	8.83
7	NFL Pro League Football	Micro Sports	8.54
8	The Genius: Writer Challenge	Accolade	8.50
9	Pick Your Card	Electronic Arts	8.49
10	Tony LaRussa's Ultimate Baseball '92	SSI	8.49

Poll is based on reader survey cards in each issue of CGW and published two issues subsequent. Data on more than 100 games is achieved and top ten lists may contain games which scored below the Top 100 cutoff.



51	The Dagger of Amun Ra	Sierra	9.09
52	Conflict: Korea	SSI	9.09
53	Cannons At War	WG	9.08
54	Chuck Yeager's Air Combat	SSI	9.06
55	Gunship 2000	MicroProse	9.05
56	Battle of the Cosmic Forge	Sir-Tech	9.05
57	Quest for Glory I (VGA)	AD,RP	9.05
58	The Last Admiral	SSI	9.05
59	Red Storm Rising	MicroProse	9.05
60	Conquests of the Longbow	SI	9.04
61	Silent Service II	MicroProse	9.03
62	Quest for Glory II	SI	9.02
63	Police Quest 3	AD,RP	9.01
64	Ultima V	SSI	9.00
65	Battles of Destiny	Origin	9.00
66	Space Quest IV	WG,ST	9.00
67	Western Front	SSI	8.98
68	The Adventures of Willy Beamish	Dynanic	8.96
69	Mad Max: The Road Warrior	Activision	8.96
70	F-15 Strike Eagle III	SI	8.93
71	F-117A	MicroProse	8.92
72	Qh, No! More Lemmings	Psygnosis	8.92
73	The Island of Dr. Brain	AC	8.91
74	Rise of the Dragon	Dynanic	8.89
75	Marian Memorandum	AD	8.89
76	Indianapolis 500	Electronic Arts	8.83
77	Elvira	Accolade	8.82
78	Command HQ	MicroPlay	8.81
79	Spelling 301: Spring Break	Legend	8.81
80	Populous II	Electronic Arts	8.81
81	Rex Nebular	ST	8.81
82	Gateway to the Savage Frontier	MicroProse	8.79
83	Sierra	RP	8.79
84	Minibratt	ST	8.78
85	Heart of China	SI	8.77
86	Castles 2: Siege and Conquest	Dynanic	8.75
87	Battlechess	Interplay	8.72
88	Gateway	ST	8.72
89	Starflight II	Legend	8.72
90	Battles of Napoleon	Electronic Arts	8.71
91	F-15 Strike Eagle III	SSI	8.70
92	Pools of Darkness	WG	8.69
93	Tyrannion of Steel	MicroProse	8.69
94	Armada 2525	SSI	8.68
95	Jack Rogers	WG	8.67
96	Legend of Kyandia	SI	8.63
97	Cannier Strike	SSI	8.57
98	Out of This World	Virgin	8.57
99	Megalomaniacs	WG	8.57
100	NFL Pro League Football	Interplay	8.55
		Three-Strike Pacific	8.55
		Micro Sports	8.54

Games on unnumbered lines have scores equal to the line above. = Top games of the year. AD-Adventure, RP-Race Playing, SI-Simulation, ST-Strategy, WG-Wargame, AC-Action, SP-Sports

The Computer Gaming World Poll

A monthly survey of the readers of Computer Gaming World Magazine.

See Reader Service Card for Special CD Offer

PC Research Hits List of Top-Selling Software

February, 1993

PC Games (MS-DOS)

Rank	Title and Source
1.	Space Quest V (Sierra On-Line)
2.	Conan: The Maximo Overkill (Nova Logic)
3.	Links 385 - Pro (Access)
4.	Sim City (Maxis)
5.	Ultima Underworld II (Origin)
6.	Kings Quest VI (Sierra On-Line)
7.	Links - Mauna Kea (Access)
8.	Front Page Sports: Football (Sierra On-Line)
9.	Falcon 3.0 (Spectrum Holobyte)
10.	Silent Service II (MicroProse)
11.	Wing Commander (Origin)
12.	Kings Quest VI (Sierra On-Line)
13.	Populous II (Electronic Arts)
14.	Police Quest (Sierra On-Line)
15.	Bear the House (Konami)
16.	Microsoft Flight Simulator (Microsoft)
17.	F-15 III Aces Pack (MicroProse)
18.	Civilization (MicroProse)
19.	Aces of the Pacific (Sierra On-Line)
20.	Wolfenstein 3-D/Spear of Destiny (Forgem)

Amiga Games

Rank	Title and Source
1.	688 Attack Sub (Electronic Arts)
2.	AD&D Gateway to Savage Frontier (Strategic Simulations)
3.	Realms (Virgin Games)
4.	Civilization (MicroProse)
5.	Operation Combat (Merit)

Macintosh Games

Rank	Title and Source
1.	Prince of Persia (Broderbund)
2.	Microsoft Flight Simulator (Microsoft)
3.	Civilization (MicroProse)
4.	Sim City Supreme (Maxis)
5.	Award Winners: 3-D V & B Lord (Sierra On-Line)

CD-ROM Products

Rank	Title and Source
1.	MPC Wizard (Aris Entertainment)
2.	Cinemania (MicroProse)
3.	Wing Commander/Secret Missions I & II (Origin)
4.	Battle Chess (Interplay)
5.	Street Atlas U.S.A. (Delorme)
6.	World View (Aris Entertainment)
7.	Mixins (MicroProse)
8.	Win CD (MicroProse)
9.	Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe (LucasArts)
10.	Compton's Encyclopedia Upgrade (Compton's New Media)

This list is based on sales sold by Software Etc., Bubbages, WaldenSoftware and Electronic 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 our many 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, medals 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 typos 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 #105, April 1993:

1.	X-Wing (LucasArts)
2.	Ultima Underworld II (Origin)
3.	Civilization (MicroProse)
4.	Conquered Kingdoms (QQP)
5.	Gary Grigsby's Pacific War (SSD)
6.	Empire Deluxe (New World)
7.	World Circuit (MicroProse)
8.	F-15 Strike Eagle III (MicroProse)
9.	Wizardry VII: Crusaders of the Dark Swart (Sir-Tech)
10.	Alone in the Dark (I-Motion/Interplay)

It's All Just A Popularity Contest

In issue #105 we asked readers what criteria they use when making purchasing decisions. As always, your responses were wildly varied and interesting. The prime consideration was, of course, a game's topic — one only buys games in which they're interested. Many people buy games from favorite publishers based upon their past track record. While not the most frequent, our favorite respondents were those who used CGW reviews in their consumer equations. We're flattered! Many readers also indicated that they had a favorite designer or two whose names would prompt an instant purchase. We were pleased to see this. For many years designers have been wrestling with their publishers over the issue of designer credits. During the early years of gaming it was the rare exception when a designer was given credit on the packaging of a game. If a designer was credited it was usually in small, unassuming print tucked somewhere near the legal disclaimers. Slowly, designers have been getting the box ink and the recognition they deserve, to the point that there are now several designers who seem to be "household names" (at least in a household of gamers). The following list is a collection of the names most frequently mentioned in your responses. We felt that this column was the appropriate place to print this Who's Who of Game Designer, as it's a small print and at the lack of a product. We thought they'd feel right at home.

Sid Meier (Pirates, Railroad Tycoon, Civilization)
 Gary Grigsby (Kampfgruppen, Carrier Strike, Pacific War)
 Damon Slye (Red Baron, Aces of the Pacific)
 Ron Gilbert (Monkey Island I & II, SCUMM adventure systems)
 Chris Roberts (Space Rogue, Wing Commander I & II, Strike Commander)
 Lawrence Holland (Battlehawks 1942, Three Wives How, S.W.O.T.E., X-Wing)
 Richard Garriot aka Lord British (Ultima series)
 Roger Keating/Ian Trowl (Roads for the Stars, Battlefront series, Garry's Art War)
 Roberta Williams (King's Quest series, Llama Boy series)
 Al Lowe (Leisure Suit Larry series)
 Steve Meretsky (A Mind Forever Voyaging, Secretz, Leather Goddesses of Phobos, Spellcasting series)
 Lon & Corey Cole (Quest For Glory series)



The Patch File

Computer game programs have grown so massive and the number of possible configurations has 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 or 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.

(* indicates new files.)

Aces of the Pacific 1946 Add-On Disk Update: Single Missions will now be saved correctly, and several fixes have been made to Career Pilots, including the elimination of known Shell System Errors. 3/10/93

Amazon Raft Bug Fix: Fixes the problem getting the raft out of the box in the airplane. 12/12/92

"Ancient Art of War in the Skies Update: Version 02 of the game. 3/01/93

Batman Returns Update: Latest version of Konami's Bat-venture. 1/24/93
"Carcass with Stacker: Allows players to use Impressions' game with the Stacker utility. 3/05/93

Civilization Version 1.0.8 (Macintosh): Latest and greatest version of the reigning king of strategy. 2/23/93

Darkseed Version 1.5 Update: Latest version of CyberDreams' adventure. 1/20/93

"Darklands Version 07 Update: Latest version of MicroProse's RPG. 3/05/93

F-15 Strike Eagle III Install Update: For those having trouble with the install program. 12/23/92

F-15 Strike Eagle Help Info Text: Text file containing known problems and suggestions for those having problems with the sim. 1/08/93

F-117A Stealth Fighter V.04: Update to MicroProse's jet simulator. 1/29/93

Front Page Sports Football: A new version is available which improves upon the original release in many ways. 2/15/93

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

Great Naval Battles/North Atlantic Update: Updates all GNBNA files to version 1.2. 2/23/93

Gunship 2000 Islands and Ice Patch Version .085: Corrects keyboard lockout problems some gamers are having. 2/11/93

Hockey League Simulator 2 Update V1.1: New version for the IBM. 2/3/93

Island of Dr. Brain Update: Fixes "Ooops 10" error, music room puzzle, and several other problems. 12/23/92

Jack Nicklaus Signature Edition Refr 1.5: Fixes the Mini-Moss effect caused by several objects being placed after a hill crest. 12/16/92

"Links 386 Pro Update Version 1.09: Includes new drivers for specific video cards, a new Sound Blaster Pro 16 driver, and fixes the Harbour Town Hole 14 lockup. 3/3/93

Magic Candle III Version 1.16: Fixes problems with Sound Blaster support, mirror of honesty/candlewick problems, difficulties with transferred characters from MC2, and other minor glitches. 2/17/93

"Mantis Update (IBM): Adds new features and improves gameplay. For disk-based version only. 3/01/93

NFL Pro League Football '92 V1.1: Contains many upgrades, fixes, and additional schedules. 1/26/93

Pacific War V1.06: Fixes the bombardment bug, the West Coast defense bug, the missing unit bug, etc. An "unofficial" upgrade from Gary Grigsby

— not supported by SSI. 1/24/93

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

Shadow President Update Version 1.0b: This version will run in ca. 30k less memory than the previous version. It also includes minor adjustments to the internal processing. 2/12/93

SimLife Upgrade V2: Fixes minor problems in Maxis' A-life simulator. 2/10/93

Solitaire's Journey Patch V1.03: This is a patch for those having problems with saved Tournament games and those having mouse troubles. 2/12/93

"Space Quest 5 Patch: Corrects the following: (1) Inability to Restore or Quit after running out of time on WD-40's ship. (2) Inability to skip polishing the Star Con crest in EGA mode. (3) Loss of cursor when Roger spends off the log which spans the river on Kit Urzagui. 2/26/93

Star Control 2 V1.1: Fixes several small problems. 12/11/92

Star Legions Update: Fixes some machine-specific lock-ups, problems with phasers firing out of the FOV, changes to mission ratings, fixes to award sequence. 1/15/93

"Samptect to Appomattox Update: Fixes the "Build" routine and eliminates the memory error that some gamers were having. 3/13/93

Task Force 1942 Update: Corrects the waypoint problem, among others. 2/15/93

LaRussa's Ultimate Baseball V1.1: Upgrades SSI's baseball simulation to the latest version. 1/29/93

"Tom Landry Football V. 1.03 Update (IBM & Mac): Corrects problems with high-speed modem play. 3/06/93

Twilight 2000 Colonel Upgrade (VGA only): Adds extra sounds and graphics, and adds a new ending to the game. 2/2/93

Ultima VII Version 3.4: Loud British fixes some minor leaks in the roof of Castle Britannia. Updates from Version 3.0 to 3.4. 2/17/93

"Ultima Underworld I Patch: Replaces old patch to UW1. 2/25/93

Ultima Underworld II Patch: Fixes the "strike" problem, local bus difficulties, and a few others. 2/24/93

The PRODIGY Weekly Top Ten

Computer Gaming World is Prodigy's on-line games expert. Look for us in their Game Center, a forum where users read articles posted on-line by CGW and exchange messages on the bulletin boards (we can be reached there at EXPT 40B). The Prodigy Game Poll is run by Prodigy based on a list of games provided by CGW and is updated weekly. Note that it is not a cumulative rating over time (like the CGW Top 100 Poll). Instead, the Prodigy Game Poll is a weekly "snapshot" of game popularity with gamers rating their favorites on a 1 - 10 scale. The highest total point earners make their Top 10. We provide this data to our readers as another barometer of "what's hot" in computer gaming.

GAME POLL
 TOP TEN GAMES
 Week of March 26 to April 1

RANK	SCORE	TITLE	RANK	SCORE	TITLE
1	315	Half-Hearted-39	6	181	Box of Pacific
2	294	Civilization	7	178	Falcon 3.0
3	250	Kings Board U	8	165	Ultima Underworld II
4	217	King Commander 2	9	152	Front Page Football
5	200	3-D King	10	151	Link-VII

QUOTE TRACK lets you track your personal list of stocks, bonds and funds. LOOK

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Why Do Reviews Take So Long?



State of the Magazine: It was a relief to attend a session on "PC Review Labs: How They Work" at the recent Software Publishers Association Spring Symposium. No matter how careful and professional one tries to be in this business of journalism, there is always a nagging fear that someone is doing it better, easier and more logically. As I listened to the editors of the major personal computer magazines that cover hardware and business software, I could almost hear myself talking.

For example, most of the general computer magazines divide their coverage up into three types of feature articles: First Looks, Reviews and Surveys. The former is usually based on beta software, reviews are always based on finished product, and the latter is a comparison of several pieces of software in the same area, all of which can be tested via a common benchmark. The first type of feature is roughly equivalent to our Sneak Previews. As Kevin Strehlo of Infoworld observed, "The intent here is to provide an impression, not be rigorous in the examination." The concern is not with shaking down a program, but describing a piece of software that the test lab staff thinks will be significant when it is released. This is not "hype," as some in the computer game press have called our sneak previews, rather it is the written description of "discovering" the software. The test lab staff reports the bugs that they encounter to the software publishers and such bug reports do not end up in the stories. If the bugs are not fixed, they are mentioned in the reviews.

Reviews are handled in much the same way as they are at *CGW*, with the exception that these general computer magazines often have larger staffs and can write more of the reviews in-house. Still, I was happy to hear my fellow editors insist that they would not review product off demo disks or documentation. In the computer game press, it seems there are some magazines that are willing to write articles

without even touching, much less experiencing, the game itself.

Further, the editor of *PC Week* stated that his lead times are 60-90 days out. This is roughly comparable to *CGW*'s lead-time. It is almost impossible to play a game all the way through (which we expect our reviewers to do), write the feature, and get the review edited, designed for the printed page and off to the printer in less than 60 days. At times, we can work miracles, but they take a lot out of us. If the company only sends us one copy of the game, that process moves to the 90 day cycle because we have to hold the product in-house long enough to write up our "Taking A Peek" paragraph prior to sending the review copy to the out-of-house reviewer.

I wanted to offer a standing ovation when he said, "Once a product is out a week and we don't have it — you're probably not going to be reviewed." With a 60-90 day lead time, getting a review copy to a magazine even one week after it hits the store shelves means that it can take three to four months for the review to appear in print, depending on what time of the month the copy arrives. In *CGW*'s case, we feel obligated to print a "Taking A Peek" as soon as possible, unless we think we can turn the review around inside of a month (sometimes our editors get such "game-lock" on a particular game that they aren't getting any sleep, anyway). In such a case, we might skip the "Peek" and get the review into the magazine with superhuman (i.e. dedicated gamer) effort.

Unfortunately, I couldn't resonate as much with the remarks on product surveys. The general computer magazines have it made. It's easy to compare spreadsheets by having them go through the same kinds of calculations. It's easy to compare word processors, feature-by-feature, and have the software handle the same kinds of documents. They can time performances and create nifty charts which summarize the results. How can one summa-

rize entertainment products in an objective manner?

Other magazines avoid the issue. They create numerical ratings which seem objective, even though they are based on subjective ratings. Just putting one's feeling into numbers isn't being objective. Even if one had objective ratings, we're not sure they would mean much. A flight simulation that ran at a faster number of frames per second than a leading flight simulation might yet be inferior because its graphics could be blockier, less detailed and less satisfying. A CRPG (computer role-playing game) that uses higher resolution graphics might not be as effective in helping gamers suspend their disbelief as a game which uses better artists at a lower resolution. A strategy game with modern-to-modern capability might not offer enough solitaire play value to make it a better buy than the one without. It is easy to get caught up in "featuritis" when one attempts to be objective with regard to matters of individual perception and value judgments.

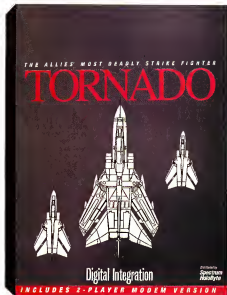
Basically, we feel that our growth at *CGW* has had something of a trade-off. When the magazine was part color/part black&white and less than 100 pages long, we had just about the shortest lead time in the computer game press. Our readers wanted a full-color magazine. Many wanted a "perfect-bound" spine so that our increasingly larger issues would not fall apart. Those who purchased us on the magazine racks wanted a glitzy design. Our long-time loyal readers still wanted thorough reviews where they could tell that the reviewers had played the games and could offer some hints and strategies.

In effect, we traded a longer lead time for all of the above. In actuality, we would still look slow compared to some magazines. We believe our reviewers should finish the games. That takes time. Not everyone believes that. We think our readers know the difference.

COW

ALL FLIGHT SIMS ARE NOT CREATED EQUAL.

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STRIKE COMMANDER

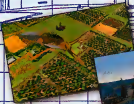
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