Covering Interactive & Multimedia Entertainment

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

The #1 Computer Game Magazine

March 1994
Number 116

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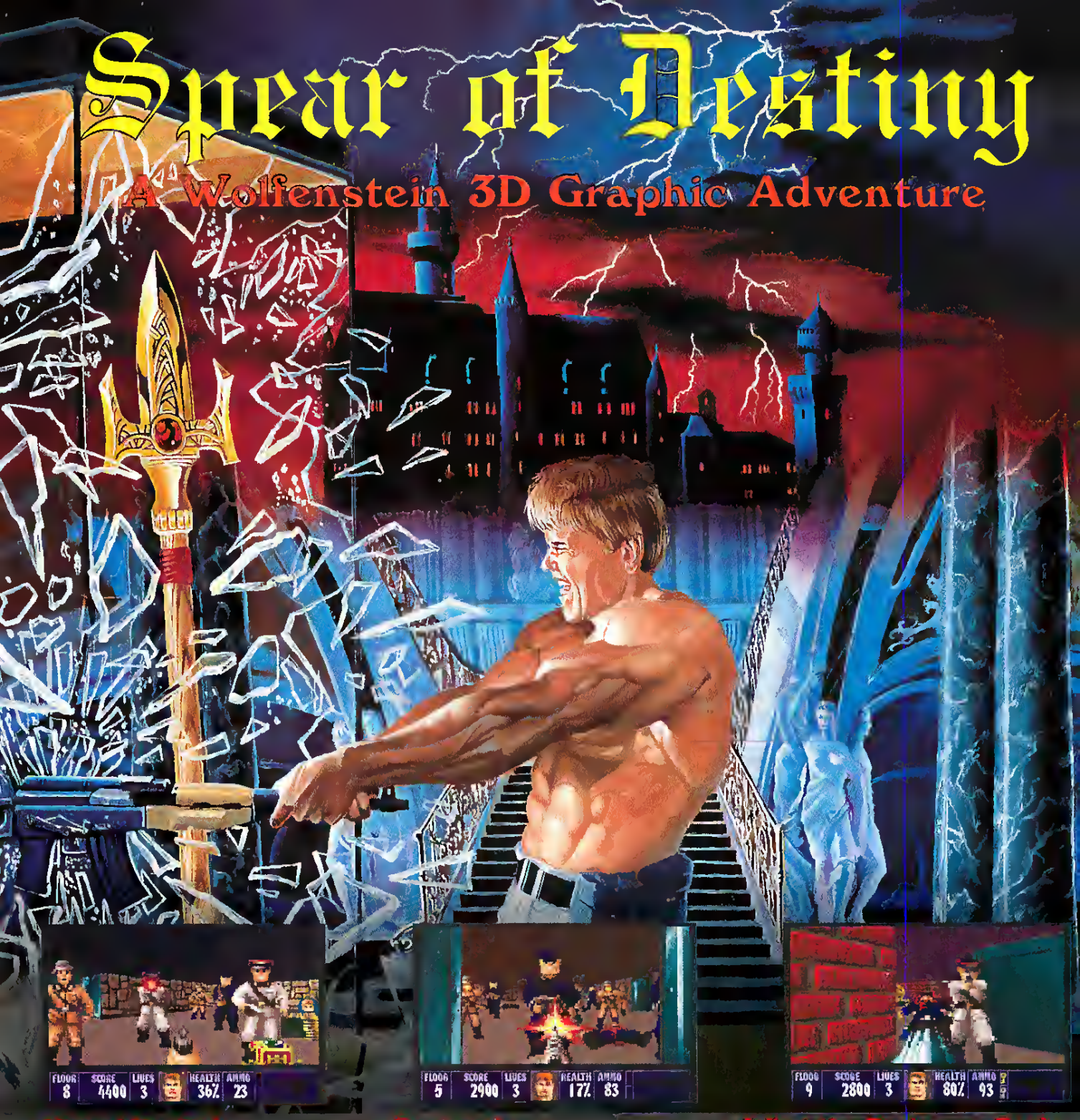

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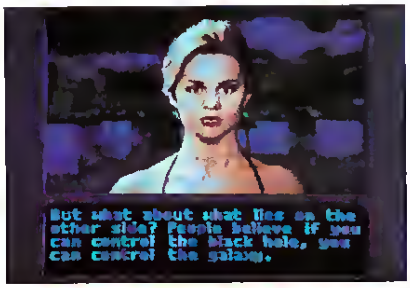

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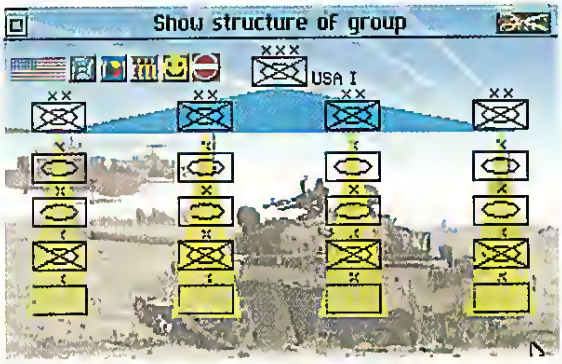

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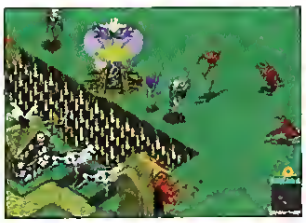

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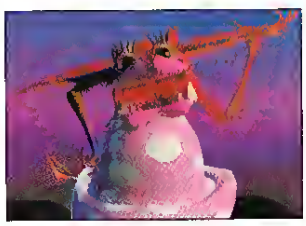

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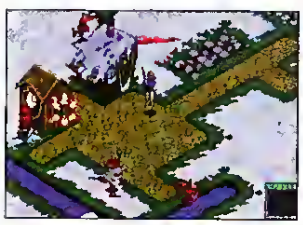

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Circle Reader Service #44

Do Gamers Grow Up?

by Johnny L. Wilson

The title is more than a rhetorical question with disparaging overtones; it is a serious question that reflects upon the potential for the expansion and survival of interactive entertainment. Many companies in the hardware, software and magazine fields are building their future on the assumption that the gaming world is maturing. The decisions made by these companies will have significant impact upon the number of titles available on given platforms, the subject matter of these titles, and even the way in which these titles will be distributed.

Hardware manufacturers are making research and development expenditures based on the assumption that maturing gamers will demand greater performance. There is at least one historical example to support this. When Sega offered a 16-bit game cartridge that outperformed the existing 8-bit machines, the company began to overtake and has quickly overtaken Nintendo in the video game market. At the same time, the average age of the video game customer began to edge slightly upward.

Sega customers regularly point out how superior their machines are to Nintendo, and how much more realistic their graphics are compared to even Super Nintendo graphics. Obviously, for those of us who are concerned about the impact of "realistic" violence and bloodshed with no accountability for the player's actions, the increased performance of the machines is a two-edged sword. Nonetheless, it is a reality that *Mortal Kombat* players who own the Sega Genesis machine laugh at Nintendo's color palette solution (changing the blood from red to white and calling it spit or sweat) for the SNES version. The issue is one of perceived maturity, even if the grounds for the perception is somewhat specious.

Let me set forth a hypothesis based on this limited anecdotal evidence. Younger gamers are willing to suspend their disbelief at a lower graphic, sound and performance level than older gamers. The corollary to this hypothesis would follow: the closer the presentation of graphics, sound and movement are to reality, the more the game should appeal to older gamers. Like most generalities, this hypothesis is not provable. We could claim that as the images used in flight simulators became more and more realistic, the target audience grew older. Of course, we would be overlooking the fact that time was passing as those of us who play computer games grew older in general and technology made possible the leaps in graphics and performance.

We could then try to shore up the hypothesis with the realization that multimedia—that muddy term for the electronic dissemination of sound and pictures together—had barely begun to scratch the surface in its distribution of photo-realistic pictures and digitized video until the pornographic CD market began to take off. Suddenly, individuals who had always written off computer entertainment products as "just for kids" are beginning to pay attention as the products present images that are more and more "realistic."

What does this mean to the gamer? First, it means that a horde of people who never thought about playing computer games may decide to give them a try. Many are not "gamers" and do not have the same preconceptions of play that those of us who "pioneered" the genre possess. More has to be spelled out to these customers, and they are less willing to put up with tough puzzles and archaic gaming conventions. They are more interested in the chrome of presentation and less in the "guts" of the game.

Second, it means that the subject matter for games will be broadened to cover the limits of human interaction, just as it has in art, comics, literature, film, radio and television. As the subject matter of games touches upon the areas where art imitates life and presents such subjects with increasing realism, we can expect the self-imposed moral policement of this world—on both extremes of the political spectrum—to protest that software publishers are trying to corrupt our children. An informative ratings system will ameliorate some of these concerns, but not all.

Indeed, this broadening of subject matter also means that magazines which care about the sensibilities of their readership will have tougher and tougher calls about what ads to run and in what fashion. It will require the proverbial wisdom of Solomon to decide between what is gratuitous and exploitative and what is insightful and productive. Indeed, Solomon himself appears to have had trouble applying divine wisdom to his sexual life. We are facing the difficulty of divining between the sexploitive and merely provocative, and are working on a reasonable policy to sift through ads and reviews in such a way that we can serve all of our readers without pandering to the oversensitive. Our sister Ziff-Davis publications are undergoing something of the same rethinking of their policies. Neither our readers nor our advertisers will always agree with our reasoning or decisions, but we are definitely aware of the issues and working toward solutions that work for our magazine.

Third, it means that there will be greater overlap between the computers without keyboards and the hot rod computer rigs chosen by the majority of our readers. There will be flight simulations where the interface carefully follows rules discovered in the cartridge world in an attempt to bring the high-end cartridge gamers (and sometimes the better games) into the personal computer world, as well as flight simulations where the high-end characteristics are streamlined down to the consoles in a logical fashion. In this way, the worlds of video game and computer entertainment will come even closer together.

This convergence, however, will not be an all-consuming merger between video games, computer entertainment and cable TV. Instead, we will see a proliferation of imitation, cross-promotion, technology-linking and demographic crossover. In the long run, we think this means a larger universe of gamers and more variety in games and game styles. In the short run, it may mean a string of big "Me, too!" failures that do not meet the needs of hard-core gamers. In spite of the concerns, we at *CGW* are bullish on computer entertainment and feel that we are poised on the brink of a revolution. Whether it takes a few years or a decade to create the "new order," we'll be here to cover the maturation of the computer game market. CGW

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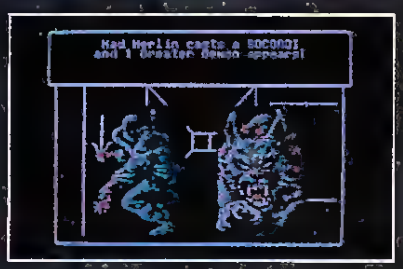

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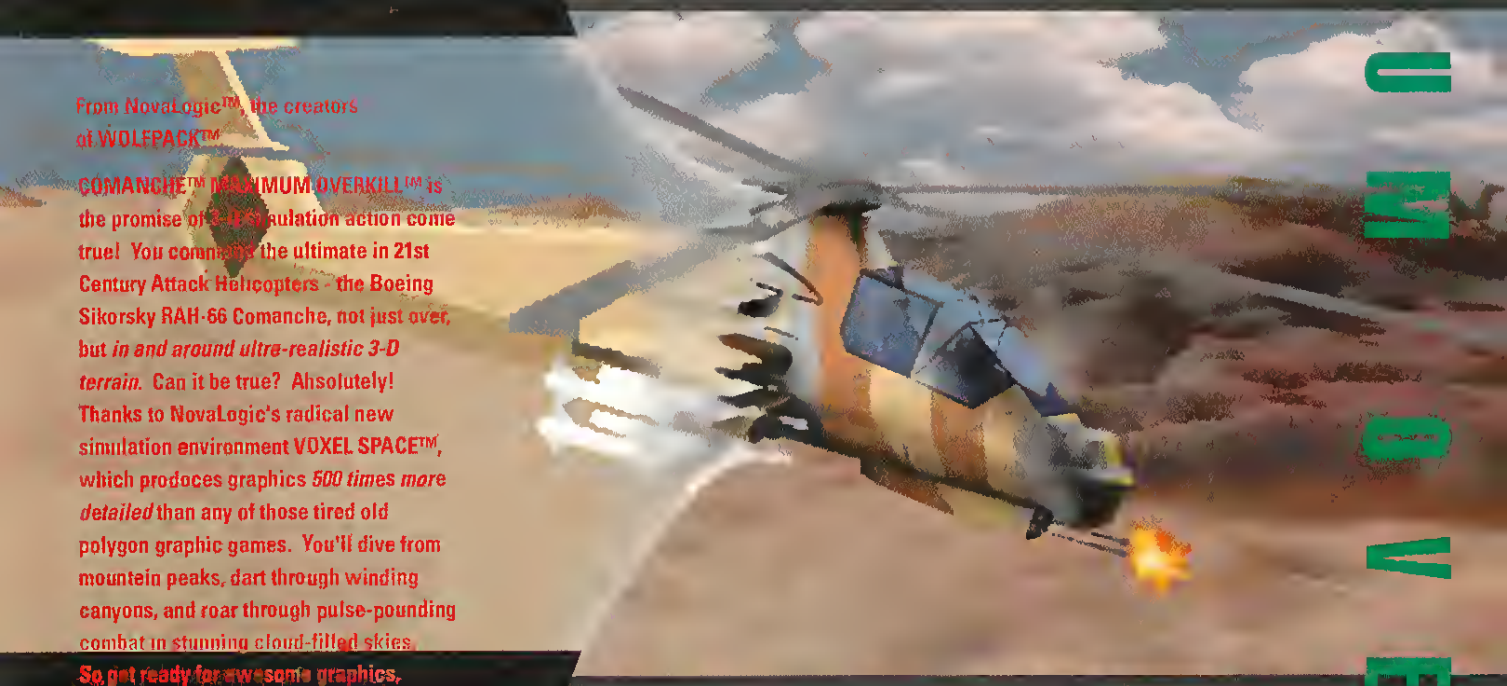

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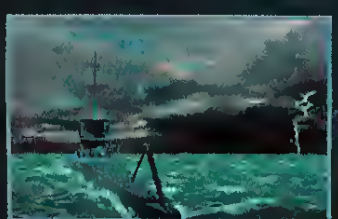

Actual screen images.

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READ.ME

THE LATEST NEWS FROM THE GAMING WORLD

NTN Networks With New World

Interactive TV Leader Purchases Might, Magic & More

The announced acquisition of New World Computing by NTN Communications, Inc. (AMEX: NTN) invokes the spellbinding possibility of an on-line multiplayer *Might & Magic* game over multiple communications networks. NTN is a leading company in multiplayer interactive entertainment with its *NTN Trivia*, available on GEnie and INN, as well as in hotels and lounges throughout the country, and *QB1*, the interactive television game of football coaching strategy.

New World Computing is a natural partner with NTN, considering that two of its recent products, *Spaceward Ho!* and *Empire Deluxe*, both allow for multiplayer contests via networks. The crown jewel in New World's tiara is, of course, *Might & Magic*. The series as a whole has sold more than one million copies.

In spite of the potential synergy cited by NTN President Pat Downs and the obvious promise of such products in the future, New World President Jon Van Caneghem says that he doesn't know whether the cooperative efforts between the two business units will happen in six months or six years. "It will happen, though. Just don't let anybody think we're planning to program *Might & Magic* for bars and hotels."

NTN acquired full interest in New World for a stock swap of one million of their common shares (value circa $10/share), continuing a trend where public companies involved in other media have acquired software publishers. In the last year, Sony purchased Psygnosis; Viacom acquired ICOM Simulations, transforming them into Viacom New Media; the Tribune Co. purchased Compton's New Media; and Time Warner Interactive expanded by purchasing Software Sorcery.

Neither NTN nor New World has commented on the precise projects in which the two units will act in concert, but one New World insider suggested that their *Vegas Games* line might be the place to start because of its broad consumer interest.

Blockbuster Ties The Knot With Virgin

In a continuing trend among large companies buying or investing in entertainment concerns, Blockbuster Video has purchased nearly 20% in Virgin Interactive Entertainment in exchange for $30 million worth of Blockbuster stock. The nation's largest video store chain, Blockbuster is interested in merging with content providers before being derailed by the "digital highway," where video and games may be available on demand.

A spokesman for the Fort Lauderdale-based Blockbuster, Wally Knief, said, "We want to have some content to put on the information superhighway," according to a January 18 article in the *L.A. Times*. Knief later denied this quote, but *Times* reporter Dean Takahashi stood by it, saying, "I can assure you he said that. He even offered that Blockbuster might use some of its 20,000 hours of [Aaron] Spelling and Republic Pictures programming for use as video in Virgin games."

This is the second recent investment announcement involving Virgin (formerly known as Virgin Games), which sold a 16.2% stake to toy titan Hasbro Inc. last year for $25 million.

Intel Bans *DOOM!*

In a company-wide memo issued in December, Intel banned id Software's *DOOM* from their networks. The memo was issued after several Intel subnets were rendered inoperable during lunch hour, as employees raced to get in a game of mulriplayer *DOOM* DeathMatch. Intel's decree is one of several banishments to come from large computer companies in the wake of *DOOM*'s long-awaited release.

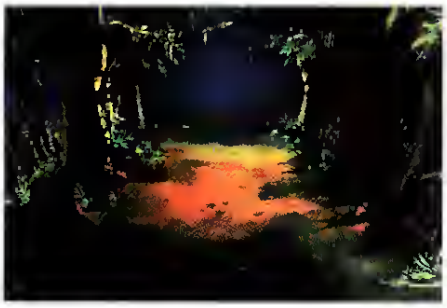
Aside from issues of lost worker producrivity, *DOOM* creates other problems that have network administrators pulling out their hair. As explained in the Intel memo, *Doom* causes network problems because of the way it trans-

mits the game information across a network. *Doom* sends a high level broadcast packet that forces every computer on a network to transfer the packet inro main memory and analyze it before it is discarded. Most network traffic is handled such that packets that are not needed by a machine are discarded by the network card before they interrupt the processor. With broadcast packets, the "net" result is thar each compurer on the network must process the *DOOM* data—even if it is not running the game. If several *Doom* games are running at once, low end 386 workstarions can bog down and network servers can creep ro a halr.

According to Jay Wilbur, CEO of id Software, the 1.2 version of *DOOM* will eliminate the use of broadcast packets and enable the game to communicate machine to machine on a network, eliminating the technical problem. Version 1.2, which will include a promised modem play feature, should be available as you read this.

Rocket Science Orbits New Concepts

Gather Hollywood special effects wizards like Michael Backes (*Jurassic Park, Rising Sun*), Ron Cobb (*Alien, The Last Starfighter, Conan the Barbarian*), Richard Cohen (*Terminator II, Total Recall, Star Trek VI*) and Mark Sullivan (*RoboCop 2, Hook, Death Becomes Her*). Then, combine their expertise with that of veteran game designers like Brian Moriarty (*Wishbringer, Trinity, Loom*) and David Fox (*Rescue on Fractalus, Zak McKracken and the Alien Mindbenders,*



Cadillacs and Dinosaurs

and *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*), as well as the technological expertise of the former **QuickTime** team from Apple **Computer**, Bruce Leak, Sean Callahan, Peter Hoddie and Mark Krueger. Stir in veteran executives from SuperMac **Technologies**, former Vice President of Marketing Steve Blank and former Director of Software Technology Peter Barrett. The resulting mix is expected to be **Rocket Science's** recipe for success.

The mix is definitely expected to be good news for gamers. As Vice-President Peter Barrett explained to *CGW*, "My first love is games. My second is film. In this company, our goal is to bring them both together." He went on to say that Rocker Science would place an emphasis on imagery, environment, character, and story, but that the games would all have a kinetic factor.

If such is the goal, the first three announced products certainly fit the bill. *Loadstar* is a project based on a science fiction film that never reached fruition. It is a machinery-intensive SFX fest with detailed Ron Cobb designs of vehicles known as JumpTrucks, high speed rail vehicles that literally launch via a "jump." Veteran matte painter Mark Sullivan did the background pictured with this article and game designer Brian Moriarty designed the interactive segments. It is expected to be released on Sega-CD in the fall of this year and on MS-DOS based platforms in early '95.

Comic aficionados will love *Cadillacs and Dinosaurs*. Based on the popular comic book series, this game is retro-'50s technology meets prehistoric monsters. The big challenge for this game was structuring the look of the game to use the two-dimensional vernacular of comic book art, while allowing the world to function with 3-D attributes. It looks like Frank Cirocco created the art, a former Marvel comic artist whose work shows the influence of Wally Wood, Al Williamson and Frank Frazetta. Again, the game will be released on Sega-CD in the fall of this year and should be on personal computers by Spring '95.

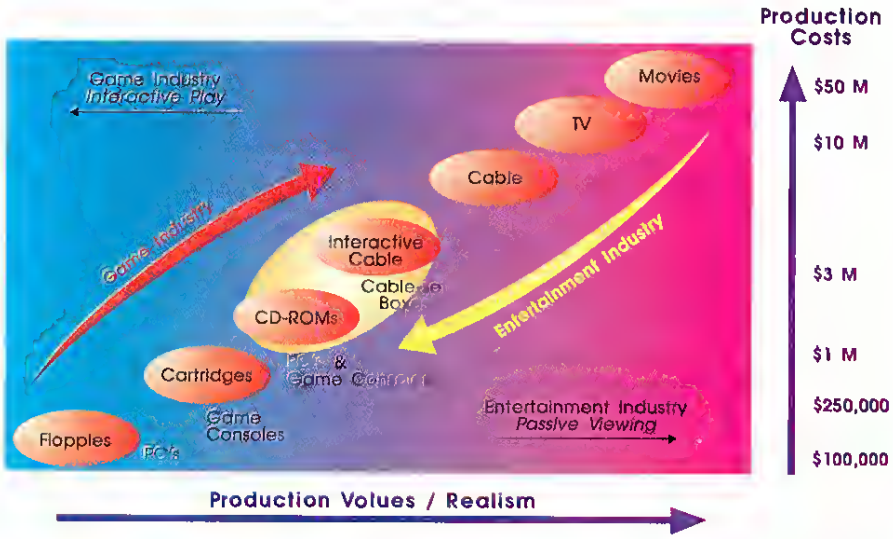
The most unique game in the bunch is called *DarkRide*. Currently planned for the Sega-CD, this space roller coaster experience sports a bizarre design that seems to mix Rube Goldberg and M.C. Escher. Not only are the levels expected to be wildly constructed, but they will also occasionally load upside-down or in a different place than the gamer expects. The emphasis, unlike most action and physical logic games, is on playing rather than finishing. The company calls the game "fun-physics" and it sounds like it will be just that.

Whatever titles Rocket Science elects to launch in the near future, it is clear that this company isn't going to be satisfied with game design as usual. As the accompanying chart (which shows the momentum from both the traditional interactive and passive entertainment industries) indicates, much of the action over the next five years will take

Loadstar

place in the central area between CD-ROM and interactive cable. Rocket Science has placed their emphasis in just that arena. In addition, the company's technical wizards have developed a technology called Game Science that improves the way data is delivered from the CD-ROM to the processor. The team is expecting to overcome many latency and data rate problems by the time of their initial releases.

The Convergence of the Game and Entertainment Industries



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CGW To Present Games Of The Year At Digital World Will Feature First Acting Awards For Multimedia

Computer Gaming World magazine, the world's oldest computer gaming publication, will present its annual Game of the Year awards at this year's **Digital World** conference. **Digital World**, the high-tech conference on convergence technologies, is scheduled fot June 6-8, 1994, at the Los Angeles Convention Center. The *Computer Gaming World Games of the Year* awatd ceremony, expected to showcase the inaugural presentation of acting awards for the computer game medium. Categories and nominees fot the acting awatds will be announced in a later READ.ME column, but the nominees for Games of the Year were announced at the Winter Consumet Electronics Show.

Action Game of the Year:

Doom (id Software)
Prince of Persia II (Broderbund)
Privateer (Origin)
Rebel Assault (LucasArts)
Shadowcaster (Origin)

Adventure Game of the Year:

Day of the Tentacle (LucasArts)
Gabriel Knight: Sins of the Fathers (Sierra)
Myst (Broderbund)
Police Quest 4: Open Season (Sierra)
Return to Zork (Activision)
StarTrek: Judgment Rites (Interplay)

On-Line Game of the Year:

Empire Builder (MPGNet)
Multi-Player BattleTech (GEnie)
Shadow of Yserbius: Fates of Twinion (INN)
3-D Golf (INN)
VGA Planets (Many BBS Hosts)

Role-Playing Game of the Year:

Betrayal at Krondor (Dynamix)
Bloodnet (MictoProse)
Darkside of Xeen (New World)
Dark Sun (SSI)
Lands of Lore (Westwood/Virgin)

Simulation of the Year:

Aces Over Europe (Dynamix)
Flight Simulator Tool Kit (Domark)
IndyCar Racing (Papyrus/Virgin)
SEAL Team (Electtonic Arts)
Tornado (Spectrum-HoloByte)

Sports Game of the Year:

APBA Baseball for Windows 3.1 (Miller Associates)
Cactus League Pro Basketball (Cactus League)
Coaches Challenge Football (MicroProse)
Front Page Sports Football Pro (Dynamix)
NHLPA Hockey (Electronic Arts)

Strategy Game of the Year:

Chessmaster 4000 (Software Toolworks)
Kasparov's Gambit (Electtonic Atts)
Master of Orion (MicroProse)
Merchant Prince (QQP)
Sid and Al's Incredible Toons (Dynamix)
SimCity 2000 (Maxis)

Wargame of the Year:

Clash of Steel (SSI)
V For Victory: Gold, Juno, Sword (Three-Sixty)
High Command (Three-Sixty)
Walls of Rome (Mindctaft)
Warlords II (SSG)

Special Award for Innovation:

Aide de Camp (HPS Simulations)

Ziff-Davis Announces "Interchange" For Digital Highway Games And More To Attract On-Line Tourists

Ziff Desktop Interactive has announced a new on-line information service. With the working title of Interchange, the service is expected to offer on-line companion magazines, electronic mail, special interest/discussion groups, news access and on-line games. The network is expected to be significantly mote visually-oriented, and the format shift is from an on-line database full of text to an on-line multimedia magazine with multiple connections to new information and activities.

Computer Gaming World will be a part of this new venture, since games will be a significant component of the nascent network. 30,000 users will kick off ZDI's 1994 test of Interchange with a target of 200,000 users by the end of 1995. Michael Kolowich, the executive in charge of Ziff Desktop Interactive, assures readers of the print magazines that the new netwotk will not detract from the sttength of the current publications. He positioned the network and existing publications as companion media that will complement each other. CGW

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The FX Of Computer

Coming Attractions in Computer Games from the Winter Consumer Electronics Show

Treasure Island may have been the perfect place for the *CGW* staff to stay during the Winter Consumer Electronics Show. We marveled at the replicas of "Age of Fighting Sail" vessels maneuvering in a man-made lagoon with masts snapping, boarding actions and one ship sinking. Yet, we couldn't get over the feeling we'd seen this before. The gas jet sending flame into the sky seemed remarkably like the volcano at the Mirage next door and the fireworks attending the exploding armory seemed like a Disneyland stage production. We were impressed with the ingenuity of the stage designer, but not drawn into the suspended disbelief that would have made us feel like we had stepped back in time.

Photo by Ken Brown

Left to right:
System Shock *(Origin),*
Noctropolis *(EA),*
MediaVision booth,
Pacific Strike *(Origin)*

Entertainment

In a lot of ways, that is what we felt in examining the new computer games at WCES. Here are the brightest and best of the upcoming spring releases, placed upon a pedestal and forced to dance for the buyers and the press, and we kept seeing the same techniques and the same products. Want to talk about *Doom*? We saw several products that attempted a *Doom* perspective, including **Capstone**'s *Corridor 7*, **Merit**'s *Isle of the Damned*, **Electronic Arts**' *Escape From Monster Manor* (3DO), **Atari**'s *Alien vs. Predator* (Jaguar), and **Origin**'s *System Shock*.

Want to talk about three-dimensional graphics? *3D Studio*, *Softimage* and other 3-D graphics programs are being used for everything from the realistic ships and modules in **Sierra**'s *Outpost*, a science fiction strategy game based on hard science, to Roberta Williams' massive *Phantasmagoria*, a detailed three-dimensional environment for her horrific adventure game. Such techniques are used for modeling ships and environments in **Mission Studios**' *Battlecruiser 3000 AD* (an **Interplay** affiliate), an amazingly complex space strategy game where sophisticated AI meets both the simulation fan and the tactician, and in building the weird world for **Merit**'s *Harvester*, sort of the *Children of the Corn* visit *Twin Peaks* while *Dr. Giggles* is being filmed on location-style horror game. In addition, **Origin** used 3-D modeling for the introduction to *Ultima VIII: Pagan* and allows gamers to operate a 3-D synthetic actor in their interactive, sci-fi movie, *Bio Forge*. **Software Toolworks** used *3-D Studio* almost exclusively in modeling the rich, fantasy world of characters for *Dragon Tales: Rage of the Dark Alliance*. It is a first-person perspective adventure in a fully-rendered world. On the console side, **Electronic Arts**' *Shock Wave* interweaves both 3-D action and digitized film footage.

Want to talk about digitized film? **Electronic Arts** is artfully inserting digitized film footage into the *film noir*, graphic novel look of its *Noctropolis*. The background art is stunning and the conceit for imposing video atop painted backgrounds is very strong (the hero dreams he has entered the world of his favorite comic book character). Access will use veteran Hollywood talent and film footage in the next Tex Murphy game, *Under A Killing Moon*. Margot Kidder, Brian Keith and Russell Means star in this interactive movie. **Crystal Dynamics** will use Kirk Cameron as one of their dominant on-screen actors in the digitized video of *The Horde*; **Mediavision** has chosen relatively new talent in their interactive movies *Critical Path* and *Quantum Gate*; and **Tsunami** will put a few lucky gamers into a revised *Blue Force*.

In addition, many companies are using digitized footage in a multimedia format as a tutorial. One of the best implementations of this is **Interplay**'s *Castles 2 CD-ROM*. The game's producer culled film footage from hundreds of hours of BBC documentaries about castles. Then, he placed the intriguing and relevant footage on the game's CD as part of the introduction. The CD also includes a full-blown tutorial game that can be interrupted at any time. **Electronic Arts**' *ESPN* series of sports games (3DO) will use digitized footage for tutorials, as well. Finally, some action games like **Sony**'s *The Lawnmower Man* (released in Europe by **The Sales Curve**) will feature some footage from the film, as well as the *Evolver* video game from **Trimark Interactive**. The latter, positioned by the company as *The Terminator* meets *Child's Play*, was developed along with the filming.

Want to talk about texture-mapping? It's here in a lot of places. Remember *M-1 Tank Platoon*? Imagine if **MicroProse** was to release that system with texture-mapped World War II era tanks and scenarios. That's the idea with *Across The Rhine*, a WWII tank platoon simulation that is sure to excite historical gamers. **MicroProse** also uses texture-mapping and Gouraud shading in *1942: The Pacific Air War*. *1942* allows players to fly ten historical Japanese planes and, in spite of the sophisticated graphics, provides for head-to-head modem play. **Origin** is building on their *Strike Commander* technology with *Pacific Strike*, a World War II version of *Strike Commander*, and *Wings of Glory: 1917-1918*. The latter allows would-be pilots to look around the cockpit like *Strike Commander* did, but there is much more reason to look around in the WWI planes of *Wings of Glory* than there was in the long-range tactical combat of *Strike Commander*. Finally, **Dynamix** is not sitting idly by as its competition improves. *Aces of the Deep*, the World War II U-boat simulation, uses Gouraud shading to enhance the target ships.

Want to talk about multi-player games? **New World Computing**'s *Zephyr*, a futuristic tank game where players are sponsored by large manufacturing companies and blast their way to the top, looks like a well-balanced and fascinating race/combat game for network play. On a different level, SSI's

Left to right: Speed Racer and Racer X enjoy a lighter moment, CPU Bach (Microprose), Yserbius (Imagination Network), Ultima VIII: Pagan (Origin)

Dark Legions offers both modem and network play for action-oriented strategy gamers who like duking it out in fantasy worlds.

Tek Warp (Technological Trends)

Sadly, there was very little *new* technology on display in the computer gaming arena. One piece of good news was the unveiling of a virtual reality system for the home from Advanced Gravis. Their new headtracking unit is expected to sell for around $700 retail, and a floating mouse peripheral for $100 more. Both peripherals should enhance the gaming experience for those who want to experience virtual new worlds. An Advanced Gravis spokesperson suggested that the peripherals could be on-sale as early as the fall of this year.

Another bit of good news was shown in private. A dedicated developer showed *CGW* a prototype for software-based, near SVGA graphics. The demonstration was exceptional, proving that an ordinary VGA card with as little as 256K in memory could display photo-realistic backgrounds and allow animated sprites to move atop of those backgrounds. In light of the recent *CGW* editorial on companies that have taken the computer gamer as early adopter for granted, it was nice to see a company develop an elegant software solution rather than expect their customers to upgrade to a higher hardware solution.

Another hopeful trend may be seen in terms of software development. Gilman Louie, Chairman of Spectrum HoloByte, explained that one reason for closing the AGA group (the graphic adventure team) at MicroProse was because those tools did not allow future designers to hook simulations into the graphic adventures. Louie explained, "I want everything we do from now on to have the hooks built-in for future expansion."

Neil Johnston, director of Spectrum HoloByte's flight sim group, echoed his chairman. He told *CGW* that the fourth generation *Falcon* product would not arrive all at once. Rather, it would be built as modular advancements and enhancements. He did pique our interest by assuring us that the fourth generation *Falcon* product would add military vehicles which are not aircraft to the *Electronic Battlefield Series.*

Sietta also plans to develop games with hooks in mind. Designers and programmers have been assigned to make many Sierra and Dynamix games "Network Aware." Eventually, this will mean a seamless communication between the standalone games and the Imagination Network where gamers will be able to play together. Soon, it will mean that gamers will be able to swap hints, save files and, possibly, objects from the worlds of Sierra games.

In addition, Maxis continues to work with Mallard on a utility where gamers will be able to convert their *SimCity Classic* and *SimCity 2000* save files into scenery files for Microsoft *Flight Simulator 5.0.* The Maxis vision of interconnected software goes further, however, with Will Wright currently working on a project where each building within *SimCity 2000* could be designed in detail and integrated into the overall structure of the city.

VR brings DOOM up close and personal.

Finally, AI is improving in several areas. Mindcraft's *CyberGo* moves beyond the tree-branched logic and into expert system technology and threshold logic in order to set long-range strategic goals. In this way, it not only assesses the board, but plays with a particular style. Mission Products' *Battlecruiser 3000 AD* uses neural network technology to handle NPCs (whether opponents or crew members). Perhaps, the most impressive use of AI, however, is *CPU Bach,* Sid Meier's music composition program from MicroProse. As described in the last CES report, the 3DO program is one of the most unique uses of computing power that we've ever seen.

Role Over Beethoven (CRPGs)

Probably one of the saddest sights over the last couple of years has been the rapid decline in computer role-playing games. This year is no exception. Even *Ultima VIII: Pagan* seems more like an action/adventure than a CRPG. The emphasis is on bigger on-screen characters with more realistic animation in a smaller game world (1/3 smaller than *Ultima VII*). This seems to be part of a design philosophy which says that computer gamers don't want to play the big games any longer.

One game that defies the trend is *Inherit The Earth* from New World Computing. This is a CRPG where the player controls "furries," those humanoid animals that are so popular among the more esoteric comic convention crowd. The fictional set-up is that this is a post-holocaust world where the animals have mutated into humanoids. It looks like it will offer plenty of interesting new possibilities.

Another interesting CRPG is *Ravenloft: Strahd's Possession* from Strategic Simulations, Inc. and DreamForge (formerly Event Horizon Software). In addition to covering the world of vampires, the designers have tried to create a universe of more interesting puzzles and ethical choices than we have seen in recent days. The graphic look is of a higher resolution *Eye of the Beholder.* SSI is also continuing to support their AD&D license by publishing *Al-Qadim: The Genie's Curse.* This is role-playing in the world of the Arabian Nights.

Celtic Tales is a unique new approach from Koei. The player is the leader of a

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Left to right:
Ravenloft *(SSI/DreamForge),*
Brent Spiner at Spectrum HoloByte booth,
Al-Qadim *(SSI/AD&D),*
Klingon scrutinizes The Next Generation *game*

small, nomadic tribe in the 1st century B.C. The player must stake out territory, build up armies and resources, and draw from the magical artifacts and traditions of the Druids. Koei is particularly proud of their attempt to provide strong female characters.

We are also looking forward to Empire's *CyberSpace* (based on the pen and paper game from Iron Crown Enterprises) and *DreamWeb*, a detective game set in a gritty, grimy future that almost makes the streets of George Alec Effinger's Budayeen (*When Gravity Fails*) or Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* look tame. These aren't the only dark future games to come in 1994. Virgin will be importing *Beneath A Steel Sky*, a dark future CRPG that was discussed in an earliet "Ovet There" as Virtual Theatre. Comic book aficionados will enjoy the graphic novel look of *Beneath A Steel Sky.*

One new player entered the CRPG arena when CyberDreams announced that they had signed E. Gary Gygax (co-creator of the original *Dungeons and Dragons* pen and paper game) to design a CRPG called *Hunters of Ralk.* Of course, many of the CRPGs expected duting the last calendar year have yet to ship: Bethesda's *Arena: The Elder Scrolls*, Interplay's *Stonekeep*, and Spectrum HoloByte's *StarTrek: The Next Generation* role-playing games.

Twitch And Flex (Action Games)

Bethesda's long awaited *Delta V* is a cross between the coin-op *Stun Runner* and the old *Tunnels of Armageddon* (with significantly better and faster graphics). In short, it is a mad race across cyberspace where the action is fast and the strategy is discovered by the seat of your pants.

New World's *Zephyr* is a multi-player race for survival in the world of the mega-corporations. Some of the design is based on New World founder Jon van Caneghem's experiences in winning the West Coast Formula Ford championship. Just as Jon learned about corporate sponsorships, so must computer gamers ot else watch their tanks get blown up because of their technological backwardness.

Another far future action romp will be Mirage's *Rise of the Robots,* to be distributed in the United States by Accolade. This product is largely a horizontal scrolling combat game, but features very impressive 3-D models of the tobots which the player must defeat.

Inferno, from Ocean, is an action/adventure that looks at first glance like a crude hybrid between *Wing Commander* and *Star Control 2.* There is a solar system with seven planets and three moons, constructed as texture-mapped terrain and digitized photos, to be explored, and over 700 missions to challenge the gamer. Gamers can also pilot ships that use three different flight models as they listen to the twisted beat of the British rockers, *Alien Sexfiends.* We were also impressed with the lip-synching of the non-player characters whenever they spoke directly to the player's character.

Mallard Software, the company that is almost synonymous with Microsoft *Flight Simulator* add-ons, is about to release a new action/adventure which can probably best be described as *Outland* (the Sean Connery movie, not the comic strip) meets *Shadowcaster. G-Nome* puts the gamer into the DNA strand of a genetically engineered cop who can alter his shape and outward appearance at will.

One of Inferno's *(Ocean) nicer denizens.*

As noted earlier, Atari's *Alien vs. Predator,* for the Atari *Jaguar,* has an interesting approach to fat future violence. Not only can gamers play the space marine trying to clear out the varmints, but the game scrolls faster when the gamer is playing the Alien trying to waste the space marine and features a special near-psychadelic perspective when the gamer is using the Predator's special vision.

In the more traditional mode of action games, Hi-Tech Expressions is nearing release on *Mortal Kombat,* a direct translation of the cartridge game for PC owners who haven't shed enough blood with *Doom.* The new twist for the computer version is that it will feature an artificial intelligence scheme that learns the gamer's favorite moves and counteracts them. Hi-Tech Expressions is also teleasing a conversion of *T2: The Arcade Game* for the personal computer.

Psygnosis' *Microcosm,* a futuristic roller-coaster ride through the human body which mixes digitized video and traditional graphics, has been mentioned in earlier articles. It is almost finished and will soon be found on interactive platforms everywhere.

21st Century Entertainment will teprise their *Pinball Fantasies* game, originally released on the Amiga, for MS-DOS. A CD version of the game is expected to ship in late Spring. It will feature a multimedia history of pinball as part of the package. *MultiBall* is an upcoming pinball title which will not only allow playets to put multiple balls in play, but will feature a construction set. *Pinball 2000* is aimed at the expert pinball player and will featute physics-based action.

Mallard's *Quackers* is a new series of action games. The first telease in the series, which is set to debut on the Macintosh, is *Fast Action Paq: The First Challenge.* Most interesting of the four games included (*Flak Attack, Bubble Trouble, Mole's Quest* and *Bot*) was *Mole's Quest.* It offers a mixture of spelunking and platform hopping that will remind veteran gamets of *Dig Dug* with better graphics.

Another strong Macintosh title is *AstroChase 3-D* from Interplay. This zero-G shoot-out is a high-tech version of all those early shooters (like *Asteroids*) that used to keep us hooked on the coin-op

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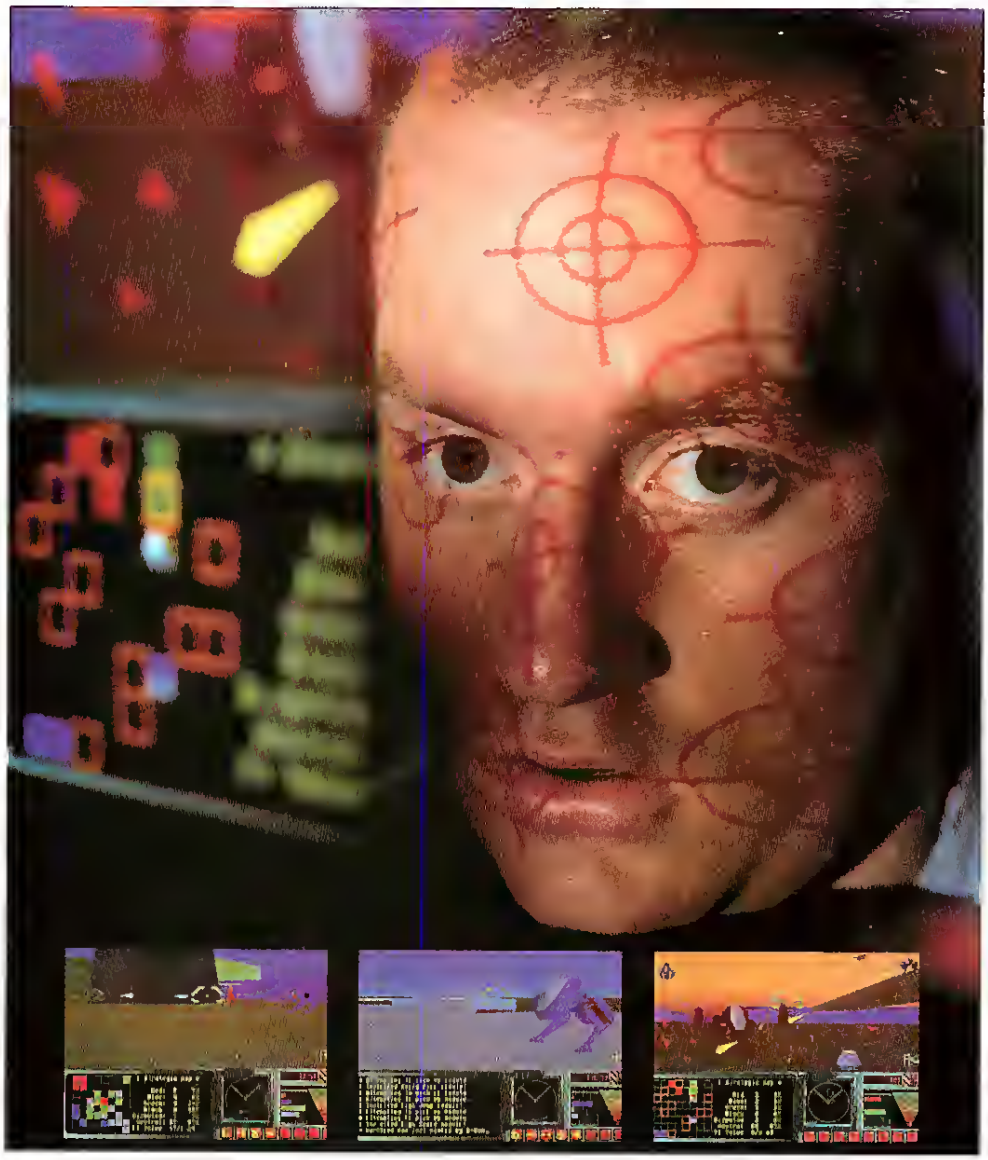

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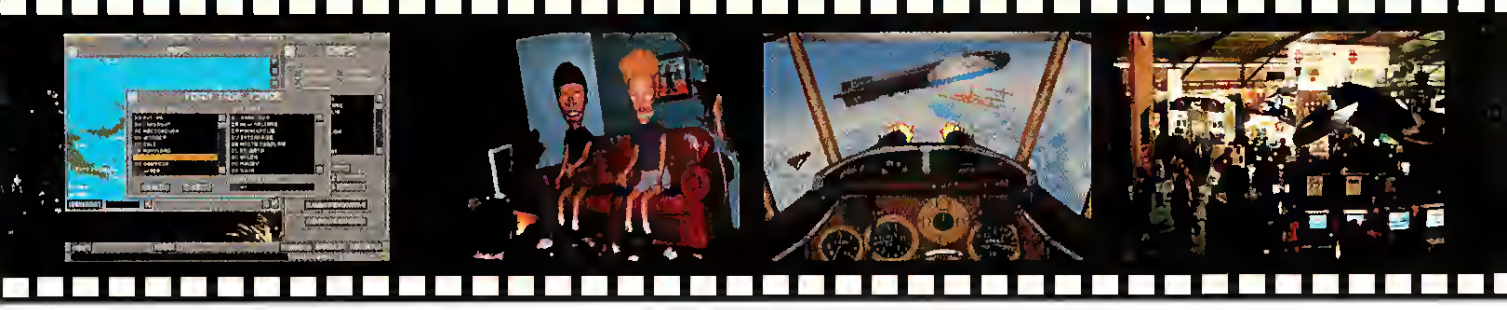
SIMUTRONICS



Left to right:
Great Naval Battles II *(SSI),*
Looking for games that don't suck,
Wings Of Glory *(Origin),*
CDs are (virtually?) everywhere at CES

machines. The three-dimensional graphics are nicely portrayed and the interface is very intuitive.

Sim, Sim, Sim (Simulations)

Simulations provide one of the most exciting genres in computer gamedom. Not only do they offer the chance to pilot, drive or command expensive vehicles, but the genre as a whole tends to push the envelope of technology as each simulation tries to become more and more realistic. Processing power is taxed to the limit in order to provide for detailed flight models, fast frame rates and texture-mapped graphics. The current emphasis seems to be on providing the best graphics possible, given the trade-offs in performance, and creating modem/network versions of the same hot experiences.

The Pacific theater of World War II is the subject matter for several sims. Origin's *Pacific Strike* is a hybrid sim/story approach a la *Wing Commander* or *Strike Commander*. The original game features 37 missions and a mission disk is expected to follow. MicroProse opts for the more traditional simulation in *1942: The Pacific Air War*. The game allows sim pilots to fly ten historical planes and command either Japanese or U.S. forces. SSI's *Great Naval Battles II: Guadalcanal, 1942-43* is yet another sim set in the Pacific Theatre. As with the original *GNB*, gamers will be allowed to command naval vessels from either side in both strategic campaigns and tactical battles.

Wings of Glory from Origin uses the *Strike Commander* engine with tons of chrome to depict WWI air combat. Rather than a straight sim like *Red Baron, Glory* includes the cinematic plot sequences we've come to expect from the folks in Texas, along with a random mission generator.

Ocean's *TFX* features five million kilometers of simulated action in such faraway places as Somalia, India and Columbia. Though playable in an arcade form, the flight model for the advanced mode was designed with the help of an aeronautics professor. The story unfolds through "Flashpoint" missions specific to each type of plane. So, if you choose an F117C, you will fly stealth missions instead of interceptions, with over 200 missions included. *TFX* will have synthesized voice even on the floppy version.

MicroProse's *Across The Rhine* bears game play similarities to *M1 Tank Platoon*, but has much more impressive texture-mapped tanks and is designed around WWII scenarios. *Fleet Defender*, also from MicroProse, is an F-14 simulation in the company's tradition of fast-paced air combat simulations. It has an impressive array of options allowing the player to customize the sim.

Two simulations feature the giant combat robots of Japanime fame. *MechWarrior II: The Clans* is a well-conceived simulation set in the *BattleTech* universe. Featuring

Conquer the South Pacific with
1942: The Pacific Air War *(MicroProse).*

texture-mapped robots, modem and network play, and the rich fiction behind the familiar cosmos, Activision's classy sim takes readers into a far more chaotic universe than the static balkanization of the original setting. Further, the emphasis is more on the player as mercenary (killer?) than soldier in this top-notch sequel.

MetalTech from Dynamix will also feature modem support. When you go into a battle, you negotiate the terms for victory (fighting for weapons, funds) with the other player. One unique feature is the free-floating camera that follows each 'mech. In addition to piloting your 'mech, you can pilot your camera and shoot your foe's roving eye.

Aces of the Deep is the latest Dynamix simulation. As noted in the last CES report, the game is based on U-boat actions in the Atlantic during WWII. It features seven different U-boat models, a multitude of warships and merchant ships to serve as victims/opponents and eight different enemy aircraft.

NovaLogic was showing *Armored Fist*, the tank simulation using *Comanche Maximum Overkill*'s voxel graphic technology. In scenarios involving American- and Soviet-made tanks, the player can command his contingent from a Command vehicle or fight within individual tanks.

One of the important news items in the simulation genre was the announcement from Looking Glass Technologies (developers of *Ultima Underworld* and *BioForge* for Origin) that they plan to release their first self-published product. Tentatively entitled *Flight*, this flight sim is designed to be a photorealistic, virtual playground employing a true flight model. Particularly impressive in this mid-'94 release is the way the program accurately reflects the response of the aircraft to weather and turbulence on the wings and shell of the plane combined with the photorealistic representation of the entire game world, including the flight instrumentation.

Join The Adventure (Adventure Games)

1994 looks like it will feature a very strong line-up in adventure games. Topping the list for most of the *CGW* staff was Electronic Arts' *Noctropolis*. With graphics a la vintage Ridley Scott and a bizarre story that would please Orson Welles, this game promises to be something of a graphic feast—a computer game *noir*.

Of course, one can round up the usual suspects in the graphic adventure genre. Sierra plans to release a new *King's Quest*, *Space Quest* and *Gabriel Knight* in the next

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Circle Reader Service #6

Left to right: Eleventh Hour (Virgin), Bioforge (Origin), Dragonsphere (MicroProse), CGW Editors late for an appointment

yeat. LucasArts will not only launch their *Sam & Max Hit The Road* CD, but have assigned theit thitd co-designer to *The Dig* (based on a Steven Spielberg "Amazing Stories" script). As noted earlier, Access will release another Tex Murphy adventute this Spting. And Tsunami is in production on *Protostar II* and *Ringworld II.*

Interplay just released *StarTrek: Judgment Rites* and will follow-up with *Star Fleet Academy.* If this game is anywhete near as impressive as the cinematic opening, *Star Fleet Academy* is going to have plenty of new cadets. Also, the company's I-Motion joint ventute with France's Infogrames will sport *Call of Cthulhu: Shadow of the Comet,* set in the familiat Lovectaftian environs of the Chaosium people-and-papet game, and *Alone in the Dark 2,* the 3-D adventure game that follows in the footsteps of the innovative original, but with mote game play.

Legend continues to spice up its graphic adventute ptoduct mix. This time, the company is using a familiar design talent in a not-so familiat way. Steve Meretzky, the game author that no one can take setiously, is developing a daffy adventute/tole-playing game called *Superheroes of Hoboken.*

Dragonsphere is the last graphic adventute ftom MicroProse. The design team has tried to develop a tealistic conversational system. Said system is constructed so that depending on your interaction, there are sevetal different endgames. The AGA engine may well be sold to another company in the near future, however; so solid perfotmance on this title could well impact futute products ftom other quattets.

Bio Forge is the first in a line of interactive movies ftom Origin. As noted earliet, gamers control a synthetic actor in sophisticated 3-D environs. The cinematic feel is developed through the extensive use of multiple camera angles.

Wrath of the Gods, from new Maxis affiliate Luminaria, is a CD-only adventute game (available fot Macintosh and Windows) set in the context of ancient Greek mythology. Fans of Ray Harryhausen SFX films will feel tight at home, but those who know the Greek myths best are likely to fare better than casual Sinbad fans.

On the film scene, Paramount Interactive plans to telease *Star Trek, Deep Space Nine: The Hunt.* The adventute is based on the TV seties and is expected to allow gamers to play the role of a Federation officer, Klingon, Ferengi ot Bajotan in this cinematic mystery title. Both Macintosh and MS-DOS vetsions ate being developed fot both floppy and CD-ROM release.

Not all of the salespeople at CES were human.

Among smaller companies, Capstone has acquired the tights to Steven Spielberg's upcoming *Zorro* film, but did not unveil plans for story or interface at the show. Readysoft has pinned its hopes on games originally published in France. *Arctic Baron* is an adventute/strategy game set in a futuristic ice age where everyone travels by train, and coal is more valuable than gold. The player's goal is, of course, to thaw out the wotld by chilling the bad guys. *Robinson's Requiem* is another French impott from Readysoft whete the player takes on the character of a hotshot FBI agent sent on a suicide mission. This is a heavily puzzle-otiented adventure game on IBM, Macintosh, Amiga and Atari ST.

CyberDreams emphasized their just-teleased *CyberRace* product at the show, but unveiled *Darkseed II,* the sequel to their otiginal Gigeresque graphic adventure, and confirmed that the Harlan Ellison project *I Have No Mouth And I Must Scream* is still in the works.

This Means War (Wargames)

In addition to those wargames coveted in this month's *CWW* editorial, we were happy to see several others in development.

Westwood's *Command and Conquer* is one of those stategy/wargames that is hard to categorize. This follow-up to *Dune II* moves out of the sand and onto a variety of terrain types as part of this exciting teal-time watgame.

Speaking of sequels, Koei hopes that the third time is the charm fot *Romance of the Three Kingdoms III: Dragon of Destiny,* featuring six new leaders and the option to play with up to eight would-be conquetots. VGA graphics appear for the first time in a Koei game, and highlight the 3-D naval attacks. As with all Koei games, the playet must not only be a great military leader, but has to deal with disease, disaster, unrest at home and all of the usual details with which the ancients had to cope. Also in the wotks is *Genghis Khan II: Clan of the Gray Wolf,* where gamers vicatiously become the great mongol chieftain, or any of 11 other world leaders. Samurai, knights, light cavalry and even elephants provide a variety of tactical options in a game with even more military emphasis than the otiginal.

Mallard and Red Sword Software have *Warpoint* in the wings, a space war simulation set in 2049. The concept is that aliens came to conquet Earth, but wete sutptised and destroyed by SDI. Thirty years latet, the aliens have retutned with new weapons and tactics. Designed by Tim Jacobs of *Harpoon* fame, the emphasis is on strategy rather than just weapons platforms, and features 3-D texture mapping with Goutaud shading, rendered in 32-bit SVGA. If successful, Mallard plans to release add-on scenarios a la *Harpoon.*

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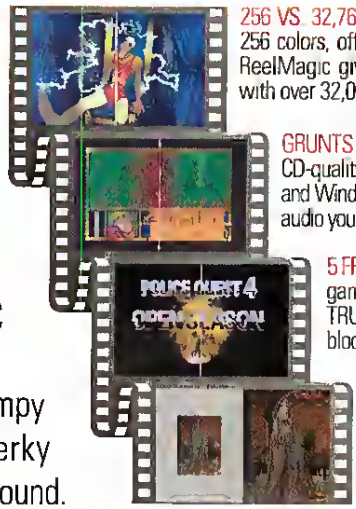

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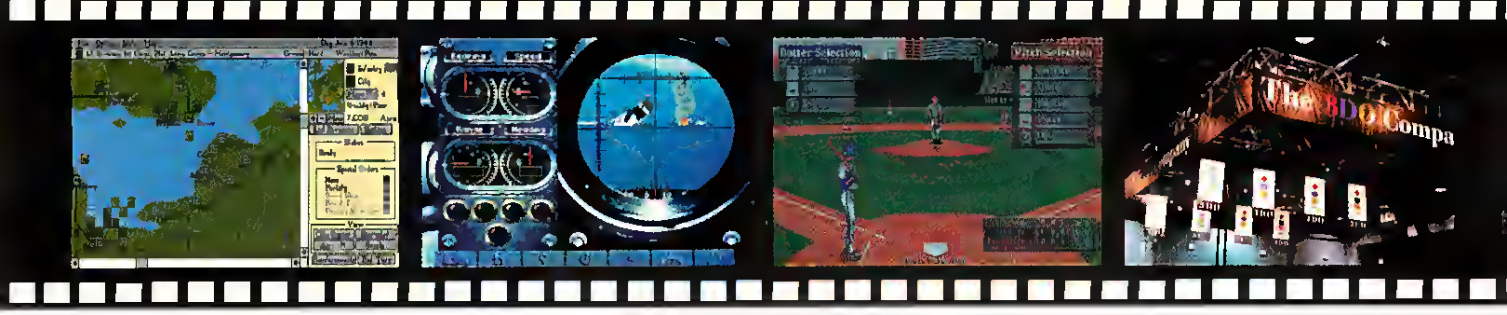

Left to right: D-Day (Impressions), Aces Of The Deep (Dynamix), Front Page Sports Baseball (Dynamix), 3DO was heavily into sports

Software Sorcery was bewitching CES attendees with *Aegis: Guardian of the Fleet.* The game emphasizes both the tremendous defense capacity of this technological marvel and its flagship task force capabilities as well. According to the scenatio, gamets may deploy helicopters, carriers, cruise missiles, or even land-based ait. Moving up in difficulty level offets limited views of the enemy, and advanced AI which responds to evety maneuver. The electtonic countetmeasutes have a good feel to them, and the tandom mission selections add a gteat deal to the teplayability to the CD-based ptoduct.

Jim Rose and Keith Zabalaoui show off Avalon Hill's upcoming computer game lineup.

One of the big sutptises at the show was a CD-ROM on SEGA ftom Extreme called *Third World War.* Solitaire only, it lets the gamer serve as the ruler of a country vying for global domination. Evety country has specific enhanced capabilities: Japan is strong economically, Istael is tough militarily, Libya can ctank out terrorists. Unlike most "game machine" ptoducts, the game is serious in its treatments of chemical and nuclear warfate, which cause you political problems, bring embargoes against you, and can even plunge the world into a nuclear holocaust. Even in conventional warfare, any buildings you destroy have to be tebuilt when you conquet other countries. Shore bombardment, mobilization, 165 different weapons, riots, spy satellites, treaty negotiations, and even the stock market must be balanced to achieve victory in this richly detailed game.

Would-be economic giants can build their empires on a galactic scale with *Mechamander* from Mindcraft. In the far future, Earth's resources have been depleted, and the cosmos must be exploited. Playets ovetsee mining expeditions and military actions versus their competitors, in a cross between *M.U.L.E.* and *Starship Troopers.*

It's A Winner

Battlecruiser 3000 AD (Mission Products) looks like one of the richest strategy games we've seen in a while. Originally designed for Three-Sixty Pacific, this combination space conquest strategy/flight simulator/role-playing game was abandoned by its first publisher because the two yeat project was turning into a fout year project. Now, designer Detek Smart has teamed up with vetetans ftom Velocity Software to ptoduce a huge ptoduct. According to Smart, there will be 5 MB worth of data on the game univetse to explore. Gamers can play fot hours, just exploring. They never have to ttigger the game's plot if they don't want to do so. Casual gamers may be put off by the game's detail level, but the good news is that nearly evetything in the game (except piloting the ctaft duting the flight simulation portion of the game) is menu-driven.

The strategic game is based upon a cosmic "domino theory" whete the Gamulans are taking ovet the galaxy planet by planet. One of the best aspects of the game is its ttteatment of AI. All communiques in the game are patsed and filteted through the neutal-networked AI database. This means that the computer-contiolled races leatn as gamets intetact with the universe. In addition, Smart has applied his experiments in AI to the crew Al. The crew members imptove or devolve accotding to the gamer's perfotmance as captain.

Throwing A Curve? (Sports)

Two of the most exciting sports games are built upon interface and design technology that has already proven successful. Dynamix has a baseball game cut from the same cloth as their *Front Page Sports Football Pro,* and Strategic Simulations, Inc. has recruited Don McFadden's Strategy First crew to cteate a new hockey program with league utilities and interface dtawn from the *Tony LaRussa Baseball II* expetience. SSI is keeping the lattet under wtaps until later this yeat, but Dynamix is attempting to garner an MLBPA license for its product. The game is expected to use a physics-based, as opposed to stat-based, model, but lest stat fans be disappointed, will featute 530 statistical categories. Naturally, it will featute the functionality of the football game, but the interface will featute windowing and pull-down menus that should make the game mote ftiendly than its predecessor. Gamer-defined camera views will play a major tole in the product.

Unnecessary Roughness was being shown by Accolade, even though it had shipped just ptiot to the show (see this issue's "Taking A Peek"). Also, Accolade publicized, but did not demonsttate two other personal computer titles: *Barkley: Shut Up and Jam!* (streetball-style basketball) and *Brett Hull Hockey.*

Meanwhile, game companies were falling all over themselves to put out new versions of best-selling sports games. *John Madden Football* was completely redone for the 3DO format, and looked impressive enough to entice even the most jaded of sports gamers. Sony's ownership of ESPN gives them plenty of heat on the mound, as *ESPN Baseball* for Sega gets teady to ship by May, with the PC vetsion artiving shortly theteafter. *ESPN Football,* however, isn't scheduled to ship until the start of the NFL season. With sound effects from Chris Betman, this may be what *Hardball III* wasn't, especially since it is being developed as a CD-ROM only title. None of the games we viewed were guaranteed modem-capable, something of a sutptise given the "connectivity" buzz at the show.

New golf products continue to appear, including some interesting products on unexpected formats. Panasonic's *True Golf Classics: Pebble Beach Golf Links* for 3DO features CD-sound and full-motion video.

From Those Wonderful Folks Who Gave You Gridlock, Blackouts and Runaway Taxes, Comes Raw Sewage, Yellow Journalism and the Subway at 3 a.m.

Left to right. Theme Park (EA), Detroit (Impressions), True Golf, Pebble Beach (3DO/Panasonic), Breach 3 (Impressions)

Evidently, Panasonic is going toe-to-toe (tee-to-tee?) with *Links 386* (Access), who just released its own Pebble Beach add-on. Virgin is entering the faitway fray, as well, with a new conversion of *Links* for the Sega. Also, a new company called Intellimedia is launching an entire line of spotts instructional programs, led by *ESPN Golf: Lower Your Score With Tom Kite*, whete the format offered by 3DO allows much more interaction than a mere VCR-based system.

In addition to the console games, the Newton has two products for sports fans. *Fingertip For Golf* from Fingertip Technologies uses the Newton's portability to call up stroke information and course layout, as well as to tabulate wagers. The company also plans to have *Stats*, developed with Stats Inc., ready for baseball fanatics to help develop theit own play-by-play commentary, by the opening of the Major League Baseball season.

Divide and Conquer (Strategy Games)

Hybrid games and new innovations on proven concepts pretty well summarizes this year's crop of sttategy games. SSI's *Dark Legions* is a fantasy strategy game that is really mote like the classic *Stratego* than a wargame. *Dark Legions* offers an "ovet the shouldets" view of the game board fot movement and spell-casting with a switch to a top-down view for arcade-style combat. Action zooms in and out when in combat mode to track the player's chatacter. Games can be configured to allow for play sessions as short as 20 minutes or as long as several hours. Modem and network play are supported, but only for two players.

Dark Legions *by SSI offers strategy with a fantasy twist.*

Mindcraft's *Dominion* is a fantasy/strategy in a similar vein. The difference is that *Dominion* takes more of a dynastic perspective than most strategy games. Each king must use his ministers to preside over his realm in both war and peacetime, and short-term trade-offs can be costly in the long run. We also know that the designer of the game has worked very hard on the routines for the attificial opponents.

Bullfrog's *Theme Park*, to be published by Electronic Arts, is a *SimCity*-style game with vibrant colors and child-like animation. The object of the game is to build up an amusement park with the right balance of attractions and vendors to increase attendance and profits. Different tiles are placed as in a Maxis game, but the graphic look is quite different.

What *Theme Park* is to the amusement park business, Impressions' *Detroit* is to the automobile manufacturing business. Instead of placing tiles a la *SimCity*, gamers move about a graphic intetface to schedule research and development, assign assembly workers, plan marketing campaigns, and rake in the profits. The design team has been listening, since it is easy to get a repott from any section of the game at any point in the game play.

With regard to sequels, another Impressions game may disappoint the fans of its predecessors. *Breach 3* uses real-time combat. The good news is that the game suppotts a tree-based campaign and features a mission builder utility. Also, in keeping with Imptessions' IGS (Interlocking Game System), the game plugs into *Rules of Engagement II* for boarding actions. New World Computing has also entered the sequel race with *Heroes of Might & Magic*. Actually, the sttategy game is basically *King's Bounty II* with much bigger character sprites and nicer graphics.

QQP has built most of its reputation on strategy games. In addition to the wargames discussed earlier, the company is expanding its line of abstract strategy games. For example, *Bridge Olympiad* is a simulated international competition that could do for contract bridge what *Solitaire's Journey* did for solitaire. In addition, *Zig Zag* is a word puzzle game that plays something like the table game, *Mastermind*. Finally, *Origamo* is a very attractive puzzle/maze game. Each toom has a different motif which can be anything from ancient Egypt or China to *Alice in Wonderland*. It even has variety in the way gamers can score themselves in puzzle-solving.

And now for something completely different, or maybe not. *Puggsy* is an intetesting Sega-CD game, a non-violent, *Lemmings*-like title designed to appeal to a broad audience. With high quality animation and a CD-quality soundtrack, *Puggsy* offers very addictive game play over 50 levels of mind-twisting puzzles.

And There's More

Of course, the entertainment industry has another tradition, and it was perfectly demonstrated in the show at Treasure Island. Duting one show, the ship sank and the captain went down with his ship. Unfortunately, there was a technical glitch that caused the ship to stay submerged longer than it normally did at the end of the show. The actor playing the captain had a snorkel with which to breathe, but stayed undetwatet a good five ot six minutes extra. He stayed in character the whole time, following that age-old tenet of show business--the show must go on.

That's the good news about this yeat's CES. The show is going on. The special effects are getting bettet, the subject matter is expanding, and new publishers are appearing all the time. That's what we love about the world of computet games--something interesting is always going on. From what we've seen, 1994 should be no exception. Who knows? We *might* even end up with mote substance than glitz. CGW

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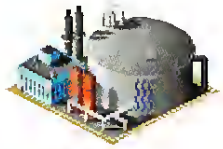

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VOICES IN THE KNIGHT

Sierra's *Gabriel Knight* On CD-ROM

Illustrations by Terese Nielsen

by Charles Ardai

Watching computer games mature is a little like watching a time-lapse photography film of a flower blooming or the giant balloons being inflated for the Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade. It feels like only yesterday that games with spotty animation, minimal sound, no speech, and brainless storylines were hubristically calling themselves "interactive movies," to the amusement and derision of players everywhere. No longer: today we have games like *Gabriel Knight: Sins of the Fathers.*

Even in its floppy-disk incarnation, *Gabriel Knight* contains audio and video that outshines any cartoon on television and a story that could scare the bejeebers out of Stephen King (assuming that after all these years he's got any bejeebers left). Add the improvements the CD-ROM edition introduces and you've got a sterling example of the new generation of games, one of the rare titles that lives up to the promise of the overhyped tag "multimedia."

Gabriel Knight stars—yes, *stars*—Tim Curry; he's got the title role and, I suspect, more air time here than in all of his movies put together. It co-stars such pop-culture luminaries as Michael Dorn (Worf on *Star Trek: The Next Generation*) and Mark Hamill (Luke Skywalker from *Star Wars*) in bravura turns as an ominous voodoo expert and an excitable police officer, respectively. It even finds room for a cameo by that smooth old lizard, Efram Zimbalist, Jr., as a mystical German who holds the key to Gabriel's sinister past.

There are other actors featured, too, of less renown but no less ability: Virginia Capers is a piquant narratress, making each "You can't do that" delicious in her luxurious N'wallins drawl; Leilani Jones plays the exotic and dangerous Malia Gedde to the hilt; and Jim Cummings fleshes out no fewer than seven characters with his gravelly tones, most memorably a no-nonsense desk sergeant at Mark Hamill's police station.

Why focus so much attention on the voice actors and their performances? Because the strongest impression you come away with after playing *Gabriel Knight* on CD is that it is an exceptionally well-performed game. Not a well-written game, though it is that, too, nor a well-designed or -packaged game (though the package of the CD edition is certainly memorable), but a game that is awfully well-performed. The actors don't merely throw their talents into the artistic pot; they take control of the game, commanding the player's attention and adding a whole new layer of texture and reality to the game's various ungodly goings-on.

That the actors grab the spotlight may not be fair to Jane Jensen, who wrote the game, or to Robert Holmes, who composed its score, or to any of the dozens of other artists and behind-the-scenes toilers who brought *Gabriel Knight* from conception to completion. But that's the name of the game: no one remembers the screenwriter of *Bride of Frankenstein* or the composer who worked on *The Shining.* Everyone remembers the stars.

Gabriel Knight: Sins of the Fathers

TITLE	Gabriel Knight: Sins of the Fathers
PRICE	$69.95
SYSTEMS	IBM CD-ROM
REQUIREMENTS	386 or better, 4MB RAM, VGA graphics, CD-ROM drive, Windows 3.1, mouse; supports AdLib, Sound Blaster, PAS, MT-32 and General MIDI sound cards
PROTECTION	None
DESIGNER	Jane Jensen
PUBLISHER	Sierra On-Line Coarsegold, CA (800) 326-6654

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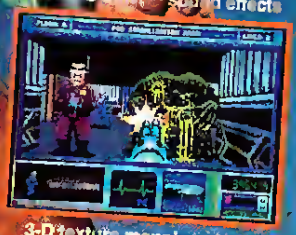
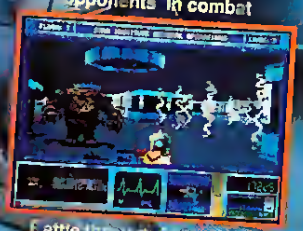
[illegible] music; Intense [illegible] sound effects



3-D texture mapping virtual reality in 256 colors

[illegible] on dozens of vicious opponents in combat



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Blake Stone: Aliens of Gold requires an IBM or 100% compatible computer with 640K RAM, a VGA graphics card, and a hard disk drive. Extended memory (XMS), expanded memory (EMS), joystick, mouse, AdLib, Sound Blaster or compatible cards are optional.

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Circle Reader Service #30

A001CGW

Gabriel Knight is the first authentic all-srar computer game, and as such can afford to showcase its performers as its primary feature.

Is there a downside? Of course; there is always a downside. Here it's thar there is a *lot* of dialogue contained in this game. Most interactions contain a dozen, some even two dozen, different question-and-answer exchanges, any of which rhe player can access more or less at will. The result is that you find yourself having much longer conversations with each character than are really necessary, just to hear all the different, well-performed lines of dialogue. Furthermore, you don'r just click on each topic once; you click on each topic several times, since a single topic will often contain six or seven different bits of dialogue and you never know when the sixth thing a characrer says in response ro Gabriel's "What else do you know about voodoo?" will contain a vital clue to the bloody ritual murders the game wants him to solve. So you keep clicking and clicking and listening and listening.

And enjoying. So what's the problem? The problem is rhat suspense and horror are genres that depend on the relentless, unimpeded unfolding of a story. Comedy is differenr: the mood is not diffused when you spend twenty minutes bantering with the barflies in *Freddy Pharkas.* The mood in *Gabriel Knight,* alas, does occasionally dissipate as one plunges ever deeper into discourses on the Old Country with Gabriel's grandmother. The game always recovers rapidly with yet another murder or disappearance or ambush or nightmare, each guaranteed to quicken rhe player's pulse, but ir has its share of valleys as well as peaks.

One solution might have been to have the topics that

are listed on the conversation menus change color once the player has exhausted all valuable information. Players who are inclined to pursue a conversation further jusr for the joy of making Tim Curry say what you tell him to could do so, while those who want to keep the adrenalin flowing could exit the scene and ger on with the case. Perhaps Sierra will include this feature in *Gabriel Knight 2,* which they tell me they are already working on. For Volume One, players just have to grin and bear it.

Why Is This Knight Different From All Other Knights?

Sierra entered into the creation of *Gabriel Knight* with the intention of reviving what has been at best a sporadically vital genre of computer games. There have been plenty of monsters in games, but there has been precious lirrle horror and even less in the way of suspense. The incomparable Steve Meretzky pulled off the latter in the nail-biting climax of *Planetfall,* and Dave Lebling drummed up some of the former in *The Lurking Horror* (both titles from Infocom and both, notably, text adventures), but recently there haven't been many titles, ler alone good ones, to speak of. *Alone In The Dark,* yes, but try to name another!

Into this vacuum (some might call it a "marker niche") comes Jane Jensen, hor off her triumph as coauthor of the best-selling though somewhat vapid *King's Quest VI.* Her sweet streak having been sared by the adventures of Prince Pubescent in the Land of Cute, Jensen now unleashes her sour, her acrid, her steamy, and her vicious srreaks all ar once. Any game that opens with a woman being burned

Between The Devil And The Deep Blue Sea.

1942
THE PACIFIC AIR WAR

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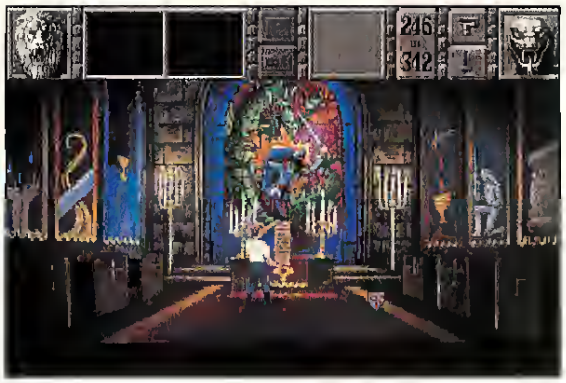
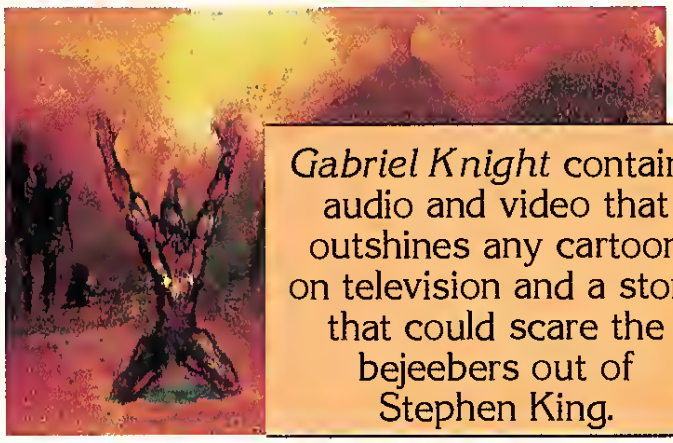
alive, blood spattering a necromantic talisman, and the main character dreaming of being hanged in a crashing lightning storm is as fat from *King's Quest*'s Green Isles as anyone could hope to get.



Gabriel, as the player knows from reading the rather too artsy but still gripping graphic novelette that comes with the game, is the spawn of a Cursed House. An ancestor hired to hunt down and capture a witch in the long hot summer of 1693 found and bedded her instead—then betrayed her to the bloodthirsty mob. Gabriel's family has been plagued with troubled sleep, and worse, ever since.

Jump to the present: Gabriel is a rare book dealer and low-end novelist in the French Quarter of New Orleans, unaware of the legacy he carries in his besmirched soul. The papers are full of stories about a modern voodoo cult and the half-dozen murders it has carried out. Under the pretense of researching his next book, Gabriel looks into the matter. What he finds not only puts him in mortal danger but forces him to take on the ancestral mantle of the *shattenjager*—witch-hunter—at great peril to his immortal (and newly cleansed) soul.



Yes, it's all a bit much, in the way horror stories always are; rather too much to take seriously, in fact, and, sure enough, the horror evaporates once you turn the monitor off. What a spell it weaves, though, while it is on! Each scene is painted realistically, so that the game appears to be taking place in the real world, yet the setting is sufficiently peculiar all by itself that it raises the hackles on the back of your neck. The music is seductive and dark, ditto most of the voices, which seem to rumble out of the pits of the actors' abdomens. Dorn's Dr. John deserves to be singled out: he is wonderfully throaty, only lapsing once or twice into the harsher tones fans think of as "Worf-speak."

The murders are depicted with no shortage of gore, one of several factors that may make *Gabriel Knight* a prime candidate to receive one of the "intended for adults" ratings the software industry is currently hot to impose on its more explicit material. (A grouchy chess player who keeps muttering "sonofabitch" to himself would probably be another.) Yet what makes this game unquestionably a piece of "adult" software is not so much the occasional raw language or image, but its tone and subject matter as a whole.

Gabriel Knight throws the player convincingly into the world of satanism and live sacrifice, of seedy and lecherous New Orleans (exemplified by Knight himself, who is never at a loss for a leer or a muttered innuendo), and of bending the rules till they just about break. At various points, Gabriel impersonates a cop and a priest, uses someone else's credit card to fly around the world, and (most questionable of all) sics a street mime on an unsuspecting victim. It's all harmless enough for players old enough to know what's what, but a good example for the younger set it ain't.

Gabriel Knight contains audio and video that outshines any cartoon on television and a story that could scare the bejeebers out of Stephen King.

The younger set would probably also run into some trouble with the mechanics of the game, which are only partially similar to those in other Sierra games. The familiar command line is there in all its point-and-click glory, but the game's plotting and puzzles are much more complex than usual. The game also relies much more on conversation than is typical for a Sierra game, and specifically on noticing subtle clues in what people tell Gabriel. This is not to say that the game doesn't have its maze—of course it does—and its obligatory pseudo-action sequences, but the emphasis is very much on character interaction.

One consequence is that the characters come to life in a way that no previous Sierra characters have. You don't know what King Graham drinks with breakfast or what Roger Wilco worries about when he turns out the lights at night; with Gabriel, you know both, and many other things beside. Gabriel has the makings of a first-rate series character, albeit a troubled and disturbing one. It will be interesting to see if Sierra has the courage to remain true to the character, following him into whatever dens of depravity his fate leads. If they do, they may have on their hands a very adult work, indeed.

Good Knight

One of many things that make *Gabriel Knight* remarkable is that it infuses the most mundane adventure gaming tasks—scouring one's inventory, for instance—with vibrance and character. For this general level of fun, the actors deserve all the credit: they make even lame gag lines palatable.

What takes the game past "palatable" and even "fun" to "wholly engrossing," on the other hand, is a combination of good acting, good plotting, and good scripting, plus art and music effective enough to permit a real suspension of disbelief. Looking back on the game after you've finished it, it's easy to see that, with all its faux-mythic huggermugger and hysterical visions of evil, *Gabriel Knight* is really a preposterous bit of silliness—but then again, that's also true of Fred Astaire dancing on the ceiling, Arnold blowing up buildings, Harrison Ford fending off Thuggees with his bullwhip, and Anthony Hopkins slavering over his fava beans. Like these bits of cinematic history, but unlike most computer games even today, *Gabriel Knight* is top-notch, Hollywood-quality entertainment. If we are lucky, it might be the start of a trend. **CGW**

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Hell's Bells And Whistles

With *Wolfenstein 3-D* and *Spear of Destiny*, id Software established itself as king of the action-game hill. The outstanding graphics and first-person 3-D environment of these games so convincingly immersed players in their world that some players were known to actually duck and swerve in their seats, and to be noticeably startled when jumped by a lurking Nazi guard. Since these overwhelming successes, id Software has been working hard on their encore while eager gamers have been whispering one word: *DOOM*. It's here, and it was worth the wait.

DOOM casts the player as a courageous Space Marine investigating trouble at a futuristic research base. This investigation quickly becomes a desperate fight for survival, as vicious creatures and dangerous traps threaten the player at every 3-D turn. *DOOM*'s adventure unfolds in three increasingly difficult episodes, "Knee-Deep in the Dead," "The Shores of Hell," and "Inferno." Each episode features a different theme with several locales to explore, and each offers a remarkable variety of scenery, monsters, weapons, and special items to gather, all adding up to a wonderfully involved and engaging game. *DOOM* also represents a huge technical improvement over id's earlier titles, giving the gamers what they asked for, and the industry a new benchmark.

DOOM is easy to install and configure, and it can be up and running in minutes. The screen size, graphics detail, sound, music, and control options are easy to adjust, accommodating a variety of systems and playing preferences. *DOOM* can be controlled with a keyboard, mouse, or joystick, with the ability to custom-configure each controller to the player's taste. Difficulty levels can also be adjusted, helping novice Space Marines have fun without getting their faces quickly chewed off.

Satan's Sensory Symphony

DOOM's first-person 3-D graphics are simply *dazzling*. The detailed textures of the walls, ceilings, and floors, the superb shading effects, and the fluid animation provide the most believable environment I've ever encountered in a PC game. Fully-functional stairs, elevators, and moving platforms are common, with many structures containing two or more levels. The deadly crushing ceiling traps and toxic rivers are beautifully rendered, and are ready to snare a reckless Marine. Shadows, strobe lights, fantastic architecture, and the occasional view of surreal lunar and infernal landscapes combine to form a deliciously nightmarish experience. The macabre imagination of veteran game designer Sandy Petersen (who designed the *Call of Cthulhu* role-playing game for Chaosium) is very evident in *DOOM*'s devilishly constructed levels and eerie theme, giving the lavish graphics a brooding, sinister flavor. The game's first-person view is top-notch, incorporating a variety of subtle improvements over id's earlier titles. The weaving and bobbing viewpoint that results from running and jumping is a wonderful touch that's almost too natural to notice!

Owners of a Sound Blaster or compatible sound card are going to love *DOOM*'s superb digitized effects. The monsters growl, scream, roar, squeal and hiss, while the stoic Marine winces in pain and gasps for breath. Anxiously listening as the breathy snarling of approaching creatures grows louder is not just thrilling, but downright spooky! The aggressive weapon sounds are equally realistic, capable of rattling tooth fillings if piped through amplified speakers. The background music is a good touch, going from fast and frantic to chilling, skillfully capturing the ambiance of each scenario.

Something Under The Bed Is Drooling

It won't take long to encounter *DOOM*'s eager monsters. As loathsome as the Nazis of *Wolfenstein 3-D* were, *DOOM*'s enemies are positively despicable! From possessed ex-Marines to drooling denizens of Hell itself, gamers will find themselves being chewed, clawed, scorched and shot. The

DOOM

TITLE	DOOM
PRICE	$40.00
SYSTEM	IBM
REQUIREMENTS	386DX or better (486 recommended), 4MB RAM, VGA graphics, 17MB hard disk space, supports Sound Blaster and compatible sound cards
PROTECTION	None
DESIGNERS	John Carmack, Sandy Petersen, John Romero, Dave Taylor
PUBLISHER	id Software, 1-800-ID-GAMES

eight different types of "normal" monsters are very dangerous, possessing unique attacks, intelligence, durability and voices. The cleverly-designed Spectres are particularly tough, sporting an invisibility effect very similar to that of the otherworldly antagonist of *Predator*. To make matters worse, each episode has at least one fearsome super-beast that must be dispatched to continue the adventure.

While the monsters are tough and plentiful, they hate each other nearly as much as they hate the player's heroic Marines. Using this enmity to advantage, a savvy player can cause different species of angry creatures to inadvertently attack one another. When the sibling rivalry turns nasty, the player can dash away and watch the fracas from a safe distance. With the huge end-level guardians often surrounded by an escort of different monsters, causing a family feud is often a winning strategy!

With the bad guys enjoying numerical superiority, players will appreciate the handy selection of potent weapons. The pistol with which the player begins the game won't do much, but pump shotguns, rapid-firing multi-barrel machine guns, and powerful rocket launchers can be found early in the game. Diligent players can also unearth plasma rifles and the Ultimate Weapon, the BFG 9000. Those in dire straits can always resort to fisticuffs, but finding a chainsaw lying around can add new meaning to the term "wet work." While I found the shotgun to be the most useful for "close encounters," many situations seem tailor-made for a particular weapon. During the numerous fire-fights, veterans of id's earlier games will notice some nice new touches. Errant bullets realistically ricochet off walls, while rounds hitting their mark tear chunks of flesh from the unfortunate target. A particularly amusing feature is the ability to send a charging monster hurtling backwards with a close-range blast from the shotgun. It's also not uncommon to see creatures tumbling off ledges when breathing their last, reminiscent of a Wild West shoot-out. Gamers who like their computer combat brutal and bloody will find *DOOM* serves up an all-you-can-shoot buffet.

DOOM also has many useful items scattered around to help the player survive, evade, resist and escape. Extra ammunition, healing kits, various types of armor, and high-capacity backpacks are valuable finds. Certain computer chips augment the handy automatic mapping function, revealing that level's complete floor plan, secret doors, and hidden rooms. Various mystical globes can give a health-point supercharge, grant partial invisibility, or even temporary invulnerability. My personal favorite was the Berserker Pack, which provides tremendous hand-to-hand combat ability as well as a health-point boost. Astute players will also find the toxic-waste barrels scattered throughout the complex make great bombs. When faced with a room-full of snarling beasties, shooting a barrel will cause the contents, and any nearby monsters, to detonate in a gratuitous display of destruction.

Hell, Hell, The Gang's All Here!

Perhaps the most exciting feature of *DOOM* is its multiplayer capability. Up to four players can join in over an IPX-protocol network. Version 1.2 of *DOOM* also provides modem play at speeds of 9600 baud or faster. Multiplayer games can be played cooperatively, or as cutthroat DeathMatches where anything that breathes is fair game. Cooperative sessions are a great deal of fun, and can easily become rollicking all-night affairs. Many gamers are going to have flashbacks of the movie *Aliens*, as they and their fellow Space Marines face the lurking terrors of *DOOM* as a close-knit team.

On the other hand, the open-ended DeathMatches may be the most intense gaming experience available today. The ever-present monsters are bad enough, but add some twisted human opponents looking to use chain saws on each other and there's a seriously antisocial situation in the making. During one particularly ugly DeathMatch, I became so fixated with stalking a human opponent that an unseen Spectre was able to sneak up and jump my hapless Marine from behind. The resulting adrenaline surge, mixed with the tremendous suspense of the hunt, actually caused me to break my cherished Thrustmaster joystick! That's how intense multiplayer *DOOM* can get! There have been reports of major corporations and even other computer-game companies *[and computer game magazines -Ed]* issuing memos specifically forbidding their employees from playing *DOOM* on company time. Jay Wilbur, CEO of id Software, summed it up best: "If you haven't played multiplayer *DOOM*, you haven't played *DOOM!*"

Misfires

With some companies releasing bug-filled games that are little more than boxed beta-copies, I'm pleased to say that I've encountered no technical problems with *DOOM*. This is pretty remarkable considering the crude network environment and variety of machines it was reviewed on. The only complaint I've heard more than once refuted to difficulties running *DOOM* under OS/2. The only quibble I can muster regards the ho-hum endgame. The ultimate end-level monster was too easy to kill, and the following "attaboy" sequence was something of a let-down. However, given *DOOM*'s many strengths, these minor complaints carry very little weight.

Locked, Cocked, and Ready to Rock

DOOM is a virtuoso performance. Stunning graphics, pulse-pounding sound, intense gameplay, and multiplayer mayhem combine to form what is probably the best action game to date. Those squeamish about intense violence, dark undertones, and mangled joysticks should probably look for more pedestrian fare. However, hot-blooded players looking to have the time of their gaming lives are simply going to love *DOOM*.

(The author can be reached for further comment on America On-Line at Walker34, or CompuServe at 73472,3113) CGW

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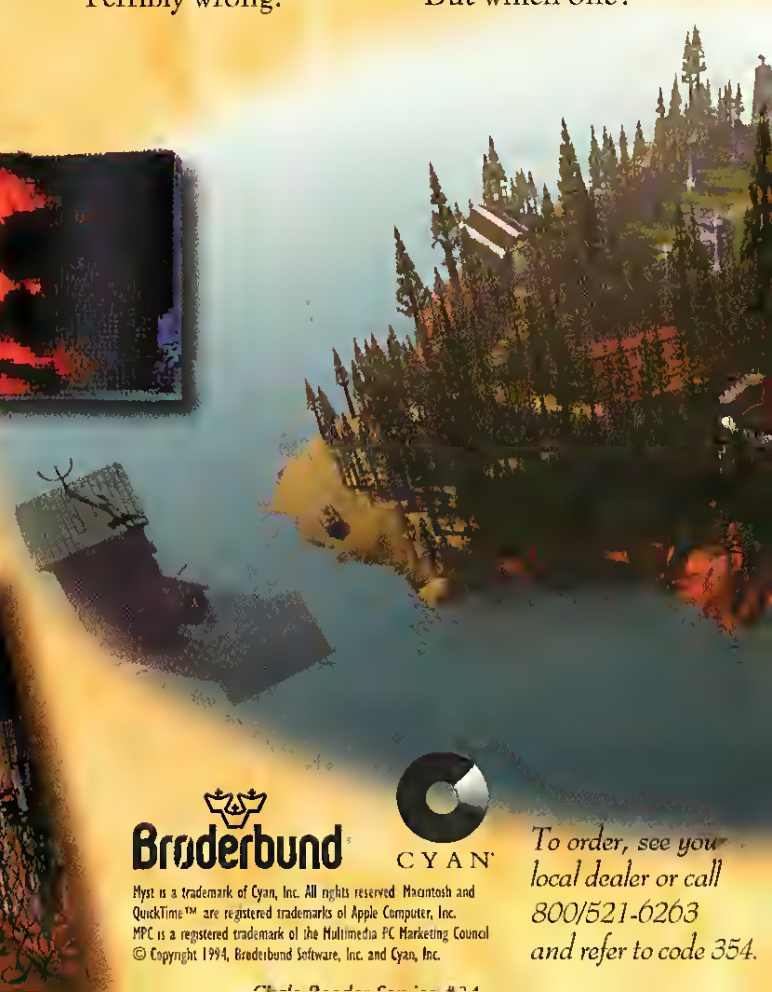

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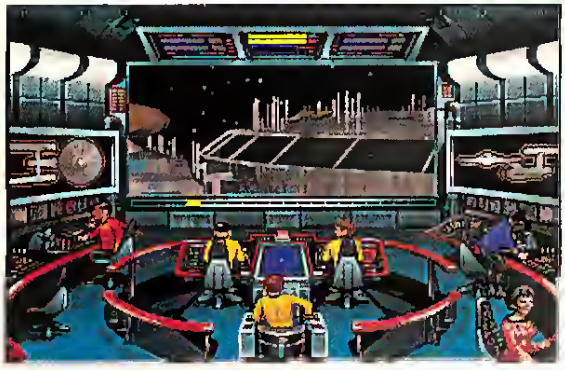
Passing Judgment On A Pop Icon

Kirk, Spock, And The Star Trek Gang Meet New Galactic Dangers In *Judgment Rites*

by Allen Greenberg

For Star Ttek fans, 1991 was a significant year. In the yeat which matked the 25th annivetsary of the show's ptemiere on network television, the casts of two generations stood side by side with their creator, justifiably proud of the series' ongoing success. It was a yeat of heattfelt farewells, as Star Trek lost its creator, and the otiginal crew appeared in what was stated to be their last feature film. Talk of future Star Ttek projects seemed ubiquitous, while doomsaying critics of The Next Generation eatned a spot on the galaxy's list of endangered species.



For computer gamers who had not enjoyed a good ride in the captain's chair of the Enterprise since the otiginal Star Trek appeared on mainframe computets some 20 years ago, it was the year that the classic Trek characters were finally given respectable teptesentation in intetactive entertainment. Interplay's *Star Trek: 25th Anniversary* game was a collection of episodes belonging to a season-that-nevet-was from the original series. The episodes were presented in standatd, gtaphic adventure format and were interspersed with outet-space combat simulation.

In consttast, 1994 is overshadowed by embittered Stat Ttck actots-turned-writers, and the uncertain transition of Picatd and Co. ftom the small screen to the big sctеen. In spite of this, computer gamers who enjoyed Interplay's vetsion of the otiginal series will be pleased to learn that with *Star Trek: Judgment Rites*, yet more adventures have been tescued from the obscurity of non-existence. Once again, boldly tetutning to where no man had gone before, Intetplay embraces the original series with all its quirks, clichés and characteristics, endearing the game to those who have followed the Star Trek saga for ovet 25 yeats.

Judgment Rites is presented in the same multi-episode format as the original *25th Anniversary* game and expands upon many of its features. While the ship-to-ship arcade exercises remain, players are no longer forced to participate in them against their will. Further, those who do participate now have two levels of difficulty from which to choose. The individual adventures are far more interesting, and several minor chatactets from the show have been given significantly larger roles in the game. In the background, a new alien tace judges the crew's actions and waits for the tight moment to introduce themselves.

Cling On Combat

It is somewhat easier to imagine Luke Skywalker as a participant in the battle sequences rather than the command ctew of the Enterprise. In combat, the large starship suddenly becomes as agile as a small fighter in a zero-graviry dogfight. These sequences may be quite challenging, but they may also seem somewhat out of place here, even to those who are normally inclined towatds arcade games. Players who have been discouraged by their presence in the past should note that Interplay has since issued a patch progtam which allows those sequences to be bypassed in the *25th Anniversary* game. Even when playcrs choose to play the combat portions in *Judgment Rites* they will find these sequences to be far less pivotal, and far less abundant, than they wete in *25th Anniversary*. Ironically, those in search of additional combat need only violate the game's navigation chart in order to be confronted by one of the galaxy's nastier species, apparently putting in overtime as copy-ptotection policc. The easicr level of combat is similar to that found in *25th Anniversary*. The mote difficult level is indeed quite hazardous fot the casual space pilot.

At times, it seems that enemies are able to dance in effortless circles atound the slow moving Entetprise. However, even under the most difficult circumstances, it is still possible to win out by constantly maneuveting so that no one shield is subjected to a steady battering. It is necessary to blast an enemy with a dozen or more solid, unintetrupted hits in otder to send it tunning. During combat, playets ate no longet restticted to a fotwatd point of view; thete are now six views ftom which to observe the action. Also on the bridge are the familiar damage display and control functions, "bad-guy" tadat, and wide-screen view option. Unfortunately, aft and lateral weaponry are still not available. Players still have access to ship's phasers and photon torpedoes. Photon torpedoes are slow to reload, require the weapons officer to lead the tatget by a gteater distance, and delivet a

Star Trek: Judgment Rites

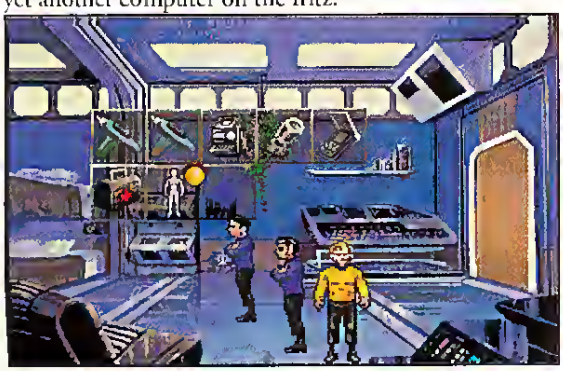
TITLE:	Star Trek: Judgment Rites
PRICE:	$59.95
SYSTEM:	IBM
REQUIREMENTS:	386-16MHz or better, 2MB RAM, VGA graphics, 27MB hard disk space, supports AdLib, Sound Blaster, Pro Audio Spectrum and Roland sound boards
PROTECTION:	Documentation look up
PUBLISHER:	Interplay Productions Inc. Irvine, CA (714) 553-6678

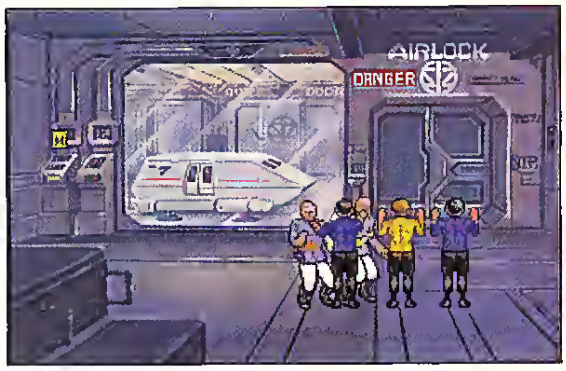
more powerful blast. Phasers are weaker but recharge more quickly and are easier to aim. A very welcome addition to *Judgment Rites* is the ability to use the ship's computer to lock either weapon on the enemy ship. While not always successful, this device does allow the player to imitate the cast member of his or her choice yelling, "Phasers locked on target!"

To Explore Strange New Worlds

Of course, it's not the weaponry that attracts legions of Star Trek fanatics to the 23rd century; it's the characters, their relationships with each other, as well as with the unknown, that has made the series so popular. *Judgment Rites* includes eight adventure episodes featuring those characters, in which some unacceptable situation in the galaxy must be put to rights. As in the first game, the player is responsible for making all of the decisions for Captain James T. Kirk. For the most part, it is science officer Spock and chief medical officer McCoy who stand ready to carry out those decisions. However, *Judgment Rites* allows communications officer Uhura, navigator Chekov, and chief engineer Scott each to have a turn at their Captain's side. In general, this collection of episodes is less uniform and predictable than in the first game, and reflects a greater degree of thought and creativity.

Each episode begins with a title and brief creative credits, as the Enterprise makes its opening fly-by in the background. A message from Starfleet Command follows, informing Kirk of his next destination and the details of his mission. "Federation" reunites Kirk with the deranged villain thought destroyed in the final battle of the *25th Anniversary* game. "Sentinel" is a familiar Star Trek plotline in which Kirk must pull the plug on a computer that has enslaved a race of primitives. "No Man's Land" is a charming story that recalls a "proto-Q" character, Trelane. This episode feels classically Star Trek, as Kirk discovers a village whose occupants believe they are living in Germany during Earth's first world war. "Light and Darkness" is an interesting, yet brief story that mixes good, evil, biology, and yet another computer on the fritz.





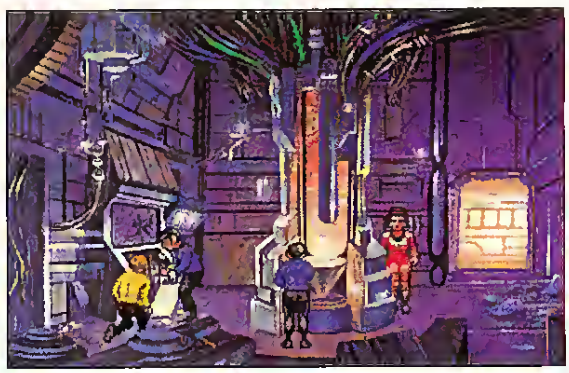
"Voids" may be the most intriguing story of the collection, and is the only one which takes place on board the Enterprise. "Museum Piece" is a hostage story that calls on Scotty's ability to tinker with outdated machinery as much as it does Kirk's diplomacy. "Though This be Madness..." is probably the most difficult exercise to complete, and is spread out like a candy dish filled with Star Trek goodies: Klingons, malfunctioning computers, insanity, compassion and violence. It also leads into the final challenge, "...Yet There is Method in it." This brings Kirk face to face with aliens who have presumably been observing his actions since the beginning of the game. For the most part, it is not a conventional puzzle-type challenge and requires Kirk to engage in a fair amount of debate with the aliens as well as his followers, including a Klingon captain.

While the *25th Anniversary* led up to a final, nerve-taxing battle in space, *Judgment Rites* climaxes with an intimidating conversation with the alien observers. This is perhaps more appropriate to a Star Trek adventure in that it calls on Kirk to debate the Human/Vulcan/Klingon condition in the fashion necessary before screen pyrotechnics made impossibly bright explosions an obligatory cinematic climax. While this hefty dose of philosophical exchange would probably have pleased Gene Roddenberry, there will doubtless remain a group of die-hard alien-killers whose instincts will cry out at the injustice of a non-violent ending.

"Most Intriguing, Captain"

Visually, *Judgment Rites* has been nicely upgraded. There is a tremendous amount of detail in each scene, and nowhere more than on the bridge of the Enterprise. It is a pleasure, once again, to see how we imagined tabletop computers in the '60s. Away from the bridge, each of the main characters reflects his trademark posture: Kirk is slightly tense, Spock coolly studies his surroundings, while Dr. McCoy is clearly annoyed at something. The Enterprise and the various other space ships, both in and out of battle, are rendered with a great deal of care. The results are dramatic and very impressive. There is also an abundance of sound effects taken from the original series, as is much of the program's wonderful musical score. From the moment the program boots up, Star Trek fans will feel right at home.

The mechanics of the game are much like the original. Kirk has the option to observe, take, or manipulate an object. He may speak with anyone, or instruct one of his companions to act. The player may also directly call on the medical scanner or scientific tricorder, provided Spock or McCoy are available to use them. There are no disposable security guards



in this game, and there are far fewer opportunities for Kirk to die. Nonetheless, such opportunities do occur, so it is still a good idea to save the game regularly. The game may be played using only the keyboard, although a joystick or mouse is strongly recommended. The program occupies 27 megabytes on hard disk, plus additional space during the installation process. Installing the program can take as long as two hours, but thankfully the installer need not be present during the majority of this process.

Judgment Rites may easily slip by at warp speed in the hands of an experienced adventure game player, who may feel that the eight episodes are both too few and too brief. Others may still wish for combat sequences that are less awkward and allow for some degree of strategy. Despite their complaints, it would be a shame for Star Trek fanatics to miss out on *Judgment Rites*; there has yet to be a better opportunity to interactively experience the 23rd Century. **CGW**

The Killing Game

Police Quest 4 Explores The Brutal Realities Of Police Work

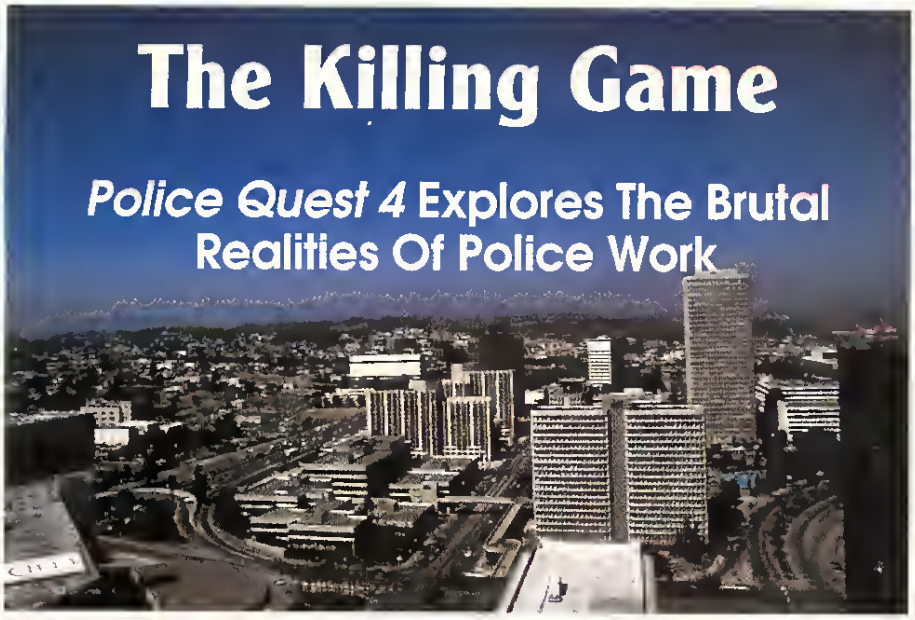


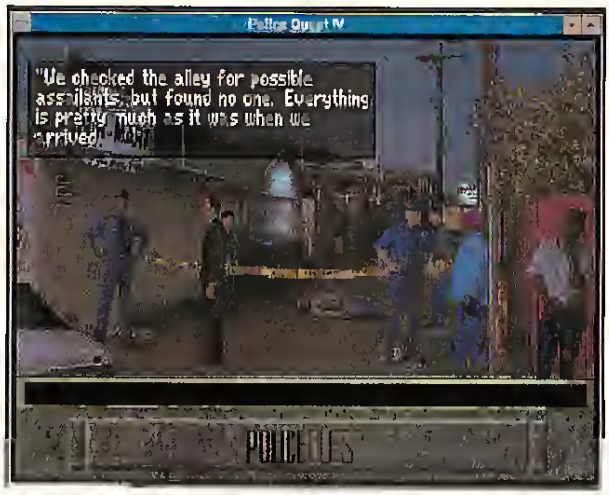
Photo by Susan Zurawik

by Dennis Owens

Police Quest 4: Open Season is not a pleasant game, but then, Sierra On-Line's series has always been ambitious. Its attempts to combine playability with the reality of detective work has always required the *PQ* series to balance carefully the drudgery, boredom, cynicism, and horror of real homicide investigation with the elements that go into a successful game. *Open Season* does succeed in that balance. However, it does so at so many levels, that to consider the game merely in terms of its entertainment value would be to miss its larger implications about our society and its struggle against the drug machine and violent crime in general.

First, though, the fact that the game requires us to face those implications is an indication of its strength as commentary. Surely, when Tammy Dargan, the former producer of "Ametica's Most Wanted," the Powers That Be at Sietta On-Line, and Datyl F. Gates, the former Chief of Police in Los Angeles, decided to create *Open Season*, they were not unaware of the game's potential implications. Their decision to make the game as realistic as possible was, in effect, a decision to portray urban realities and all of their raw, tragic contradictions without comment—and nothing is more political than the truth. Indeed, when the player's partner, Hal Bottoms, complains bitterly that he's a diabetic, on his third wife, who has "seen things no man is supposed to," the ability of truth to destroy people's lives is vivid, almost disarming, and terrifying.

The fiction of the game is simple: the player portrays Detective John Carney, lead investigator of the death of Detective Bob Hickman, whose body is found mutilated, tortured, and



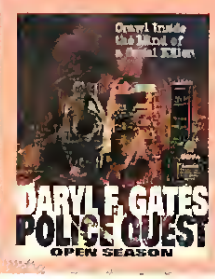
semi-nude behind a convenience store in South Central Los Angeles. The player must follow a watered-down version of police procedure to solve the murder, which includes the collection of evidence, questioning of witnesses and collaterals, filling out seemingly endless amounts of paperwork, tracking down leads and contacts, schmoozing with fellow officers, dumping money into vending machines, and much pointing and clicking—most of which is covered in the abridged Los Angeles Police Department manual included with the game.

It is in this pointing and clicking, however, that the game reveals its one weakness: the limits of its genre. That a playet unsure of what to do next must move the mouse all over the screen and repeatedly, desperately, click and point is a noticeable flaw in a game designed to be so seamlessly authentic. Often, how much an astute detective/player notices may depend on the resolution of his monitor or the accuracy of his mouse. Especially in a game as linear as *Open Season*, the incredible power of the game is replaced by the frustrating teminder that graphic adventures, at times, ate little mote than glamotized text games. It wouldn't have been unteasonable, it would seem, in a game that comes on 12 high-density disks, to include a feature that would highlight the names of important items when the pointer passed over them.

Open Season repeatedly bludgeons us with reality in much the same metaphorical way as Detective Hickman must have been tortured before his mutder. For instance, at one point Catney must discuss Hickman's death with Katherine Hickman, the slain detective's wife. Although he tries to console her, he cannot mask the real reason he has come: his job requires him to. When he questions her about Hickman's drug abuse and het husband's increasing inability to separate his work ftom his personal life, Carney is doing the same thing Hickman did; he's failing to step away from the job long enough simply to be, to feel, and to treat anothei human—in this case, the stunned, grieving widow of a longtime friend—with simple, unobtrusive compassion.

That the game includes the player in this intrusion, is, of coutse, an astounding, overwhelming accomplishment. The player cares nothing about

Police Quest 4: Open Season

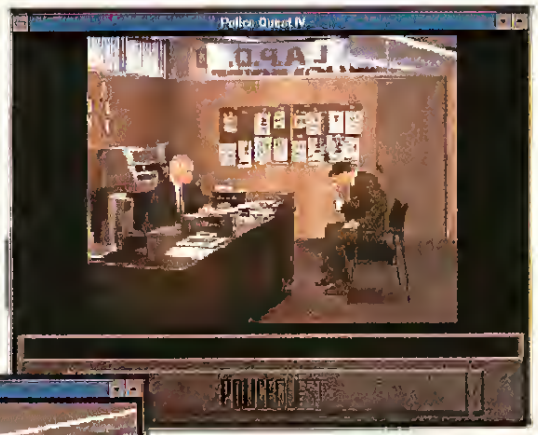


TITLE	Police Quest 4: Open Season
PRICE:	$69.95
SYSTEM	IBM
REQUIREMENTS:	386-25MHz or better, 4MB RAM, VGA graphics, 22MB hard drive space, mouse, supports Windows 3.1, supports all major sound cards
DESIGNERS	Tammy Dargan, Daryl F. Gates
PUBLISHER.	Sierra On-Line Coarsegold, CA (209) 683-4468

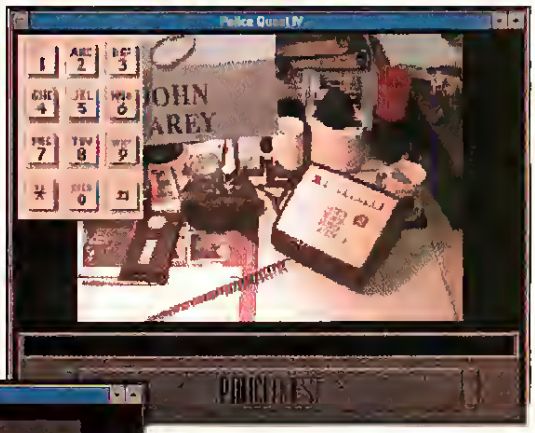
this woman; she is simply a part of a puzzle to be solved in the fetteting out of the killet. After forcing Katherine Hickman in tears ftom the room, Carney thinks nothing of casually gtilling Valerie, theit young daughter, ot of searching a part of the house which she mentions; the player probably won't, either. It's not until the second visit to the house that the player realizes thete might have been a mote humane and ethical way to proceed.

Many games ovet the years have encouraged that lack of consideration for NPCs. The tendency to slaughtet all and take all in role-playing games has been so pervasive that the few games which punish such behavior could be counted on one hand. But to tun actoss such selfishness in a game like this seems incredibly damning—and heartrending—because it's true to life. We treat each othet, the game implies, in our attempts metely to cope with the problems with which we ate faced, like NPCs.

In that irony lies but one of the many strengths of *Open Season.* Its accuracy forces the player to considet issues that lie far beyond the typical scope of most computer games. The distinction between behaviot in game-play and behaviot in real life, fot instance, calls to mind the ongoing debate ovet the effect of televised violence on its viewets, ot of pornography on the attitudes of its purchasers toward women—and may indicate why so many more fantasy role-playing games exist than do those teflecting real life situations. The teality in the game's presentation of a confrontation between Carney and a television journalist, each of whom would argue that he was merely trying to do his best to fulfill his duty to society, is complex and fairly drips with the frustration inhetent in the telationship between the police—dedicated to preserving justice thtough action and investigation, and the journalists—dedicated to the same end through disclosute and debate. Carney's later inability to explain to a storekeepet why the televised scene appeated as it did involves many of the conflicting values of contemporary society. Few realistic depictions of societal misperception could ptesent that conflict as accurately as, say, the NPC in *Ultima V* does when he asks, "Do you know Lord Blackthorne? No? Then how do you judge him?"



Indeed, the *Ultima* seties depicts many of the struggles implicit in *Open Season* mote effectively than does this one game. *The Black Gate,* fot instance, freed of the necessity to be tiue to life, easily and directly examines the implications of class warfare on society. *Open Season* can only do so indirectly—by forcing the curious player to wonder why gang warfare occurs as it does, why the police are perceived as they are, and what would cause the mother of a horribly murdered child to refuse to cooperate fully with those dedicated to bringing his mutdetet to justice. However, *Ultima* has addressed those societal questions ovet many years; *Open Season* attempts to do so in one game.



That it accomplishes its task is notewotthy. The game draws us in; it surrounds us with a reality that is horrifying because it is our own. From the opening scene, when we realize that our character icon is faceless, it atttacts us. Scott McCloud, in his book *Understanding Comics,* muses that the compelling powet of the cartoon face is in its ambiguity. "The cartoon is a vacuum," he says, "into which our identity and awateness ate pulled, an empty shell that we inhabit which enables us to travel in anothet tealm. We don't just observe the cattoon, we become it." In much the same way, the good detective attempts to enter the mind of the ctiminal. There are reasons for everything, he understands, and in realizing that, he deciphers clues, pieces togethet motives, and visualizes scquences in which criminal events occurred. In effect, he becomes the criminal. Chief Gates knows that. Tammy Dargan knows that.

The VGA gtaphics are photo-realistic. If anything, that realism adds to the grimness and sense of pressure which an actual homicide investigation entails. The scote, by Neal Grandstaff, is moody and evocative. The overall sense of *Police Quest 4* is of a tight package designed for those willing not to step into the shoes of a flatfoot ttying to ttack down a gangster, but, instead, of a real-life investigatot trying to untangle the knots of circumstance which lead to violence and horror.

The contemporary detective stoty is not about rain-soaked stteets ot dames so hardened that their beaury is less mutable only when compated to their cold, cynical hearts, but about class warfare and poverty so extreme and telative that hope can only exist through the desperation of violence and crime. *Open Season* tells that story magnificently. Not for the immature. **CGW**

To read Kasparov's mind, simply refer to the second board

[BEFORE]

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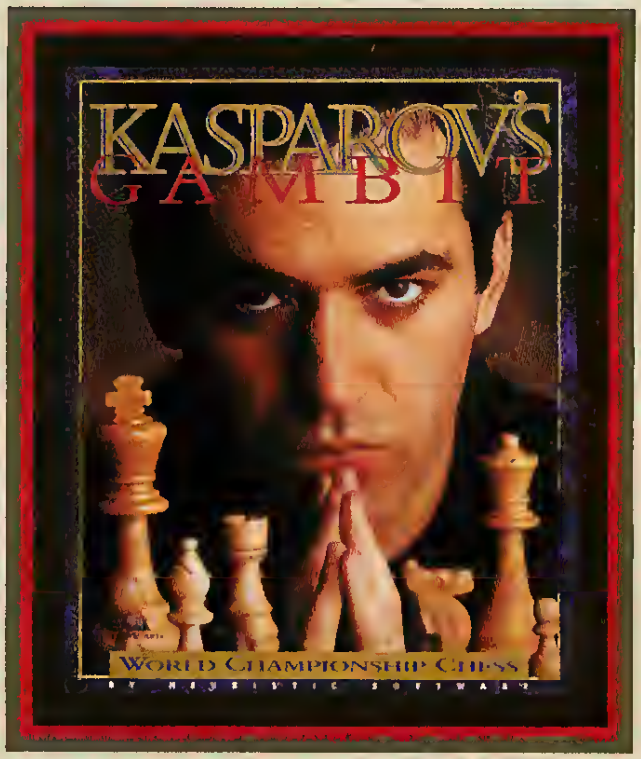

There's even **a second board,** which allows you to **visualize the strategies** Kasparov suggests. You can also customize most aspects of your opponent's game, giving you a virtually **infinite pool of challengers.**

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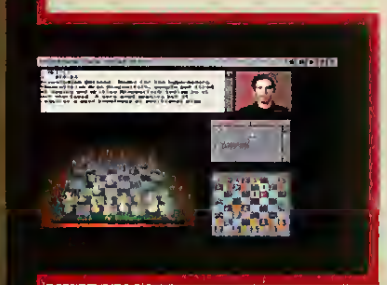
[AFTER]



As you improve, you can customize opponents to suit your game

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Go, Go Syd's Racers

Syd Mead And CyberDreams Team Up In *CyberRace*

by Paul C. Schuytema

War has always been an inefficient and messy means of settling a conflict, and to this day humans seem to prefer armed violence to deal with their differences. It should come as no surprise then, that in the far, far fictional future of Cyberdreams' *CyberRace*, when our galaxy opened up its mysteries to reveal several races besides the Earth-bound Terrans, war was called upon to settle the disputes over territory and power-sharing.

As the story goes, the Terrans had a particular hatred for the demonic race known as the Kaladasians, and this hatred was keenly reciprocated. For decades the wars and battles raged, leaving millions dead and the political map of the galaxy changing by the day.

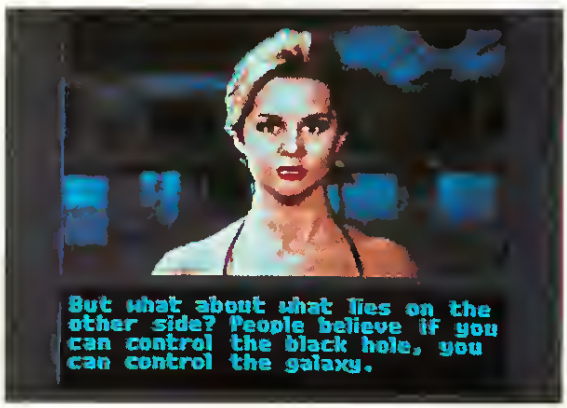
One particular battle was especially messy. A Terran battle cruiser had made a routine raid of a Kaladasian outpost. As the cruiser made its escape, a Kaladasian Dreadnought fell into pursuit and let loose two pulses from a newly developed graviton beam. One pulse destroyed the cruiser, while the other plunged into the system's star. The star went nova, destroying the entire system in a single stroke, and then collapsed back into itself as a black hole.

Both the Kaladasians and the Terrans were appalled by the senseless destruction war had wrought, and they decided to create another venue for settling conflict. The CyberRace was born.

CyberRace is a futuristic race simulator inspired by the fertile imagination of Syd Mead, an artist/designer whose credits include city and vehicle design for *Blade Runner*, spaceship design for *Aliens* and *2010*, as well as concept-car design for Ford. *CyberRace* tells an evolving story, tracing the political maneuverings of the Kaladasians and the Terrans as they jockey for position to control the resources of the black hole, which has the very real possibility of being a gateway to riches and technology hitherto unknown.

Our central character is Shaw, who is still reeling in the emotional turbulence of his father's death. His father was one of the greatest cyber racers, and after defeating the Kaladasian champion, Mugyor, he was destroyed by Mugyor in an "accidental" burst from his laser cannons as the sleds returned to the pits.

In your role as Shaw, you are uninterested in becoming a cyber racer, but Dobbs, a technocratic yes-man for the Terran Empire, has different plans for your future. By kidnapping your beloved Alyssia, Dobbs has found an effective way to get you to drive for the Terrans. Failure to cooperate means that Alyssia will die. Winning consistently, on the other hand, results in freedom and riches for both you and Alyssia.



A Day At The Races

While the framework of the game supports an evolving story, the heart and soul of the game is the sled racing. Using voxel graphics, similar technology to that employed in Nova Logic's *Comanche: Maximum Overkill*, the rolling terrain of the race course is vividly modeled.

The races, at their most basic level, are several-lap affairs, following a course laid down over the terrain by holographic beacons. In your race for the finish line, you compete against 14 other sleds from four other species. To make the race more competitive, the sleds can be outfitted with any manner of offensive or defensive weaponry, from lasers to anti-grav mines to holographic projectors. Racing well earns extra credits that can be used to buy more advanced weaponry or some extra goodies from the black market.

Race day begins with an all-too-brief overview of the race by Nardo, your crew chief, and then an opportunity to update or outfit your sled with an assortment of goodies to improve your racing chances. Then it's off to the race.

It was startling to find that there is no real start to the race. After 10 seconds of CD access, you are dropped immediately into the race in progress. The sudden cut without any green light is very disorientating, and until you get used to it, the start can mean the difference between winning and losing. So, the first order of business is to avoid the chaos at this pseudo-start, swerving clear of the other sleds to get out into the open. There seems to be a bug in the game which pulls the sled's control to the left when faced with a screen full of opponents, but control returns after a few seconds.

Once underway, you can take a breath and marvel at the scenery. The graphics are spectacular (though not quite up to *Maximum Overkill*'s level), and the painted stellar backgrounds are amazing. Rich colors give an

CyberRace

TITLE:	CyberRace
PRICE:	$69.95
SYSTEM:	IBM
REQUIREMENTS:	386-20MHz, 4MB RAM VGA graphics, CD-ROM drive; supports AdLib and Sound Blaster sound cards
PROTECTION:	None
PUBLISHER:	Cyberdreams Woodland Hills, CA (818) 223-9990

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orherworldly feel to the race course, and the opposing sleds are rendered in good detail.

The cockpit for the Terran sled, although graphically uninspired, is very functional. Three-quarters of the screen is filled with the forward view, and a small monitor below can be switched to display left, right, rear and statistics views. There is an effective radar screen, a weapons screen, and a damage/shield-strength indicator.

Flying the sled is basically a matter of steering left and right with the joystick (the keyboard is supported, but I wouldn't recommend its use). Pushing forward on the stick accelerates the sled, and pulling back slows it down, but brakes can be applied for even more stopping power. The ship's alritude is controlled automatically, so you don't have to worry about bottoming out or flying too high. With a Thrustmaster joystick and all of the visual controls, rhe game plays with a single hand, and after several races to get comfortable with all the gizmos, nearly everything is useful and easy to access.

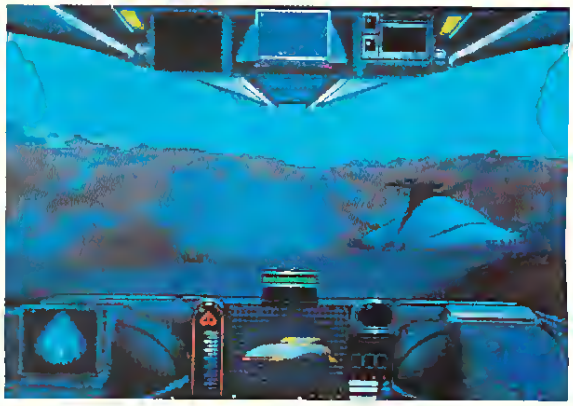
When hit by fire from opponents, your sled is stopped in its tracks and spins for several seconds, whether or not the shields absorbed all of the damage. This was a good design feature, because it penalizes you in rime fot a mistake, allowing orher sleds to zip past. Of-

fensively, even a hit on an opponent with the most simple of weapons can give you an envelope of opportunity to attempr a pass.

At the conclusion of rhe race, you are presented with a screen of statisrics showing rhe finish order of the race, as well as the damage to yout sled. While the background graphics are attractive, rhere is no additional fanfare for winning a race, and Dobbs is extremely stingy with his praise (after two wins in a row, I was called a mediocre driver). While winning allows Shaw to spend a few moments with Alyssia, I would have liked the game ro factor in the race's resulrs and Shaw's performance more carefully inro the evolving plot. More penalties for losing and fanfare for winning would have been a nice touch.

The sounds, or absence thereof, are the weakest part of the racing. The sled moves along silenrly, without so much as an engine whine to indicate changes in speed, and the background noise is filled with random, silence-filling booms from impossibly far away. Sometimes a missile or mine hit elicits no sound ar all.

But on the whole, the race portion of *CyberRace* is a load of fun, and the ability to actually use all of your sled's resources makes the race an interesting offensive battle. The only problem might be a quickly diminishing level of challenge: once you figure out rhe control sysrems and master a few driving tticks, the game becomes fairly easy.



The Need For Mead

Though the racing simulation is strong, the overall package comes up short in some ways. *CyberRace* has been extensively hyped as a Syd Mead ctearion ("from rhe man who brought you *Blade Runner*"), but sadly, *CyberRace* does not have the holistic feel of a Mead design. The haunting *CyberRace* painting and the package design are vintage Mead, and it's obvious rhat Mead did the basic sled designs, but on the whole it seems as if he were used more as a selling point for the product. Cyberdreams seems to have missed an excellent opportunity to create a truly unique ambiance for the game. For instance, the cut-scene locations, the sled hanger, and the sled's controls are visually very run-of-the-mill (somerimes very pootly rendered, as if added as an afterthought), and could have been much more spectacular with Mead's help. From a gamer's perspective, Mead's design work comes across as more hype than substance.

Another weak point is the nattarive framework of the game. Cyberdreams has atrempted to infuse the gameplay with a larget-than-life struggle by braiding a plot around the races, complete with angry arguments with Dobbs, brief meetings with Alyssia, saboteurs, a visit to a black market fixet bar, and ongoing news reports following the progress of rhe *CyberRace* and the exploration of the black hole.

While admirable in intention, rhe narrarive is generally poor in execurion. Using the massive storage space of rhe CD-ROM, all of the characters' dialogue is spoken by well-chosen actors. Unfortunately, Cyberdreams did not use the same care in writing the dialogue, which is at times humorously immature and at other times merely a list of the next race's objectives set in a confusing and unimportant context. The visual images of the characters consist of a blend of digital photographs and rendered graphics, and they are quite palatable the first few times you see them. Unfortunately, each character has basically one pose in one location and is animated by twitching eyebrows and squitming lips. The storage space on the CD-ROM should have allowed plenty of space to create several different views of each character, and perhaps even a change in clorhes or facial expression.

By nor altering the cut scenes much (rhere are a few alternate scenes, such as the Black Hole news correspondent, several stills of Alyssia, and the saboteurs), the between-race storytelling interludes seem like old reruns aftet only a few races, and there is really no reason to pay much attention.

Prospective cyber-racers should also know that the game does contain several bugs. Occasionally, the non-inreractive scenes will lock up, fotcing a reboor, or an old image will remain on screen when a new inrerface is overlaid. Other times, the lip and face animation will freeze up, and the game will only progress when you repeatedly tap the enter key. At the very start of the game, there is an information (or menu?) screen that flashes by so rapidly rhere is no chance of reading it.

In all, *CyberRace* is a fun, visually stunning race simulator with a rather weakly constructed and executed narrative framework. I can't shake the nagging feeling that the game was rushed our the door without adequate playtesting of the game or story. Some gameplay rweaking, a rework of the script, and the addition of some sounds and art would have made the difference between *CyberRace* being a mediocre game rhat provides a few hours of fun and being an excellent, cutting-edge game that is hard to walk away from. CGW

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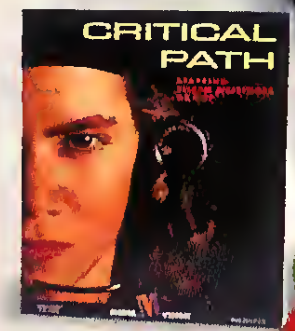

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Circle Reader Service #76

Good Heavens, Miss America! You're Virtual!

Enter the virtual reality of Thomas Dolby, where the hills are actually alive with the sound of music, and you are their conductor.

by Ellen Snell Adams

Imagine a computer game where your actions cteate the music. As you navigate a labyrinth, the music writhes and twists with every turn you make, ot when you'te scaling a peak, the melody reaches a ctescendo as you struggle to the top of the mountain. As you pursue yout goal, the music follows you, buoying you along, sweeping you toward the objective. So, in the end, you come away from the game expetience with not only a sense of victory or fulfillment, but with a symphonic score composed entirely by the interaction between you and the computer. That's Thomas Dolby's virtual teality.

Musician Thomas Dolby, world-renowned for his pioneering music videos and pop hit "She Blinded Me With Science," has taken up vittual teality programming and object-otiented music. He's working with innovative game makers to create artificial worlds that sound as distinctive as they look.

Thomas Dolby models appropriate head gear for both virtual and authentic reality.

That Bleeping *Pong*

"The bleeps and blips of the Pong era are gone fotevet," Dolby told CGW. "Music is a cheap commodiry in the overall cost of a computer game title, yet it can do a great deal to enhance the expetience. With the incredible advances of affordable sound cards, along with the gteater audio capabilities of new machines, there's no longet any excuse for settling for substandard audio."

With Thomas Dolby designing your music, you don't have to. Dolby explained his techniques for creating the lush aural accompaniments to the game experience. "When scoring a film or an interactive experience, instead of composing a theme or cue for each scene, I assign a melody or sound to each character, object or space. I constrain the key and tempo, and the music is generated from within the game. Then, each important action of the player creates a modulation or tempo."

Employing these methods works on a vatiety of levels, Dolby said. "It is much more economical in terms of time, money and computet memory. Second, it gives the player instant gtatification for his choices; it creates a sense of achievemenr and will match his mood. And finally, the music that results is very cool. It often surprises *me*."

"My fitst computer game [*The Conversation*, based upon the Francis Ford Copola film] is the fitst to be driven completely by audio. It allows the player access to the same audio and music techniques I use, but with a gteatly simplified interface, from within the context of an exciting and suspenseful game," he said.

Dolby hopes his work will help broaden the appeal of the traditional computer game. "My computer game is truly adult; that is, it has a much wider appeal than to teenage arcade fanatics. I'm very keen to widen the envelope."

Don't Shoot The Piano Player

Dolby said his intetest in computets evolved, in part, from the fact that he cannot play the keyboards very well. "I adapted a lighting computer to trigger synths and drum pads around 1979. Then I got a Fairlight, and finally a Mac II around 1985. I'm not a very proficient keyboard player, so the computer became my musical instrument."

Dolby's inadequacies as a keyboard playet were lost on the pop world, which eagerly embraced him as a musician. Long before releasing his own Grammy-nominated albums, he was in demand, and could be heatd tickling the electtonic ivoties on albums by musical artists Foreignet, Def Leppard, Joan Armitrading and Malcolm McClaren. After top-five hits of his own ("She Blinded Me With Science," and "Hyperactive"), Dolby then segued into producing other artists like Joni Mitchell, Prefab Sprout and Ofra Haza and composing film scores and musical numbers for movies as diverse as Ken Russell's *Gothic* and the animated feature *Ferngully: The Last Rainforest.*

When composing his music, Dolby wotks on a Macintosh 840AV machine with 32MB of RAM, a 230MB hatd drive and a 21-inch RasterOps color monitor. He uses lots of musical attachments: 8 Tracks Pro Tools, a Sample Cell Card and a Fairlight Series III electronic organ with assorted keyboatds and

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rack modules. "None of the equipment is essential, though," he said. "In a way, I was happier when I just had one monophonic synthesizer and a two-track tape deck."

He employs the computer at several stages: for writing, sequencing the keyboards and adding in vocals and the tracks of guest musicians. "I edit and tweak my vocals digitally with the other musician's performances. Then I record everything to hard disk and edit together the best bits."

After becoming interested in virtual reality, Dolby teamed up with VR pioneer Eric Gullichsen to create a goggles- and glove-based program called The Virtual String Quartet. The project, sponsored by the Intel Digital Education and Arts (IDEA) program, was exhibited at the Guggenheim Museum in October of '93. The first interactive virtual world to synchronize animated figures with three-dimensional sound (the illusion that various sounds are coming from different points in space), the program introduced Quartet participants to a rehearsal space where a string quartet is playing Mozart's Quartet No. 21 in D Major. Participants could bend down to better hear the violin, cello or bass. The really adventurous could even "tickle" a musician, sending him into an improvised jazz or bluegrass solo as a musical counterpoint to Mozart.

Dolby said he sees almost limitless potential in computer technology. He admits that he is greatly impressed with the potential of machines like the 3DO system, which is exciting gamers with photorealistic graphics and three-dimensional sound. "It really is important that these fire bugs get into the hands of entertainers. If artistic content is dictated by technicians and venture capitalists, we will all be subjected to an excruciating period of interactive *Jeopardy*," Dolby said. "Some artists are better-equipped to adapt to the requirements of a new art form than others: I've been fortunate enough to get a head start, but I'd like to entice other artists into the fray. That's one of the main objectives of Headspace [Dolby's Los Angeles-based audio service company], to become a magnet for willing, creative minds." Of course, another objective is to lure "mega companies with more money (and bandwidth) than sense." Dolby is interested in developing projects that do not yet have a target audience: "We can dream—take ideas that do not yet have a client and develop them until they crystallize."

Dolby has scored several projects for Sega/Digital Pictures and I-werks Turbotour ride-simulators. His work with I-werks led to a bid on music for *Virtual Adventures*, a game developed in collaboration with flight simulator experts Evans and Sutherland. In the end, I-werks chose a passive, linear score to accompany the game. Interactive musical scoring was perhaps too sophisticated for the adventure, which plays out entirely underwater.

The Human Touch

Last summer Dolby premiered his computer composing techniques at Digital World in Los Angeles—to standing ovations. His instrument of choice, the computer, seems only natural as the tool on which to compose for computer games. "There's really no difference between composing for the computer and composing conventionally. People often assume that music made by guys in tuxedos with Stradivarius violins is warm and human, whilst music made with buttons and wires is cold and clinical. Actually, the opposite is often true. Orchestras are often programmed like bytes in a computer, yet a computer, in the right hands, is a very soulful instrument."

Dolby's experiments with computers could herald the dawn of an entirely new musical age. "I hope to emerge from this with a brand new musical instrument. It will run on a computer (maybe or maybe not the Mac) and it will not supplant the recording studio," he said. "It will work within the confines of a desktop business computer but it will behave more like a musical instrument—like a direct link between the music that's in my imagination and sound waves that an audience can hear and enjoy."

Ellen Snell Adams is a freelance writer based in Austin, Texas. CGW

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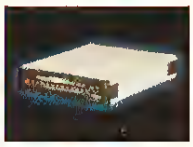

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The Phoenix Rises

From The Ashes Of 8-Bit Games A Strategy/Action Classic Emerges

by Terry Lee Coleman

When *Archon* appeared a decade ago on the 8-bit computers of yore, it was a revelation. The subject matter involved the ultimate forces of good and evil deciding the fate of the cosmos on an otherworldly playing field. Like chess, its spiritual grandfather, two opposing groups of characters faced off on a grid of squares, strategically maneuvering to capture pieces and control the board. Unlike chess, the capture of a piece wasn't a tidy, bloodless affair; instead, pieces went into battle on a separate battle board, and the ensuing arcade sequence would determine the victor. The game was well-executed and well-loved, and now it is back from the 8-bit graveyard to try its luck against a new generation of games and gamers.

The reincarnated form of *Archon* is *Archon Ultra*. Like its predecessor, it's played on a nine-by-nine square board, rather than the 64 squares traditionally used for a chess game. The initial effect of this expanded play area is that chess players cannot depend on typical chess openings from memory, due to the different spatial considerations of the board. Long diagonals take on even more significance due to the larger playing area, while control of the center is a much more tricky proposition. Chess players will also not be able to analyze "pawn" structure so easily, making for a more wide-open style of play. Without centuries of published games to build on, both the player and the computer opponent must be more creative, allowing non-chess players to compete on a more equal strategic basis with their more experienced opponents.

Power Trip

As in the original *Archon*, the key to winning the game is controlling the various "spaces of power," the key to control of the universe. Five such power spaces can be found on the board: one at the exact center, one on each extreme edge, and one underneath each opposing "mage," roughly equivalent to kings in chess (but with a lot more firepower). The rest of the board is divided into light, neutral and dark squares, emblematic of the spheres of influence for each of the Dark and Light forces. Movement is fairly simple for anyone who has played any computer chess game. Whether mouse or keyboard-driven, the pieces are most responsive, and the animations are good, although not up to the quality of say, *BattleChess 4000*. The artwork tends to be clean and unusual, but was not quite the unbelievable figures I had hoped for. There is naturally no point in comparing these figures with the old 8-bit versions, given their steroid-like transformation.

Obviously, where *Archon Ultra* differs most from chess is in execution of combat. Regardless of how entertaining *Battlechess* might be, you always know that the piece that moves into the square will always win, whether by blowing up the opponent, cutting him in half with an axe, or any number of violent animations. Pieces that clash in *Archon Ultra* still move onto the square, but have a choice of challenging an opponent in either dark, neutral, or light-colored squares. The scenery then changes to one of three combat environments: lush and green for light, gray for neutral, or dark for chaos. When on your own color square, your piece's "hit points" are increased greatly, and your opponents' are summarily reduced. Once a piece of one side or the other loses all of its hit points, the other side wins, with its piece returning to occupy the square on the main strategic board.

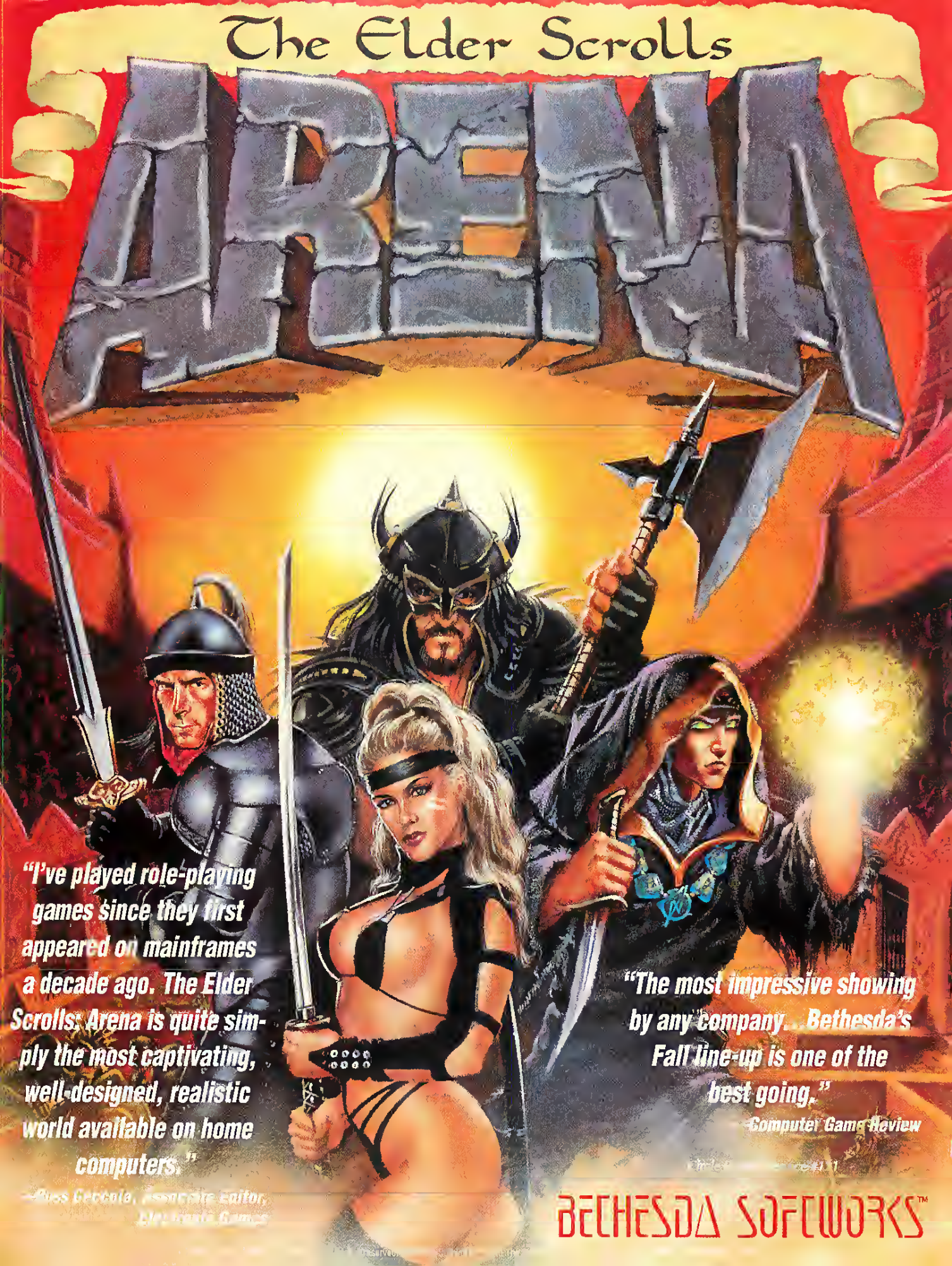
All three types of battle areas have detailed terrain, with trees or molten lakes of lava

Archon Ultra

TITLE	Archon Ultra
PRICE	$49.95
SYSTEM	IBM
REQUIREMENTS	386 or better, 2MB RAM, 5MB hard drive space, VGA graphics, supports AdLib and Sound Blaster sound cards
DESIGNERS	Jon Freeman, Paul Reiche and Anne Westfall
PUBLISHER	Strategic Simulations, Inc Sunnyvale, CA (408) 737-6850

The Elder Scrolls

ARENA



"I've played role-playing games since they first appeared on mainframes a decade ago. The Elder Scrolls: Arena is quite simply the most captivating, well-designed, realistic world available on home computers."

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which affect combat in a variety of ways, offering covet, blocking line of sight, and even destroying enemy units outtight. The approaches to the various power points assures that each playet will have to fight on both favorable and unfavorable terrain to control the board. Winning "on the road" in *Archon Ultra* is not metely difficult; it is the key to ultimate success.

The pieces ate all drawn from typical fantasy fate and will be easily tecognizable to the novice. Goblins act essentially as pawns, but with big, nasty clubs. Instead of castles, we find rock-throwing Golems, capable of destroying enemies with one or two blows. Unicorns have the fastest rate of fite in the game and the ability to leap ovet chasms and lakes. Dragons fly and breathe an arc of deadly fire far and wide. Banshees wail to demotalize their enemies and are one of the most effective pieces for the dark-side player. The Phoenix rises in flames and immolates its enemies, but has to be adjacent to be effective, a bit of a liability. Unlike the Phoenix in the original *Archon,* however, out 1994 model has a secondary weapon, a sott of magical homing missile. In fact, the biggest difference in combat between the old *Archon* and *Archon Ultra,* may be that now all of the different pieces have two unique abilities instead of one.

The delights of the system are both obvious and subtle. From a tactical standpoint, no two pieces are alike. Different fiting tates, amounts of damage per hit, and a marked difference in movement capabilities make every engagement something special. Some players might be tempted to charge head-long into their opponent with theit most powerful unit, but each creature has its limitations, including a "recharge" period during which they cannot fire their weapons. The powerful Phoenix may have to face the Fire Elemental, who far from being harmed by flames, tevels in them! Even the most jaded of players will have to play a long time to exhaust all the possibilities in the tactical match-ups alone.

From a pute strategy standpoint, conservative players may hug their own color squates, and play defensively. Wild attackers may ptessure at widely divergent areas of the board, and those with a counterattacking bent may choose their spots carefully. Regardless of the playing style chosen, the *Archon Ultra* bonus is that even the most potentially static games are kept lively thtough the arcade struggles.

Nice New Paint Job, But How Does It Move?

Most chess-like algorithms use a fotm of "ttee search" for their AI routines. Without having asked the designers, it seems that *Archon Ultra* uses a similar approach, because the program plays a vety tactically-minded game. The designers have thoughtfully kept the "reflexes" of the program to a manageable level on normal settings, although the ptogram may be enhanced for O.K. Corral-type shoot-outs. Sttategically, the AI tends to find a weakness and pound on it, making it a fotmidable opponent, but *Archon Ultra* also impressed me by being able to play most patiently in the late middle and end game. New players may want to give the computer

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a handicap setting for the first couple of games in order to actually learn the game.

A pleasant surprise is that *Archon Ultra* actually gives some of the feel of being a fantasy game. When playing other fantasy strategy games such as *Conquered Kingdoms*, I feel as if I'm playing a wargame with fantasy trappings, whereas the Unicorns, Banshees, etc., of *Archon Ultra* don't feel at all like military units. Magical spells cast by the sorcerers of each side add to the mystical feel, as units are teleported, storms are cast, the "flow of time" gets reversed, and mayhem reigns throughout. The classic good-versus-evil struggle gains a bit of freshness, as *Archon Ultra* seems less abstract than chess or even more recent strategy games such as *Theatre of War*, while retaining the charm of the old 8-bit version.

Aside from the obvious strengths of the AI, the best thing about *Archon Ultra* is that it can be played via modem. Chess online is nice, but many gamers prefer action games or simulatots such as *Red Baron*. With *Archon Ultra*, gamers may try to outwit a live opponent, while simultaneously having the thrill of blasting away at enemy pieces in real-time action. The tournament potential is obvious, and we can only hope that the designers see fit to design more games in this genre.

Everything Old Is New Again

The remaking of a classic involves risks, even for game designers with the lofty reputations of Freeman, Reiche and Westfall. Just as in film, where a colorized version of a great black-and-white movie can detract from the director's original intent, so the "colorization" and the addition of features to a game can destroy the balance of the original. On the other hand, the remake of a game can do too little to make the new version worthwhile to players of the original. Recent efforts such as *Pirates Gold!* and *Seven Cities of Gold II*, which simply upgraded sound and graphics and added little to enhance gameplay, ate clear examples of this problem. Fortunately, Freeman, Reiche, and Westfall have found a balance between these two extremes, as they have brought the graphics and sound of *Archon* up to current standards, and have made minor changes to game play without sacrificing the elements that made the original a classic. CGW

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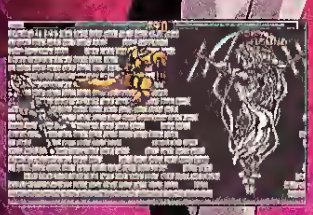

System requirements: 286-20 or faster machine (386 recommended) with 640K RAM, hard disk, joystick recommended. Operating Sys.: MS DOS 3.3 or above, Windows 3.1. Graphics compatible with VGA. Sound support: Sound Blaster, Sound Blaster Pro, Thunder Board, Pro Audio Spectrum, Adlib Gold and Speed Master.

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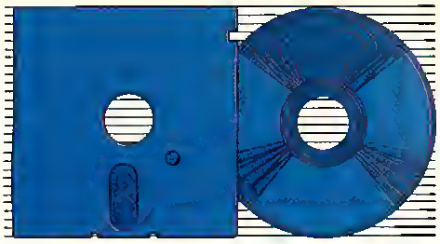

COMPANY REPORT

Gamblers Synonymous

Villa Crespo Moves Beyond The Felt

by Johnny L. Wilson

In a page right out of Rod Serling's "The Hitchhiker" teleplay, Dan Sejzer's life changed in 1969 when he picked up a fellow in need of a ride. This hitchhiker hired Sejzer to program a mainframe using COBOL. Naturally, the mainframe offered those versions of Adventure, Trek, Hangman, Gomoku and Tic-Tac-Toe that could be found on any mainframe in those days. And like many programmers of that era, Sejzer would spend his after-hours time improving upon those games and designing his own.

Sejzer, the son of a professional gambler in Argentina, had been a fairly successful blackjack player, but had decided that making a living at blackjack was too much work. Yer, he drew from his experience and wrote a blackjack program for that mainframe in CLIST, a command language that was used at that time.

Since he had watched his father play poker from the time he was two or three years old, he also had a desire to program a poker game. In 1976, he purchased his first personal computer—a Commodore PET. After working with mainframes, he found himself frustrated by both the memoty constrictions and the I/O problem (remember those cassette tapes?). In 1980, however, he purchased a TRS 80 Model II and began programming rhe forerunner of *Amarillo Slim's Real Poker, Electro-Casino. Electro-Casino* had poker, horse racing and roulette. Unfortunately, by rhe time he finished the program to his satisfaction (1982), the TRS 80 was almost dead as a commercial platform, and the game only sold about 10 copies.

Though he still worked in the traditional computing industry, Sejzer didn't buy an IBM comparible until 1988. Of course, he immediately began rranslating code from *Electro-Casino* into the MS-DOS environment, and in 1989 he started to market *Amarillo Slim's Real Poker.* With his brother Ed (a successful manufacturer's rep in a high risk business) and an entrepreneurial ftiend named Skip Wood (who was coming off of a failed pizza enterprise), Sejzer formed Villa Crespo to market both a producrivity product called *MemoPad* and *Amarillo Slim.* Because of distribution problems, the company was nearly an immediate flop. Fortunately, Egghead Software took 1,000 copies of *Amarillo Slim* on speculation and saved the day. On the basis of a very succcssful sell-through in that software chain, *Amarillo Slim* was sold into several others.

Dan Sejzer in the World Series of Poker '91, Press Tournament.

By this point it was mid-1990, and Dan realized that his company could not survive on the strength of *Amarillo Slim* alone. He had always thought that blackjack was a better bet than poker, so he started working on the program that was to become *Edward O. Thorp's Real Blackjack.*

Both the blackjack and the poker ptograms sold well, but Dan saw the need to expand his vision. He hired Roger Pedersen, former programmer/designer for CBS Software, Gametek, Merit and Hi-Tech Expressions, as Director of Development. Then, he discovered a poker program rhat some people (including *CGW*'s Alan Emrich) thoughr was superior ro *Amarillo Slim.* Rather than compering with John Comeau (*Vegas Johnny's Poker*), Dan brought him onto the team, and *Amarillo Slim's Dealer's Choice* was the result.

Today, the company is still known largely as the "gambling software" company. Though the company has grown from the original trio of partners to more than a dozen employees/contractors, and the product line has dozens of "Coffee Break" titles, Villa Crespo still feels like something of the Rodney Dangerfield of the entertainment software world. They have branched out into morphing progtams, computer security programs, database programs and children's software, but they are still primarily identified as that "gambling" company.

Sejzer hopes their current group of developments will finally expand his company's image beyond the poker room. They have a physics-based sports simulation and a very fast graphics utility called *MetaMorf* in the works. They are also nearing complerion on a series of children's titles called the "Cookie Break Series." Their most exciting new project is a series of titles in conjunction with *GAMES* magazine. Lou Kesten, Villa Crespo's Communications Manager, is a freelance writer for *GAMES* magazine. He and in-house artist Gabi Ladowski are two of the designers contributing to the new series of *GAMES* for the computer. The value-priced Volume I will be *Word Games.* It will feature crosswords, cryptograms, double crostics and word jumbles. Later volumes will feature logic puzzles and optical illusions.

Even with expansion plans underway, however, Sejzer hasn't forgotren that helping someone out can change a life. The company contracts out its packaging and assembly work to a company that employs the physically and mentally challenged. The subcontractor calls its employees, "handicapable." Villa Crespo sends boxes ro the subcontractor and rhe "handicapables" place disks, manuals, brochures, etc. into the boxes.

We know the Villa Crespo contract makes a difference to the "handicapables" because we have seen how they reacr when Brenda Andrews, Villa Crespo's Operations Manager, enters the plant. Most of rhem know her by name and many ger very excited, because they know her presence means that rhe company is going to be shipping more product. Indeed, the look on those "handicapable" folks' faces may be rhe only respect any software publisher would need. It's at least enough to make us think of more rhan gambling whenever we think of Villa Crespo. CGW

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It's All Pun And Games

Scorpia Piers At Legend's *Companions Of Xanth*

The *Xanth* books by Piers Anthony have long been popular with readers of fantasy and science fiction, so it comes as no surprise that someone finally got around to making a computer game based upon the series.

Legend Entertainment's *Companions of Xanth* is adapted from the book *Demons Don't Dream*, which is included in the game package. Since the game follows the book to a large extent, and a couple of puzzles have essentially the same solution in each, it's best to play the game first and read the book afterwards.

The story begins when two mundane (i.e., non-magical) teenagers from Earth, Dug and Kim, are drawn into the world of Xanth to compete in a contest for a mysterious Prize. Neither knows what the Prize is, except that it's supposed to be something very good.

Under the surface, however, matters are much more serious than they appear. Two demons, E(A/R)th and X(A/N)th, have set the game up as part of a wager. The stake is the existence of magic in Xanth itself. If E(A/R)th's player, Kim, wins the prize, then all magic in Xanth will disappear forever. If X(A/N)th's player, Dug, wins, then everything will continue as before. Since the goal is to maintain the status quo, you take the role of Dug.

Because Dug is unfamiliar with this world, he receives the Compendium of Xanth and gets to choose a Companion to help him before play begins (hence the title of the game). While four Companions are presented to him for selection, the choice is actually rigged: only Nada Naga can be chosen. Picking any of the other three leads to early disqualification.

This fact gets the game off on the wrong foot: it is annoying, unnecessary and unfair. As the game is designed for Nada to be the Companion, better to have presented her as such right away, instead of pretending to allow the player choices which lead only to several disruptive false-starts.

Once Nada gets Dug and herself out of the starting room, the real play begins. From that point on, Dug must solve the rest of the problems himself, although there are occasions when he can ask Nada for assistance. The pair explore the wild and wondrous realm of Xanth, meeting many strange beings, passing through the regions of Void, Earth, Air, Fire, and Water, and running across an unending succession of bad puns (most, of course, taken from the book, which has even more; sometimes, there can be too much of a good thing).

Around three-quarters of the way through the story, Dug catches up briefly with Kim, and they switch Companions; Nada goes off with Kim, and Dug ends up with Jenny and Sammy Cat. This doesn't make quite as much sense in the game as it does in the book, so be sure to read the book afterwards to learn what this business is all about.

The game ending is very different from the book, however, and it is not clear why Legend made such a change. It is especially odd as the game's resolution doesn't really settle the demon wager at all, leaving one giant loose end and making the whole thing ultimately unsatisfying.

A Departure From The Text

Companions marks a radical departure for Legend from their previous offerings, in that it is their first true all-graphic product. Players familiar with the *Spellcasting* series, *Eric the Unready*, and *Homeworld*, may be surprised by the absence of a type-in, parser interface. Except for a few hot keys, there is no keyboard input: all actions are handled with the mouse.

As the cursor travels over the screen, it lights up objects of interest by displaying the name of the item. So, for instance, when the cursor is on Dug's computer, the word "computer" appears on the screen. To form a sentence, the mouse is clicked on the highlighted object, then moved over to the list of verbs on the left-hand side, where it is clicked on a verb to complete the sentence. Thus, the command "look at the computer" is made by first clicking on the computer and then on "look at" from the list of verbs.

This system works in reverse, too: you can click on a command first and an item second. So taking "look at" first, followed by clicking on the computer, gives the same result: "look at the computer." The verbs listed are few indeed: Put, Take, Look, Look At, Open, Close, Talk, and Wait. Occasionally, an additional verb or two will appear on the list when using a particular object. For example, if a rock is the highlighted item, the verb "throw" is temporarily added to the commands.

Room descriptions and results of actions are displayed in a small window under the main graphic screen. Below that is the inventory window, where all of Dug's current possessions are depicted. These items can be acted upon in the same way as anything on the main screen, by highlighting them and choosing a verb, or vice-versa.

While the verb-object interface is simple, it is not used consistently in the game, which

TITLE:	*Companions of Xanth
PRICE:	$59.95
SYSTEM:	IBM
REQUIREMENTS:	286 or better, VGA or VESA graphics, 8MB hard drive space, mouse, supports AdLib, Roland and Sound Blaster sound cards
PROTECTION:	None
DESIGNER:	Michael Lindner
PUBLISHER:	Legend Entertainment Chantilly, VA (800) 658-8891

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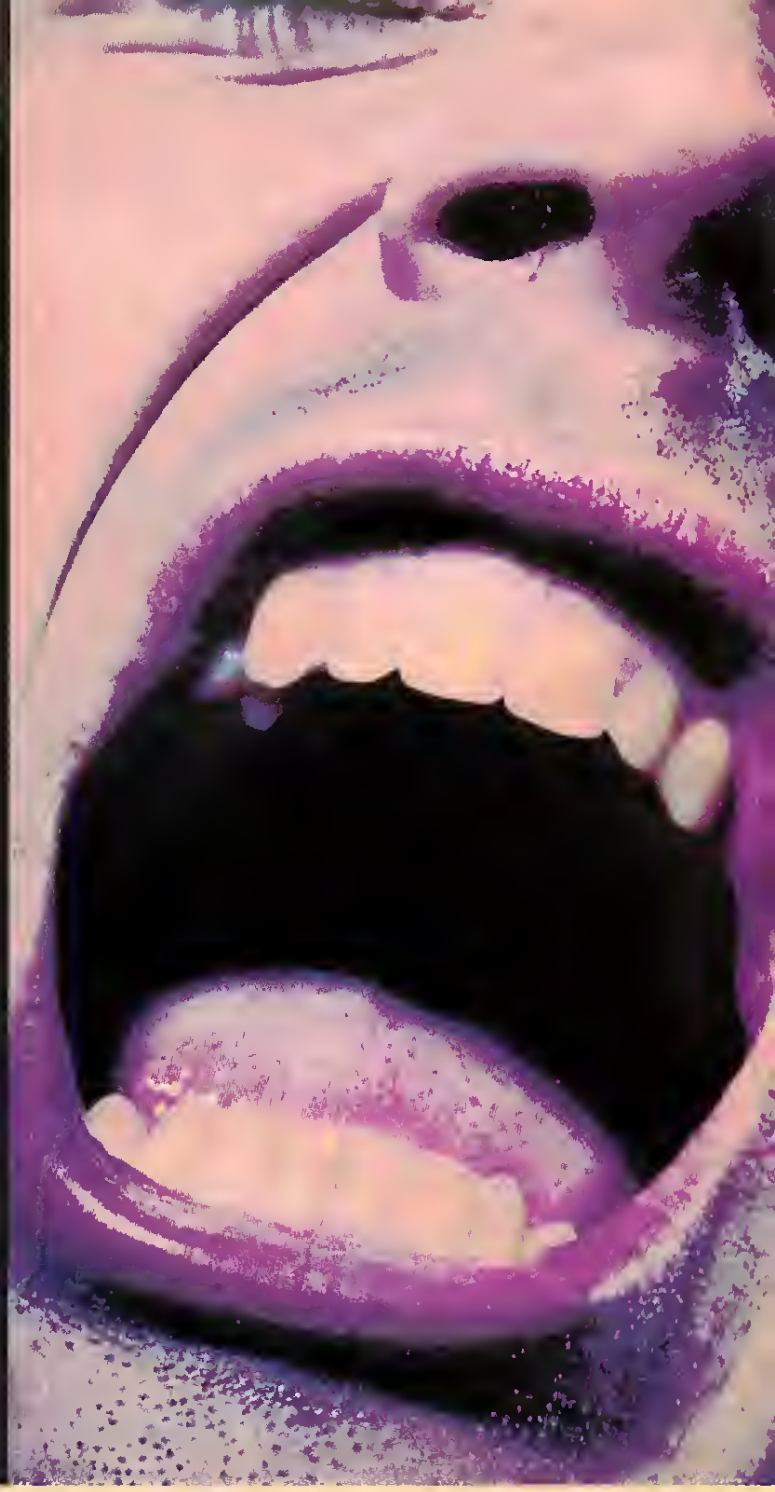

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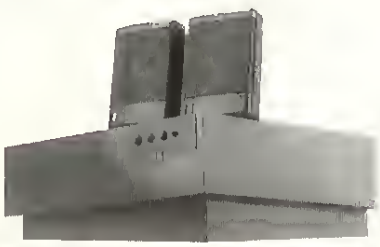

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can cause some frustrations. Take the matter of Ma Anathe (an anagram of "anathema"). You have to bring her a certain item. Up to that point, when you had an object people wanted, they would recognize it was in the inventory when you talked to them.

Not Ma, though. However much you talk to her, she just tells you not to bother her unless you have the item. Also, the verb "give" doesn't appear when the item is highlighted, and the regular "Put" doesn't do much if you try to "put" the item on her. The answer to this dilemma is to first highlight the item, then move the cursor onto Ma, at which point "give (item) to Ma Anathe" appears on the screen.

This sort of thing happens more than once in the game, and to make matters worse, no mention is made in the manual of this special construction. The instructions merely describe the "verb-object" and "object-verb" combinations. Nowhere does it tell you that you can make commands in other ways, as noted above.

Piers Poor Puzzles

The puzzle quality in *Companions* is uneven at best, and in some cases, downright poor. Take the sequence with the evil Com-pewter, for example. It is described in the Compendium as being extremely powerful and able to change reality in its vicinity. This made it sound as if taking on Com-pewter would be a difficult task. As it turns out, this entire sequence was a joke (and not a funny one, either). All you do is play a game of anagrams with Com-pewter, who describes something from the world of Xanth and provides an anagram of the item, lacking one letter. You choose the missing letter from a small pool of letter tiles.

This isn't a challenge, or even a puzzle; it's just pointless activity. You merely open your Compendium of Xanth and read through until you find the answer, which naturally tells you what the missing letter is, and that's the one you choose. The second round is slightly tricky, as Com-Pewter cheats by not providing one of the letters, but Dug has an inventory item to use as a substitute.

After going through this no-brainer, Dug is forced by Com-Pewter to resign (even though he won), but Grundy Golem (a sort of emcee for the game) puts Dug back in the game and gives him the item needed to actually destroy the machine. This is supposed to be a puzzle?

Not much better—if at all—is the rescue of Nada Naga after she's been spirited away by the demoness Metria. When Dug finds Nada, she's chained to a wall. Nearby is a type of moss that can eat through anything, including metal. Naturally, you think that the moss is part of the solution to freeing Nada.

Wrong! The moss is used for something else. You simply *talk* to the manacles, and they let her go. How are you supposed to know this? How did *I* know this? Simple. There wasn't anything else left to try; I had gone through all other possible actions with no result, and that was the last thing available to do.

A voice does whisper at you occasionally "from the vicinity of Nada's arm," but that's where the moss is, so you don't really associate the voice with the manacles, and why should anyone think that manacles can talk? None of it makes any sense.

The best sequence is at the beginning where Dug must help the village of Isthmus rid itself of the dreaded censorship. While most of the puzzles in this segment aren't especially difficult, at least the solutions can be reasoned out instead of stumbled over by trial and error.

Despite following the book fairly closely, *Companions* is a quick play. This is partly because of the trivial puzzles, and partly because many areas don't have that many things to do in the first place. The Com-Pewter section is an example of this, as is the Void, a one-location puzzle. It just seemed to me that there should have been more substance to many of the segments.

Overall then, *Companions of Xanth* is a disappointment. Its poor puzzle structure makes it the weakest Legend game to date, and unlikely to please gamers looking for an adventure on the level of a *Spellcasting 101* or *Eric The Unready*. The relatively short playing time is also likely to leave many with an unsatisfied feeling. Only true "pun"dits of the *Xanth* series, or those looking for a lightweight adventure, will find this one worth their time. **CGW**

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Can A King Be Found In These Baron Lands?

QQP's *Heirs To The Throne*

by Ken Hill

Quantum Quality Productions has built a teputation in computet gaming for ptoviding the strategist with solid products. From the seas of *The Lost Admiral* to the fantasy battlegrounds of *Conquered Kingdoms*, gamers have come to know QQP games for their high-replay value, and, in general, their strong artificial opponents. With their tecent release of *Heirs to the Throne*, QQP and the German Design Group provide us with yet another take on the medieval strategy game. Combining elements familiar to most fans of the genre, they have produced a deceptively simple game which nonetheless ptovides enough variety to challenge even the most battle-hatdened of veteran gamers.

The ptemise of *Heirs to the Throne* is that a vast continent, set somewhere in a fantasy world, has been unified by a strong leadet. This great King conquered the otes and other hideous creatures that once terrotized the populace, by uniting the warring factors of barons under a single banner. Though fteed of the menace, not all the barons were happy with the new political arrangement, and they hired an assassin to do away with the King. The success of the killer's task left the country leaderless, as the rightful heir was conveniently off Crusading in the Holy Land with the loyal troops. The resulting leadership vacuum has left the perfect opportunity for the batons to regain their fotmet ptominence.

In yout tole as one of these powet-hungry batons, you start with but a single province, wresting territory from your rivals until you control the entire continent. Before playing, you are given an enotmous number of customizing options—no less than six screens worth—each of which has a significant effect on play. For example, the Royalist troops controlling the neutral provinces at the start of the game may be friendly, neutral, or hostile to your cause. Other selections influence terrain effects, production, fog of war, weather and even interest rates on saved income. Since many of these restrictions apply only to human players, they can be used to strengthen the computet opponents, and thereby tune the difficulty level to your skill level.

Sire, Doth Thou Recognize This Land?

The game map is generated randomly at the beginning of each game. It consists of square and tectangulat provinces, with some water squares acting as borders between provinces. Each province consists entirely of one terrain type, either swamp, desert, mountain or grassland. Not only does the randomness of the maps provide replay value, but the program will obligingly generate random continents until you find one that suits your conquering mood. The tetrain type can provide an advantage or disadvantage both for combat and production if you choose. For example, mountains are a wonderful advantage on the defense, but are a disadvantage for production.

At the start of each new game, you must choose a home province. This choice is crucial, since this province is where your new military forces will come into play. The loss of your home province results in yout immediate defeat.

Each province contains villages. These settlements provide the money needed to buy the services of mercenary soldiers and the other articles of war necessary for conquest. There is an upper limit on how many villages each province can support, which can be adjusted to handicap the game.

The sequence of play is divided into several phases. Fitst, all income and production is calculated based upon your village production, and any soldiers, supplies, weapons or fortifications purchased on the previous turn are placed in your home province. Then, supply allocation and random events will follow if these options were chosen at the game's setup. Next comes the attack phase. You can move troops from your provinces to attack neighboring provinces as you see fit. After combat, you have the chance to move troops within your kingdom to defend against attacks from the other barons. Finally, you can buy villages, recruit soldiets, and petform othet administrative tasks during the investment phase.

Heirs to the Throne

TITLE:	Heirs to the Throne
PRICE:	$59.95
SYSTEM:	Amiga, IBM (reviewed)
REQUIREMENTS:	IBM: 286 or better, 640K RAM, EGA/VGA graphics, 2.5MB hard drive space, mouse, AdLib and Sound Blaster sound cards supported
PLAYERS:	1-4 (same computer)
PROTECTION:	Documentation look up
DESIGNER:	R.K. Rien of the German Design Group
PUBLISHER:	Quantum Quality Productions Flemington, NJ (908) 788-2799

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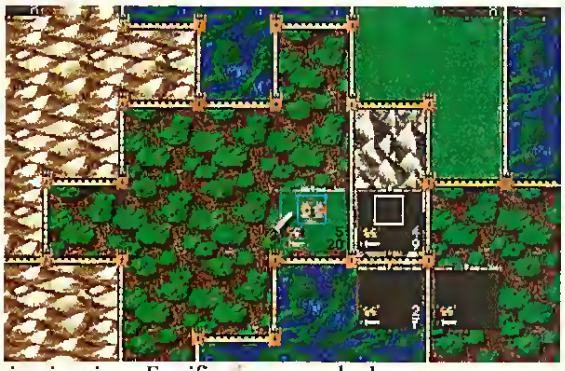
Cry Havoc!

The combat system in *Heirs To The Throne* is relatively simple. Each "soldier" icon represents 100 mercenaries composed of either cavalry, infantry, pioneers or archers. Your starting unit mix can be fixed or variable depending on the initial game settings. Infantry are equally effective in all terrain, while cavalry work best in open country and defend poorly. Archers are excellent on defense but are nearly worthless when attacking fortified positions. Pioneers are the most effective units for attacking castles. Heavy weapons are also available in the form of catapults; these can be purchased during the investment phase and will help with assaults on fortified positions, but they cannot be used in defensive situations. Fortifications may also be purchased during the investment phase. Forts range in size from a tower, which adds 12% to your overall combat strength in that province, to a citadel, which adds a whopping 75%! Strongly fortified positions are not easily taken, and it requires a huge advantage in troops to finally wrest a citadel from enemy hands.



To attack a province, you simply click on the adjacent province you wish to attack and indicate from which provinces the attacking troops will come. Next appears a screen, showing the troop strengths and appropriate adjustments from weapons and terrain. From this screen, you have two options. Clicking on the sword icon on the left side of the screen will begin the attack, while clicking on the banner to the right will cause your units to retreat. It can take several attack rounds to finally defeat your enemies. Once combat has been completed, you can shift your armies between provinces during the movement phase, reminiscent of the "free move" in *Risk*. One handy feature allows you to split your forces equally between all the provinces that have hostile borders automatically, saving you the time and trouble of allocating troops by hand. You may make adjustments to the troop dispositions once the computer is finished, transferring units between any two connected provinces within your kingdom. Provinces that are isolated by enemy territory from the rest of your holdings cannot receive troops in this manner.

The Crown *Is* The Economy

The final part of the game turn is the investment phase. During this crucial phase, you must decide where to allocate your hard-earned income. You may recruit new troops, found new villages, buy weapons and fortifications, buy supplies, or simply save money. The game does pay interest on any gold not spent during the previous turns, but saving is a luxury that many players will not get the option to exercise. Fiscal management is one of the keys to playing the game successfully. Finding the balance between building new villages (which provide future tax revenue) and supporting your military efforts requires planning and foresight.

Those players in search of strong computer opponents should look no further than *Heirs To The Throne*. The computer players are very shrewd and aggressive. They will sacrifice provinces of dubious value in order to defend valuable ones. They will also set traps to lure the unsuspecting player into indefensible positions. And, when all else fails, they don't hesitate to dig in by building massive fortifications filled with troops to defy capture. The computer barons will also conspire against you. If you pay too much attention to one foe, another will creep up on your flanks to take advantage of your near-sighted strategy. It took several games before I was able to consistently beat two computer opponents, even under what the manual calls "very easy" conditions. I strongly suggest that you take on only one silicon-brained adversary until you have a good feel for the game system. Playing against two computer barons and a hostile Royalist party is a very demanding challenge!

A Long And Profitable Reign

The interface of *Heirs* is so well designed that novice gamers will be able to use it with little difficulty. Pop-up menus guide you throughout the game, numeric selections are chosen using point-and-click buttons, and the entire game can be played using a mouse (although keyboard equivalent commands are provided in some cases).

The graphics and visuals are functional, but are not of the highest quality. Most screens

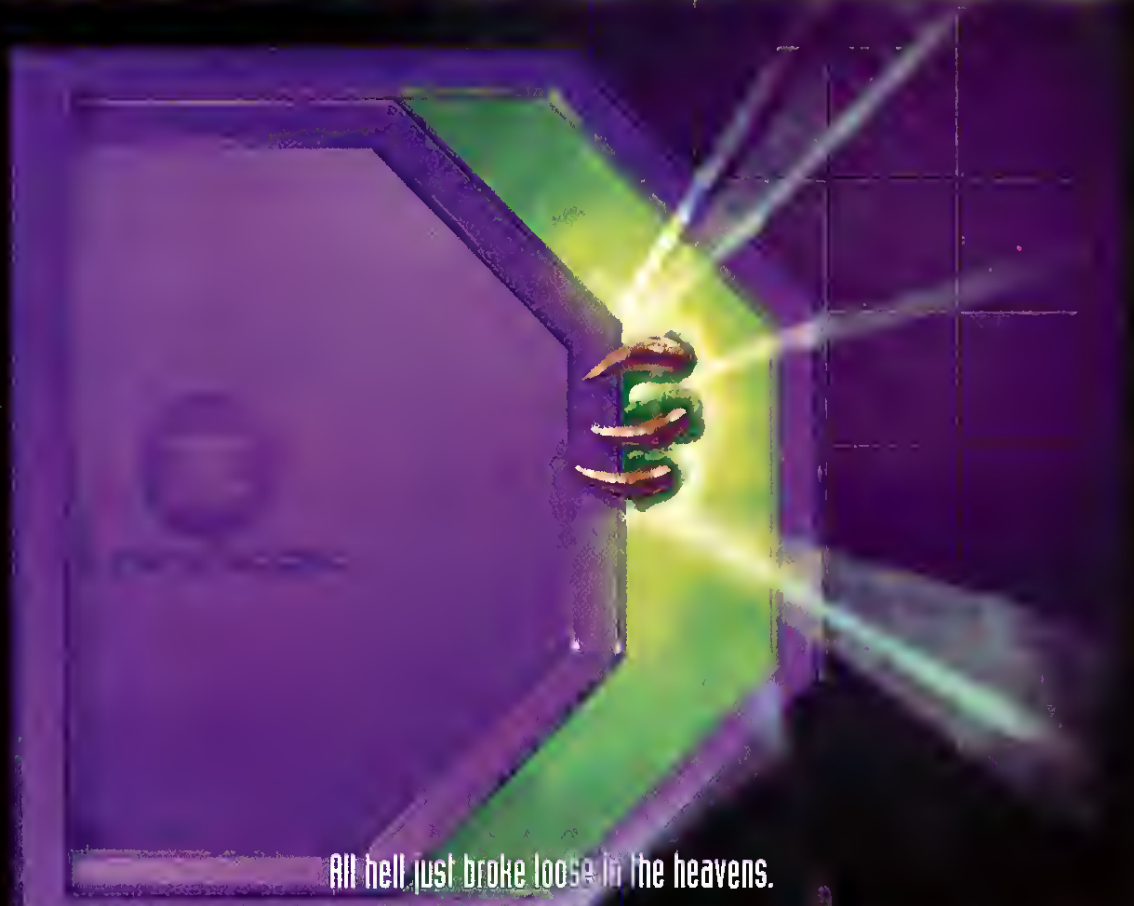
are very cartoon-like, especially the screens that appear when you are prompted to higher levels of nobility. The map screen is very functional and provides smooth scrolling during the main phases of game play. A right click of the mouse at any time will reveal an extensive supply of maps and charts. My only complaint would be the quality of the writing (especially the spelling!) on both the menu screens and in the manual. Since English is a second language for the game's designers, this can be forgiven to a degree, but a good editor would certainly have made for a more professional product.

On the surface, *Heirs* is a very simple strategy game that breaks no new ground in the tactical area. Production and attack games for the computer can be traced back as far as *Empire*, but *Heirs* will remind many veteran gamers of the venerable Electronic Arts classic *Lords of Conquest*. What makes the product particularly attractive are the many user-controlled game parameters. By changing these selections, you can create a different game situation each time you play. Small-continent games can take under an hour to play, while a large continent can gobble up an entire evening. The "returning heir" selection can inject a player with extra motivation, as he must consolidate his gains before the Royalist leader comes back from the Crusades. Those who enjoy tinkering with unit composition can select the variable unit composition option, or simply leave the decision to the computer for a "quick and dirty" struggle.

Heirs to the Throne is a simple and challenging strategy game. With its strong artificial intelligence and many flexible options for customization, it will please many types of strategy game fans. While it may not have the complexity needed to hold the attention of the veteran wargamer for a long period, it still provides a welcome diversion from the rigors of playing games like *Pacific War*. *Heirs* is a fine complement to QQP's growing library of excellent strategy games. **CGW**

Guess what's coming for dinner...

ALIEN BREED



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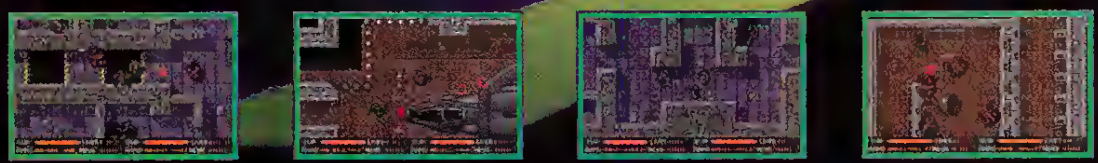

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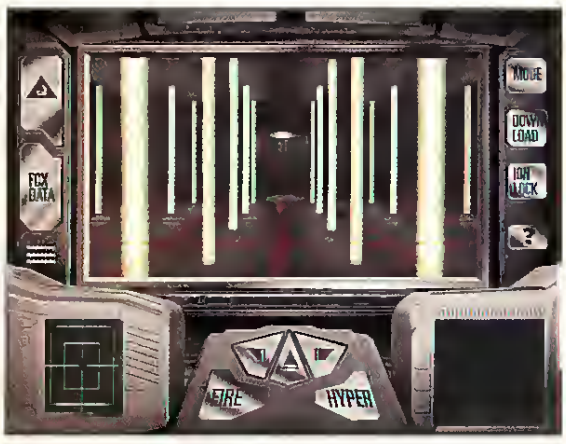
C.H.A.O.S. – Out of Order

The *C.H.A.O.S. Continuum* From Creative Multimedia

by Christopher Breen

Be wary of any product that trumpets the worthiness of its ingredients over the quality of the whole. This rule applies to everything from a blind date ("She's got a great personality!") to breakfast cereals ("Contains 85% more bulk fiber!!"). Unfortunately, this also applies generally to entertainment software and specifically to Creative Multimedia's *C.H.A.O.S. Continuum.*

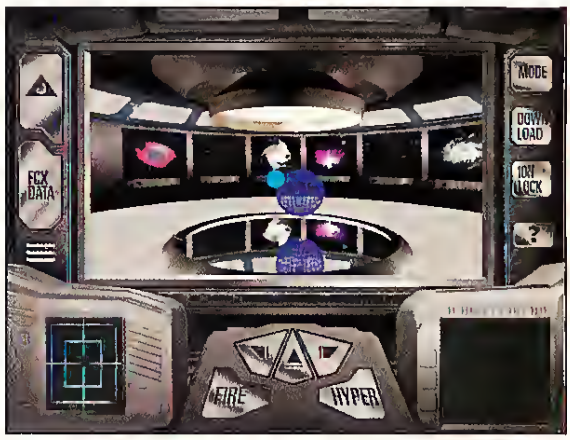
The back of *C.H.A.O.S. Continuum*'s CD-ROM jewelbox announces that it is "...the first CD-ROM adventure to incorporate movie-quality animation and special effects: created on Silicon Graphics workstations." It also promises "innovative new scripting techniques" and "various random events" that enhance playability. When we wary gamers



read of the 8-bit graphics that look like 24-bit and of the "stereo sound effects and original music score," we might become suspicious of this blind date and wonder how much of the hype is bulk fiber.

The Whole

The *C.H.A.O.S. Continuum* is a science-fiction game in the "Oh my golly! We've built a computer much smarter than we are and now it wants to control us!" style. The game opens with a panoramic view of the heavens. Stars and galaxies whiz by, nebulae burst before us, eerie synth pads drone. Suddenly, an eyeball appears. From the eye comes a rotating pyramid which transforms, with a hissing sound, into the *C.H.A.O.S. Continuum* logo. A voice emanating from a grid implores us to respond. We are informed that a colony on Saturn's moon, Titan, is being held captive by an orbiting computer known as C.H.A.O.S. A group of scientists who are trapped within a parallel continuum are contacting us across time from the year 2577 in the hope that through our home computer, we can control a Time Probe that will disable C.H.A.O.S. and set Titan free. Help us, OB1, you're our only hope....



Once a lovely animated sequence has seen the Time Probe land safely in New Eden, a self-contained biosphere on Titan, control is given over to the earthbound, 20th century game player, and the adventure begins. Players interact with the game through the Time Probe interface. A central viewscreen acts as the eyes to the world of C.H.A.O.S. Arrayed around this screen is a series of buttons that control such functions as navigation, data storage, data retrieval, on-line help and weapon control. The probe includes radar for locating the baddies and an update screen that displays messages from the entrapped scientists.

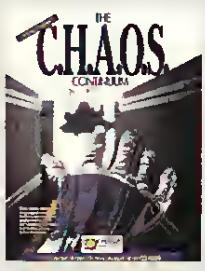
These messages are the glue that ties things together. Although a mission statement is presented at the beginning of the game, once the probe makes its initial landing on Titan, there's little to indicate what you're supposed to do next. Fortunately, after a careful step or two, up pops a message from these chatty men of science that provides a first set of instructions. This is only the beginning: you can expect to receive numerous missives from these folks throughout the game. Regrettably, these helpful hints are so numerous that you feel as if you are being guided through the game as a mere witness to the action rather than a participant.

This perception is substantially strengthened by drowsy CD access times and the inability to move around certain areas of the game. All too often, you hear the annoying "Motion restricted!" message when an attempt is made to explore an interesting machine or doorway. Given the time it takes to turn the probe around and the frustration inherent in the wait, the designers might have been better off omitting these inaccessible items.

The Parts

Okay, so perhaps *The C.H.A.O.S. Continuum* is on the slow side and not the most challenging adventure game around. Creative Multimedia never claimed it was fast—although "Innovative new scripting techniques enhance playability" does suggest some hope of a perkier pace. The company does, how-

The C.H.A.O.S. Continuum



TITLE:	The C.H.A.O.S. Continuum
PRICE:	$69.95
SYSTEM:	Macintosh
REQUIREMENTS:	Macintosh II or better, System 6.07 or later, 2.5MB RAM, 1MB hard drive space, 13" or larger monitor with 8-bit display, CD-ROM drive with 150k/second transfer rate, 380ms or less access rate recommended
PROTECTION:	None
DESIGNER:	Andrew Davies
PUBLISHER:	Creative Multimedia Portland, OR (503) 241-4351

ever, trumpet their use of the Silicon Graphics system for the generation of movie-quality animation and special effects. Are these sequences really so spectacular?

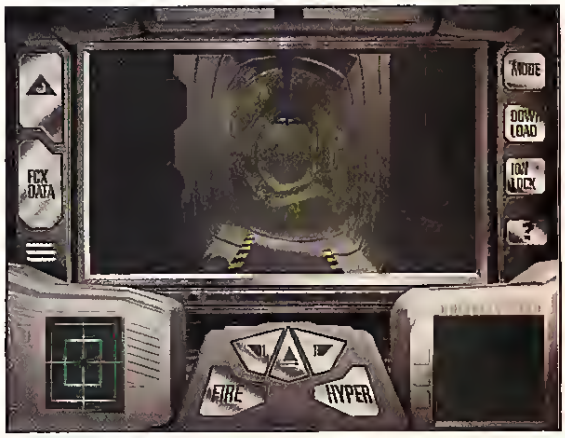
In short: No more so than many others you may have seen. There *are* some impressive bits of animation and special effects, but to label them movie-quality is stretching things. True, they are quite good and compare favorably with the kind found in some other Macintosh games, like *Iron Helix*, but there is no discernible difference between the quality of animation found in *C.H.A.O.S.* and that of other products on the market that did not employ a Silicon Graphics machine.

Likewise, the use of stereo sound is somewhat exaggerated in the packaging. The game *does* use stereo for some of its sound effects and narrative passages, but in a few cases it's employed ineffectively. For example, during an instructional message regarding the operation of the probe, the narrator's voice ping-pongs between the left and right speakers. Although the view screen does show a revolving wire-screen model of the probe, there is nothing to indicate that the player's orientation, or the orientation of his sound source, has changed in any way. The stereo sound, in this case, simply comes off as a gimmick.

The Content

The entire story of *The C.H.A.O.S. Continuum* is not contained in the game. Rather, the enclosed manual carries a three page pre-history of the events leading up to the scientists' call for assistance. This material is well written and, unlike many science-fiction stories of this ilk, is not terribly far-fetched. Unfortunately, it's also the most interesting part of the plot. By the time the distress call goes out and you are invited to participate, all the really compelling action has already taken place: Titan has been colonized, C.H.A.O.S. has been built, C.H.A.O.S. has become unruly, the colonists have been subdued, and the scientists have shuffled off into their cozy continuum. What's left is an exercise in digging up a few clues, following instructions, and completing a couple of fairly simple tasks.

These tasks, which are intended to pass for challenges, are in fact, not challenges at all. For example, our first task is to travel into New Eden's underground science lab and retrieve a number of codes and maps. To gain entry to the various labs that contain these items, we must pass the Intuitive Sound Cognition Test. Sounds daunting, I know, but it's as simple as a session with the old Milton-Bradley toy, "Simon." Here's how it works:



When the probe draws up to one of the lab doors—there are four that must be accessed—a computerized voice that sounds distinctly low-tech for the year 2577 demands a security clearance code. A panel sporting 12 buttons then appears. Each of these buttons has the ability to light up and play a different pitch, and your job, as in "Simon," is to parrot the sequence displayed and played on these buttons. The first time through, five buttons are engaged. If you make a mistake, the ante is upped to six buttons. Any mistake thereafter is punished by destruction of the probe and a trip back to the main screen where you're offered the opportunity to begin anew, resume a saved mission, access on-line help, or quit the game. Although this test is amusing once or twice, on the third and fourth go around it becomes tiresome.

Other than the Intuitive Sound Cognition Test, you stumble upon a couple of mazes that are easily navigated with the help of pen and paper, and you are called upon to play an outer space version of "The Lady or the Tiger." This is that old wheeze in which the player is asked to make a choice among a number of potentially dangerous options. The difference here is that the tiger is always behind the same door—if you make the wrong choice, it's a simple matter to go back to a saved game and try the next option.

From Bad To Worse

C.H.A.O.S. is also plagued by a number of small problems. One of the included maps is wrong (the player who stubbornly follows its directions will quickly be vaporized), the Macintosh interface uses some odd conventions (to save a game, you must first quit and then save), and the game is overly particular about the kind of extensions, control panels, and hardware you use. The current release is incompatible with accelerator cards, Adobe's *ATM* and *Type Reunion*, and Apple's *MacsBug*.

Creative Multimedia is aware of these problems and is correcting the incompatibilities and errors for future updates. Sadly, fixing these few things won't significantly improve the game. Although the game is recommended for ages 10 and up, *The C.H.A.O.S. Continuum* simply doesn't cut the mustard as adult entertainment. The game is too slow and too easily solved to hold a seasoned game player's attention for long.

If I worked in the Creative Multimedia marketing department, I would seriously consider revamping the packaging and advertising to target *The C.H.A.O.S. Continuum* for a younger audience. The perfect market for *C.H.A.O.S.* is young teenagers who have an interest in sci-fi and space adventures. The level of science is not too advanced, there is no violence against humans, and the level of intensity is enough to engage a young mind.

CGW

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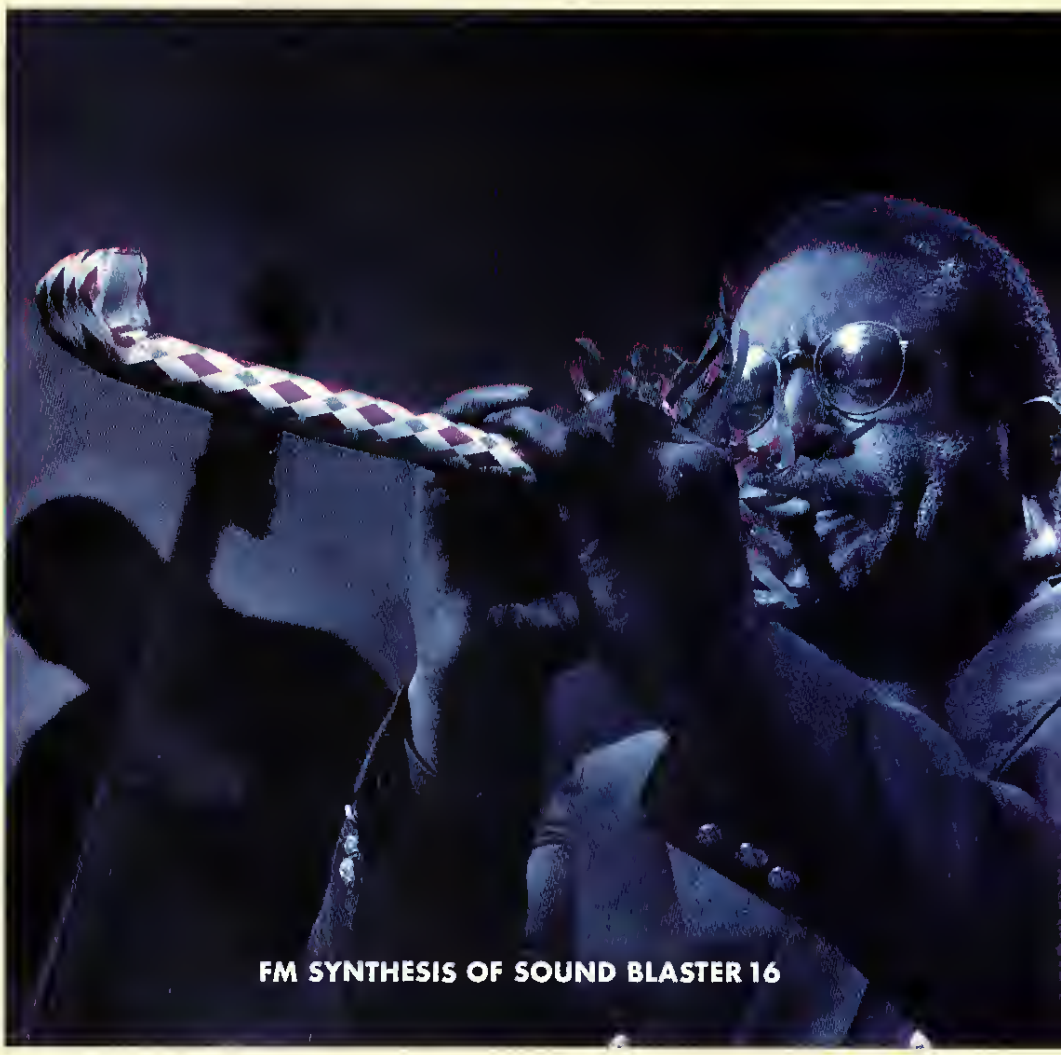

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Circle Reader Service #74

The Ups And Downs Of Disney's Coaster

KNOTT'S BERRY FARM © 1992 Knott's Berry Farm

By Gordon Goff

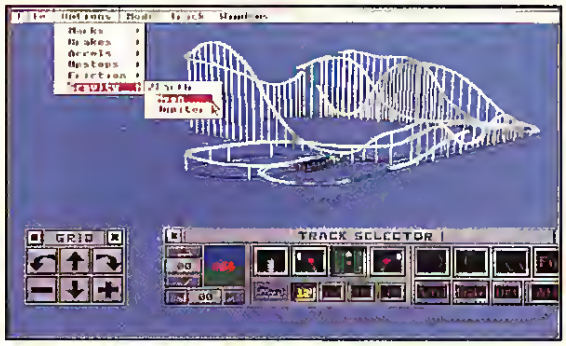
How do you turn an introduction to 3D CAD design into something that people would *want* to do in their spare time? Disney Software seems to have found an answer in *Coaster*, a simplistic CAD program that allows you to design and erect your own roller coaster. As reward, you, the budding engineer, will then have a chance to experience first-hand your dream amusement park heart-stopper.

Disney's newest venture has several things working in its favor, not the least of which are its price, its miniature size (at a mere 1.1 MB, the program fits quite comfortably on a common household diskette), and its ability to run on just about any 386 machine.

But certainly the most intriguing element of *Coaster* is the actual construction of the railed machine. With a simple tap of a mouse button, thrill-seekers will find themselves immersed in an informative and accurate "3D" CAD sampler. Here, various track pieces are at the ready, including left and right handed curves, loops, barrel rolls and climbing straights. The mission for the architect is the amalgamation of all the components into some form of a working unit that will thrill the pants off, without ripping the spines out of, coaster lovers.

In the design mode, a detailed grid defines your working space, a pair of button bars offer various track pieces and movement keys, and you may zoom both in and back out again, rotate, flip, and manipulate works in progress for views that are perspectively correct from all angles. The height, pitch, banking, length and even the color of each individual track piece are fully adjustable, as is the desired amount of gravitational pull. For those who have always felt the CAD learning experience might be, shall we say, imposing, *Coaster* represents a fine working primer on the subject.

Upon completion of the model, actual testing will determine its quality and "rideability." If a roller coaster car is unable to make it from start to finish due to shoddy workmanship, it's literally back to the drawing board. Perhaps the degree of track banking is insufficient, or the peaks a little too tall—whatever the problem, you will have to reassess and rebuild, or find a new line of work.



After experiencing first-hand the hottos of your mind wrought into itonwork, a sort of post-game analysis will check a number of design characteristics such as Ride Time, Average Speed, Top Speed, Maximum Height, Maximum Gs, and so on. In this "Signature" mode, a wire-frame perspective of the ride will sit in the screen's upper left corner, while a polygraph-style plotter runs at the bottom, graphically depicting all the forces at work either enhancing or detracting from your masterpiece. If the coaster builder feels the overall statistics to be strong enough, the true fun quotient will be ready for the most intense scrutiny.

Residing deep inside the *Coaster* program are a group of people known as The Evaluators. Their sole function is to critique the gentle nuances and barf factor of each particular structure, and they're a hard lot to please. The Surf Dude, Mousy Librarian, Nintendo Kid, Little Old Lady, Blonde Babe, and Redneck Cowboy make up this eclectic judging panel, bonded together only in their lust for the thrill of the rails. Each has a specific coaster fetish, and where a relatively tame affair will garner weary expressions and sarcastic comments, a hell-bent screamer will elicit extreme physical reactions, verbal enthusiasm, *and* a high score. When all The Evaluators have found their own sense of joy in a single structure, your job is complete...until next time, when the compelling design phase draws you back for another go.

From most viewpoints, *Coaster* is an innovative, refreshing little software gem, and assembling the pieces of new coaster "puzzles" may well become an engaging and possibly obsessive undertaking. But establishing new levels of first person thrills is not the strong suit of the program. As Ted Shred, the Evaluating Surfer Dude might say, "Building the monster machine is, like, tubular, man...but, hey, riding it through a monitor screen is like, bogus."

Clearly, riding a digital *Matterhorn* is a far cry from the "chuck-your-lunch" frights of the real thing, but *Coaster* is somewhat ineffective even in its attempt. Granted, a "virtual" roller coaster is indeed an ambitious idea, but while the "clackety-clack" of wheels against rail helps audio make the grade, visual perception is left wanting—a sort of throwback to those EGA days of yesteryear. The *Coaster* track is skeletal, scenery is Mickey Mouse (a mountain range thrown onto the horizon), and no, your car cannot be hurled wildly through the air and viciously to the ground from a poorly designed track.

Although sensory expectations may not be met, *Coaster* presents its own little magical kingdom in other areas, and introduces a new twist (and a few loops) to the gaming world. CGW

Coaster

TITLE	Coaster
PRICE	$24.95
SYSTEM	IBM
REQUIREMENTS	386 or better, 1MB RAM, VGA graphics, 1MB hard drive space, mouse
PROTECTION	None
DESIGNERS	Jim Simmons, Dan Duncalf
PUBLISHER	Disney Software Burbank, CA (800) 688-1520

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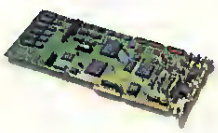

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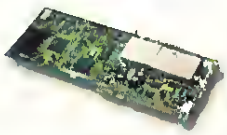

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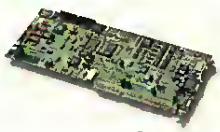

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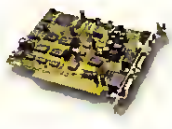

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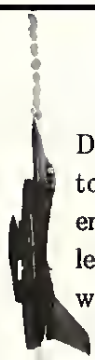
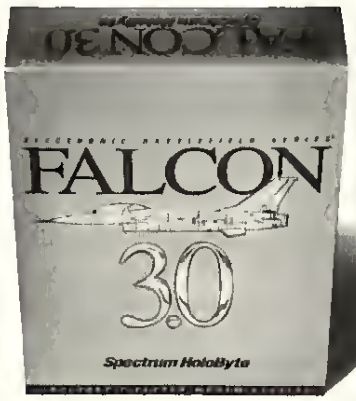


A TRUE STORY

Kuwait, May 23, 1991. Captain Dean "D-Dawg" Pennington dives to take out an Iraqi 85mm gun emplacement below. "Flares, break left!" his wingman screams. He wrenches the stick just as a SAM explodes 10 feet behind his F-16. Anti-aircraft batteries now open up all around, engulfing him. Too low to avoid the anti-aircraft, too slow to evade another SAM, he's faced with a hopeless choice and less than a quarter of a second to make it. Lighting afterburners, he rockets to safety before they can lock on again.

THE STANDARD BY WHICH OTHER FIGHTERS ARE JUDGED

Captain Pennington survived on skill, nerve and the awesome capabilities of the F-16 Fighting Falcon. Nothing, aside from a true F-16, captures the "hair-on-fire" feeling of flying America's most deadly fighter like *Falcon® 3.0*, Spectrum HoloByte's computer simulation.



A HIGHER LEVEL OF FLIGHT

Unlike some sims, which more closely simulate the arcade experience than the flying one, *Falcon 3.0* features a depth of play that almost rivals real life. Like real pilots, you'll fly with a wingman, allowing you to engage in aerial tactics like bracket maneuvers. Instead of enemies who fly in circles, *Falcon 3.0* adversaries fly according to true fighter doctrine so they're no pushovers. And Kuwait looks like Kuwait since real geographic theaters are faithfully mapped.

With Falcon 3.0, up to six players can go mano a mano. May the best man win.

SPECTRUM HI HEAD AD 2 HOLOBYTE

NOT JUST A SIMULATION OF A WARPLANE A SIMULATION OF WAR

Falcon 3.0 lets you fight as part of an entire campaign. The missions you fly play a crucial role in your side's success. But they're not hard-wired. Each result affects the overall war effort—and determines your next mission. Succeed

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For technical questions call (510) 522-1164 (M-F: 9AM-5PM Pacific Time).

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and go on to hit the enemy in his own backyard. Fail and find the bad guys breathing down your neck.

FALCON 3.0 vs. MiG-29

Electronic Battlefield Series simulations link up So you don't just choose your mission, you choose your aircraft Care to fly for the other side, comrade?

THE ELECTRONIC BATTLEFIELD SERIES: THE ULTIMATE CYBER-BATTLEFIELD

Choose from multiple aircraft, multiple theaters, even which side of the conflict to fight on. Go head-to-head over a modem or with up to six players over a network. It's possible because each *Electronic Battlefield Series* title works with the others, from *MiG-29*™ to the upcoming F/A-18 simulation. There's even a multimedia guide to air-to-air combat called *Art of the Kill*™ to help you fly like an ace. It all starts with *Falcon 3.0.*

The simulation for people who want to fly the not-so-friendly skies.

Spectrum HoloByte

ELECTRONIC BATTLEFIELD SERIES

The fight of your life.

Roadside Assistance For Sam & Max

Scorpia Plays The Good *Sam*aritan To Adventurers In Need

It's not enough to say that *Sam and Max Hit The Road* is bent. It's warped and twisted enough to put a DNA strand to shame. Imagine a pair of wacko critters roaring around the countryside calling themselves the *Freelance Police*. Almost makes you wish for an aspirin and a flak jacket. Hey Fred! Check the storage closet!

As a general rule, it's Sam who performs most of the actions in this game, but don't forget about his partner. When something has you puzzled, when you're not sure what to do, when in doubt—use Max! Hey, it can't hurt.

Okay, so our boys Sam (the dog) and Max (the psychotic rabbit) have just been assigned a hot new case. Before running off, though, be sure to check out the office thoroughly. You don't wanna be without money, or anything else you might need later (walk ALL around the place).

After some fun stuff on the stairway, it's time to hit the street and find that bonded city courier. Hmmm. He doesn't seem to be around. Then again, this being the game it is, maybe he doesn't look like you'd expect (and just what were you expecting, anyway?).

Now it's off to the carnival to learn what the problem is, and it turns out to be a strange one: the prime exhibit, a Bigfoot-on-ice, has vanished, and so has Trixie the Giraffe-Necked Girl. How did Bruno get out of the ice? Why did he take Trixie? Where are they now? And who were those two unpleasant types you ran into on the way in? That's what you'll have to find out as you go along. Real detective work here. Hah!

Walk around the carnival and be sure to talk to everyone. And you *must* play Wak-A-Rat. Yep, no way around this one, and you do have to win. Besides, haven't you always dreamt of bonking a passel of sassy rats? Look around the rest of that tent, too. And don't forget to take a ride on the Cone of Tragedy!

So now there's the Tunnel of Love to get through. Kinda dark in here, huh? Maybe some extra light will help with all that blackness. Ah, is that a fuse panel we see? Sure looks like one. Let's be vandalistic and blow the fuses! You gotta be quick, though; this one requires split-second timing (you might say it's almost like splitting hares).

It isn't long after this that you talk to Doug the Moleman. He can tell you some interesting things—like about the World's Largest Ball of Twine and the real story behind Bruno's escape—for a little bribe (where to get it ought to be pretty obvious).

I know you're eager to rush off to the twine, but visit Trixie's trailer first so that you can get Gator Golf on the map (saves a little time). This twine episode is a little tricky, and you'll be coming back here more than once, so don't expect to get everything done on the first visit. For now, it's enough to talk to the weirdo who bends wrenches with mental power. And you can mess around with the binoculars if you like, but that's really for later.

So what's next? How about that World of Fish, eh? (Remember not to leave empty-handed!). Say, that big fake fish on the left sure looks interesting. I wonder if anything might be inside? Or, if not, maybe something might go in there instead. A couple of somethings, even. At least it solves one of the problems with the ball of twine.

Now let's go see what this Gator Golf is all about. Wow, miniature golf with alligator hazards! Whatta concept! And speaking of hazards, there's Conroy Bumpus and his stooge again. In hardly any time at all, Sam is out cold, and poor Max is trapped in the Dunk-the-Beast.

Before rescuing Max, have a little fun with the golf course (I just loved dunking Max a few times myself!). Then it's down to serious stuff, like getting over to him without being chomped by alligators. Maybe you can give them something else to chomp on (Conroy comes to mind, but he's not available, so you'll have to fish around for an alternative).

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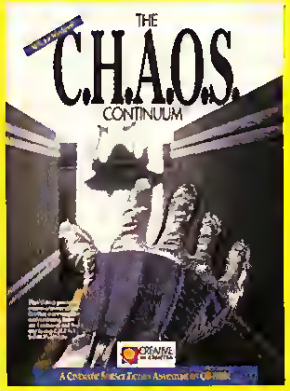

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Hey, what's this? It's a sno-globe from the Mystery Vortex! (You didn't see that? You didn't look close enough!). If Sam and Max weten't twisted enough before, they're sure gonna be after a visit to this bizarre place!

Riding the mini-vortex is fun, but it's really impottant later on. What you have to do here is find Shuv-Oohl. Look at all those doots. Maybe he's in back of one of them? Could be, but just try getting thtough 'em. Not so easy, is it?

Meanwhile, all this getting taller and getting smaller stuff makes you feel like Alice in Wonderland, huh? Well, you reflect on that for a little while. And when you get to the secret of the Vottex (there's *three* of 'em; don't miss the far tight!), be sure to check out all the pretty colors.

So now you talk to Shuv-Oohl, but he wants something (like his ring from inside the big ball of twine) befote he'll tell you anything important. Hey, no problem, haven't we done hardet stuff already? All you need for this is a big reach, a helping hand, and a little attractiveness.

And while you're at the twine, use those binocs to locate Frog Rock (you DID fix them sometime or other, right?). What's that? You say everything looks too small? Wak! Wak! Wak! (Got the idea now?)

Okay, so you give Shuv-Oohl the ring, and he gives you some stuff and some instructions. Just follow them (I will not attempt to describe the tesults, just do it and see for yourself), and then it's on to lovely Bumpusville!

That's right, the home of Conroy Bumpus himself. Be careful what you grab in hete; some things ate safe and some aren't. But it's okay to talk to Lee-Harvey (in fact, you can get some interesting info ftom him), and you don't want to miss the floor show. Especially not that, since you finally catch up to Trixie and Btuno, sort of. Thete's just this little alarm system you have to do something about first (doing something about Conroy will be a little furthet in the future).

So you gotta do something about Lee-Harvey. After Gator Golf, it's obvious that sheet physical violence isn't the answer (a great disappointment to Max, no doubt). However, Lee-H isn't too bright. A little adroid divetsion should be enough for that.

Facing the dragon can be a little tough. Maybe frusttating, 'cause he seems to have only one vulnerable spot (believe me, I ttied 'em all!). Need a hint? Just look at the title of this column (talk about giveaways!).

All tight, so you free up Trixie and Bruno, but they aren't interested in going back to the carnival (can't blame 'em). Instead, they take off fot the Savage Jungle Resort and the Bigfoot party. Sure, you can follow them there, but not being Bigfoots (Bigfeet?), S&M can't get in. At least they can talk to Evelyn Morrison. Those brochures are handy for lighting up Mount Rushmore and Celebrity Vegetables (using GREAT restraint, I make no further comments on that last one!).

Mt. Rushmore is a great place for bungee-jumping. Just remember you'te not doing this for fun. There's a reason for almost plopping into that tar pit. And don't miss the dinosaut exhibit. Y'know, that woolly mammoth looks pretty hot with all that fur on him.

Okay, okay, you figuted out our boys have to disguise themselves as a Bigfoot to get in, but even all dressed up, there's no way past the bouncer. Unless you do him a favor, that is. He sute has trouble with his big feet (heh). So what can you do about it? "I gotta go, I gotta go!" (See how clevetly I snuck that hint in there? Ouch!)

So now you're at the party (Sam and Max sure make a cute Bigfoot). Talk to all of 'em if you like, but the real action is in the kitchen (a hatd place to find, as it's not evident on the screen; go left near the dancets).

Hmmm. A freezer? Anything inside? Nope, it's empty right now. What about that back door...wonder where it leads. OOOPS! Look who just walked in: Conroy and Lee-Harvey, and they're about to snatch Sam and Max as a Bigfoot prize (yeah, sometimes Conroy isn't too bright, either). What to do?

Well, really the only thing is to show Contoy what a mistake he's making (this is a little tricky, since just talking to him isn't enough; play with your inventory). Of course, that gave Conroy the idea of him and Lee-Harvey using the disguise to spy on the Bigfoots (Bigfeet?), and they step into the freezer to put it on (hey, I *said* these guys weten't too btight!!).

Do I have to say what comes next? Didn't think so. Anyway, having done a big favot fot the Bigfeet, Sam and Max ate made honorary hotshots of the ttibe and taken to the final puzzle of this crazy adventure—the four totem poles—which, befitting an endgame, is the toughest section of the game.

Actually, it's not too hatd when you realize that each pole represents an item, and when you figure out what the item is, you just hand it ovet to the chief. Simple, eh? Okay okay, maybe not. I admit, I spent a lot of time trying to use the items on the poles themselves until I tried giving the stuff to the chief (hey, I have my off days, too).

So let's see hete. Ya need something from Celebrity Veggies (and it ain't Conroy; picture something else). Ya need something from Mount Rushmore (think D.D.S.). Ya need something from Conroy's mansion (yawn). And ya need a little something from Mystery Vortex, after you find a plug (hic).

Then just sit back and enjoy the fun. Especially enjoy Max's btight idea for retutning the Bigfoot to the carnival. A petfect ending!

And that's about it for now. Remember if you need help with an adventure game, you can reach me in the following ways:

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

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

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

Until next time, happy adventuring! CGW

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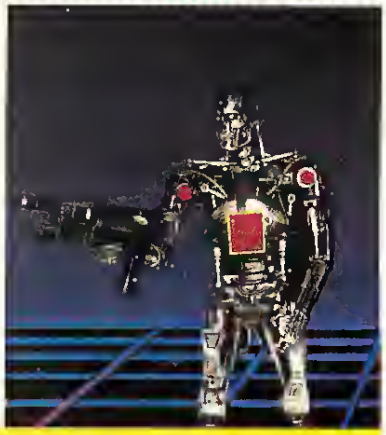
Darth Vader vs. The Terminator



Star Wars And *T2* Meet In A 64-Square Universe

by Jay Kee

Chess has been around for centuries. It has outlived empites and dynasties, survived wars and rebellion, and ttanscended endless attempts to analyze it. Thete is a certain symmetry, a fascinating depth to the game that will sustain it into the next millennia and beyond. In the fickle world of games, it has uncanny staying powet. Maybe that's why so many have tried so hard to te-invent it. Although there have been vatiations like *Archon* and 3D Chess, no one really succeeded in doing anything really different with the grand old game until *Battle Chess* hit the shelves.

Battle Chess took the simple ptemise of dramatizing the actual capture of pieces without altering the rules of the game. It was successful, and it naturally resulted in several sequels, including the latest release of Interplay's *Battle Chess 4000*. On the down side, it also spawned a host of imitations and look-alikes—some good, some bad, most mediocre. The latest entties in the *Battle Chess* look-alike contest come from Capstone with *Terminator 2: Judgment Day Chess Wars*, and Software Toolworks with *Star Wars Chess*.

Not content with simply imitating the format with animated captures, these games introduce a new element: Hollywood. Both games are based on mega-hit movies. The boxes and literature and game graphics draw heavily on themes, music and characters from the films. The idea seems to be that if you loved the movie, you'll buy the game. Let's set aside the packaging and cinematic cross-promotion for a while and take a look at the actual games.

Use the Force, Luke. Castle Kingside!

Software Toolworks' *Star Wars Chess* runs exclusively under Windows 3.1. The minimum hardware requirement is a 386-33 with 4 MBs of RAM, MPC-rated sound card and CD-ROM drive, and SVGA graphies capability. A 486-33 is recommended. The one catch here is the Windows driver you're using. If you aren't running a 640x480x256 color driver, you'll have to use Windows Setup to teconfigure before the game will run. If you don't have a 256-color driver, you'll need to get one—either from your graphies card manufacturer, your dealer, or the Windows suppott library on one of the major commercial nets, like GEnie or CompuServe.

The game runs full-screen in 640x480 and looks every bit as good as in 800x600, which runs inside a non-resizable window. The SVGA graphics are sharp, smooth and very attractive. The pieces are faithful reproductions of various *Star Wars* characters, creatures and mechanicals, and the backgrounds for the two 3-D boards are detailed without being cluttered.

Both music and sound effects are excellent—this is a CD, after all. Strangely enough, music and sound-effects are not independent options. If you turn the music off, you lose the sound effects as well. As nice as the music is, it gets monotonous after awhile, and it would be nice if you could turn it off without losing the effects.

Being a Windows game, *Star Wars Chess* uses a mouse interface. The pieces are moved by a drag-and-drop method that's a bit awkward until you learn to place the pointer slightly above the target piece. Until you do, you'll invariably click on the wrong piece.

The game menus also take some getting used to. Options are selected through a series of icons located in the lower left cornet of the screen. Clicking on an icon will bring up another row of icons which contain specific options, highlighted in text in a window bar to the tight. Once you get the hang of it, it's really very comfortable.

Game options are limited to bare-bones basic chess settings, which include taking back moves, choosing side and opponent, forcing moves, replaying moves, or asking for hints. Play levels are uncomplicated and single-tiered, consisting simply of five choices ranging from

Star Wars Chess

TITLE	Star Wars Chess
PRICE	$44.95
SYSTEM:	IBM CD-ROM
REQUIREMENTS	386 33MHz, 4MB RAM, SVGA graphics, CD-ROM drive, Windows 3.1, Microsoft Mouse, MPC-Rated Sound Card
PUBLISHER	The Software Toolworks Novato, CA (415) 883-3000

T2: Judgment Day Chess Wars

TITLE:	Terminator 2: Judgment Day Chess Wars (With Grandmaster Chess)
PRICE:	$49.95
SYSTEM:	IBM CD-ROM
REQUIREMENTS	386 33MHz, 1MB RAM, 10MB hard drive space, VGA/SVGA graphics, mouse; supports AdLib, Sound Blaster, PAS, Roland, Covox Sound Boards sound cards
PUBLISHER:	Capstone Miami, FL (305) 591-5900

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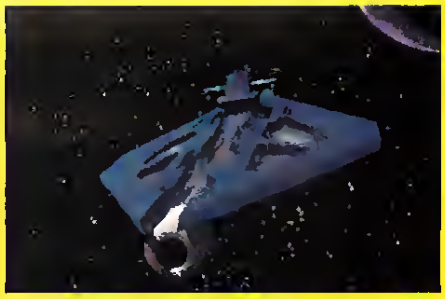

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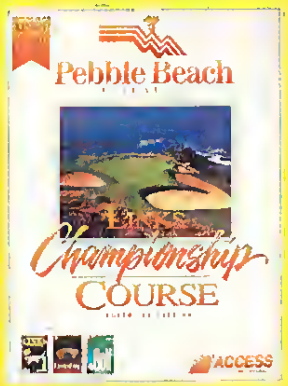

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Circle Reader Service #39

Newcomer to Expert. There are none of the extras commonly found on standard chess programs, such as think-during-move, learning mode, time controls, tournament clocks, or the selection of openings. I find this especially surprising considering that the game was built upon the *Chessmaster* engine.

Also conspicuous by its absence is the 2-D/3-D option. The game must be played out on the 3D board, which for all practical purposes, is next to impossible. Once the novelty of the animated captures wears off—and it wears off in a hurry—you're going to want to switch to a 2-D board to play the game. With pieces occupying the middle of the board, things get so cluttered it's impnssible to analyze your position.

There is a Setup option that allows the player to arrange pieces to re-create game positions on a 2-D board, but for some unfathomable reason, you can't play the game from this board. You're forced to return to the 3-D board and pieces.

Star Wars Chess

As for the chess engine, it's adequate but mostly harmless. The lack of an opening library slows it down and makes for some boring, repetitive games. If you're looking for a challenge, you'll be disappointed; if you like to win, you'll be pleased.

The animations in the *Battle Chess* genre are the stars of the show. When so much of the actual gameplay is sacrificed for the sake of sound and graphics, nothing less than spectacular will do. *Battle Chess 4000* delivered—with SVGA graphics, fluid animation and digitized sound, all on a disk-based game with a lower hardware requirement. *Star Wars Chess* does not.

While the graphics and sound are nice, the animations are a bit choppy and slow. And although the capture sequences vary randomly, they are for the most part predictable and uninspired. In fact, the best part about them is that they can be turned off.

You May Check Me Now, But...I'll Be Back!

Capstone's *Terminator 2: Judgment Day Chess Wars* is also a CD-ROM game. It installs and runs under DOS and requires a minimum 386-33 with VGA or SVGA graphics capability, 2 MBs extended memory (SVGA), and a double-speed CD-ROM. A sound card is required, but the sound will play through the PC speaker. Again, a 486-33 is recommended. The game doesn't like compression programs; if you've got a compressed drive, it probably won't run.

Right up front, I have to say that the game crashed repeatedly on my system. Configuring and various boot disks did nothing to

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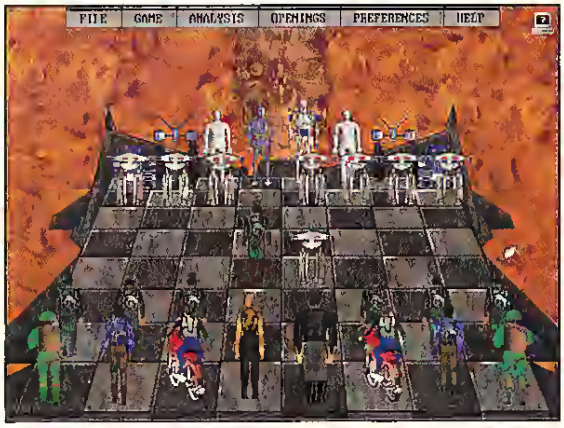
alleviate the problem. The game would load and play for a of time, then crash. Commentary on the chess engine is limited by the fact that not a single game was played to completion.

The graphics are unimpressive, especially for SVGA. There are five different board designs available, but the only thing that changes is the background—the board stays the same. Pieces consist of characters and machines from the T2 film that move atound the board either by walking or stepping into a "vortex" that transports them to the destination square. The vortex effect is fairly quick, but the walking consumes too much time. Fottunately, the Preferences option allows you to turn the various effects, animations and sounds on or off. It may be a testimony to the quality that I eventually turned everything but the sound off.



T2: Judgment Day Chess Wars

Captures ate all dtamatized by animated battles, but unlike *Star Wars Chess*, they take place off the board. The ttansition to and ftom these animated sequences is painfully slow (even with a double-speed dtive), and the animations themselves are a big disappointment. They're pootly-rendered, jerky and wholly underwhelming.

The sound is quitc good, howevet, and could be considcted the highlight of the game. Effects ate solid, and there are two types of music, Moody or Nervous, to choose from. The music does wear thin, but when it does, the sound effects aren't lost when the music is turned off.

T2 Chess Wars offers a better range of game options than *Star Wars Chess*. You can sct playing strength by selecting one of five scttings from Beginner to Grandmastet, but you can also vaty the style of play by choosing Active, Passive or Balance style options. The game will ptint moves and diagrams, and includes a Time Control option that provides a wide range of clock options. Thete's even a feature that will compute yout tating on the USCF scale ovet a shott ot long-tetm time-frame. But there are a couple of key elements missing.

A 2-D board is not supported, and although there is a Library Option on the menu, *T2* apparently does not possess an opening libtary. The manual states that it has a library containing 4500 opening variations, but when you select the option, there's nothing there. A subsequent check of the CD and installed files also dtew a blank. There's an Adjust Variety option that allows you to set the vatiety of moves *T2* chooses from the opening libtary, but without a library, it's a moot point.

Endgame

Both *Star Wars Chess* and *T2 Chess Wars* are examples of markcting at its best (or worst, depending on your point of view). Theit appeal is centeted on theit expensive movie licenses and the genre they'te imitating. Theit value as chess games is minimal; their value as pute entertainment is non-existent. While *Star Wars Chess* does the better job with its licensed bells and whistles, both of these games are destined to collect dust on a shelf. CGW

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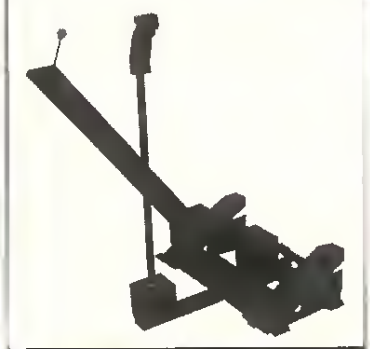
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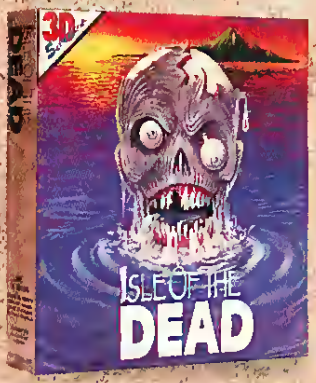

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Only In America

Syndicate Goes To The States In *American Revolt*

by Jeff James

Revolution must be in the blood of those damned Yanks. Your multi-national corporation had captured the market-share of world power through its aggressive "marketing campaign," but now a rotten apple has been found in the pie chart of your global dominance. The territories in the Americas, both North and South, have decided to vote with their firearms and violently secede from your young global empire, preferring reckless autonomy to forced subservience.

Syndicate: American Revolt, an add-on disk to the original *Syndicate* program from Electronic Arts, offers 21 single player missions in which you must coerce the American territories back into the union—by whatever means necessary. In addition to the single player missions, a new multiplayer feature allows skull-to-skull competition in ten missions with up to seven other flesh and blood *Syndicate* players across a compatible network.

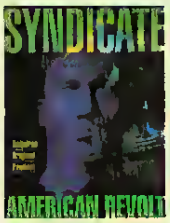
The multiplayer mode isn't the only new feature. Two new weapons have been added to every *Syndicate* executive's arsenal: the clone shield and the air strike. Useful only for multi-player games, the clone shield can disguise your deadly cyborg agents as harmless civilians, allowing you to sneak close to an unsuspecting enemy and surprise him with a sneak attack. Whereas the clone shield emphasizes subtlety and deception, the Air Strike relies on raw explosive power. To use the Air Strike, you simply mark the target area with a crosshair and hustle your agents out of the area. A flight of military aircraft will then rocket overhead, decimating large tracts of real estate with explosive munitions.

In terms of playability, *American Revolt* leans towards the more difficult end of the spectrum. Players who managed to bully their way through the original *Syndicate* missions by loading up on mini-guns and medikits will have a difficult time with most of the missions in *American Revolt*. A few scenarios are absurdly difficult, as if the developers were trying to "get even" with players who thought that the original was too easy.

The increased difficulty of *American Revolt* amplifies the shortcomings of the original *Syndicate*, turning niggling foibles into serious impediments to gameplay. The inability to see behind buildings and other structures was only irritating in the original; in *American Revolt*, a hidden enemy has enough firepower to decimate an entire squad faster than you can say "cyberpunk." The amount of graphic detail in the original *Syndicate* was one of its strengths; here, that same detail leads to sluggish animation and lethargic gameplay. The missions in *American Revolt* are often packed with opponents, with several dozen heavily armed enemy agents not uncommon for most missions. The combat zone can quickly become choked with explosions, rocket exhaust, burning shrubbery, and other animation, bringing even the fastest 486 machines to a crawl. When presented separately, these problems are merely irksome. Combined, they can try the patience of even the most accepting gamer.

Hard-core *Syndicate* nuts who couldn't get enough of the original game—and who have access to a network running NETBIOS—will most likely be able to overlook the flies in *American Revolt*'s ointment and find hours of enjoyment. Less interested gamers should steer clear and wait for a more playable addition to the *Syndicate* family. CGW

Syndicate: American Revolt



TITLE:	Syndicate: American Revolt
PRICE:	$29.99
SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS:	IBM Syndicate, 1.5 MB hard drive space
PROTECTION:	None
DESIGNER:	Bullfrog Software
PUBLISHER:	Electronic Arts San Mateo, CA (415) 572-ARTS

Network Notes

I tested American Revolt on a small network running Novell Netware workstation shell v3.31, Novell IPX/SPX v3.10 and Novell NETBIOS v3.01. The procedure for running the network game is fairly straightforward. First, log onto the network and run NETBIOS. After starting *Syndicate*, select "multiplayer game" from the main menu. A mission selection screen will appear, listing the ten available multiplayer missions. Before beginning a multiplayer game, all players should select the same mission and the same number of players.

The instructions state that *American Revolt* needs at least 510K of conventional memory free after all the requisite drivers have been loaded. While the game will load in that configuration, practical playing experience revealed that having at least 550K of conventional RAM free on each machine prevented the occasional lock-up or drop to DOS. Getting that much free conventional memory isn't easy when you have a machine with a CD-ROM drive, disk compression, network drivers and other memory-grubbing TSRs. Use a clean boot disk or the multiple boot options of MS-DOS 6.0/6.2 to get the most out of your available RAM. I found the DOS 6 memmaker utility to be especially helpful at optimizing RAM for gameplay.

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Circle Reader Service #91

Over There

Rally 'Round The Wicket, Boys!

by Robin Matthews

Many years ago Europress Software released a CGA/EGA racing game called *RAC Lombard Rally*. Named after a well known car Rally in the United Kingdom, this was a respectable first-person driving simulation with some elements of route planning and resource management. Europress has now brought this theme into the 90's with *Network Q RAC Rally* (renamed simply *Rally* for the U.S. market, see Taking A Peek, pg. 174). For those new to the RAC Rally, it's a grueling four day 350 mile race with both day and night driving on surfaces varying from tarmac roads to forest dirt tracks, and with weather from sun through rain to snow and ice. Each day of racing a certain number of stages must be completed, each within a time limit. Thirty-five stages of the Rally are featured with a choice of five different cars. The graphies are strong, and although flight-sim multiple views are not supported (straight ahead view only), the night time driving is about the best in any racing simulation. A nice touch is that of a speaking navigator who talks you through the course using proper Rally jargon. The game runs decently on a 386-16 MHz processor but a bit more is recommended, especially for sound board support. *Network Q RAC Rally* will be brought to the U.S. via Accolade, and should be available as you tead this.

Europress Software's Rally

On the sporting fronts I have been asked about computer simulations of that most quintessentially English of pursuirs, the game of Cricket (a sort of baseball with more complicated rules—sides that are out trying to get the side that is in, out). There have been a couple of previous efforts by U.K. software houses to reproduce the thud of leather on willow, but these have tended to have poor graphies and very little gameplay. The basic rules of cricket lend themselves well to simulation, and if the likes of U.S. football and baseball can be converted, there is no reason why Chinamen, Leg Before Wicket and Full Tosses shouldn't make a suitable case for treatment.

U.K.-based Audiogenic is now threatening to make terms such as LBW, Silly Mid-off and Googlies household words with their *Graham Gooch World Class Cricket*. Master Graham is the highest scorer in English first class cricket, and it is to be hoped that this conversion will be rather more successful than the recent English XI performances. Shots playable include hooks, sweeps, leg glance, and back on the driving front—on, straight, off and cover. Bowling styles will allow fast, slow, swing and pace. This is coming to Cricket nets neat you shortly.

There is lots of gossip and rumor in the ether—talk of a new Mike Singleton game, the third part of *Lords of Midnight*. The original game and its rapid sequel *Doomdark's Revenge* were really big on old 8-bit formats, and although Part Three was underway, the purchase of its prospective publisher resulted in it being shelved many years ago. Singleton Esq. and Messrs. Maelstrom intend to revive the name as a PC version, either bearing the name *Lords of Midnight* or perhaps with the title mooted for the original third part, *Eye of Doom*. The original *Lords of Midnight* was a role-playing game that pushed 8-bit further than it could really go—an interesting development in prospect. Watch this space for further news...

Rough Ryder

Ocean, basking in the reflected glory of *TFX*, has also released another golf game. It's amazing how much computer attention this spott continues to attract. With *Links 386 Pro* and *David Leadbetter* still taking the high ground, new releases appear on the first tee at regular intervals. *Nick Faldo's Golf* and Ocean's recent *Open Golf* have made the PC fairways even busier, and here is yet another. *Ryder Cup Golf* attempts to simulate probably the best international team sport in the world. The ridiculous control system in *Open Golf* has in part been abandoned, and the player now has a choice of three control systems, one of which is the standard power meter method.

Ryder Cup Golf allows you to compete in the three matchplay formats of singles, fourball and foursomes. In its favor, up to four human players can take part and attempt to win the cup as a team. Unfortunately, the graphies are rather dated (more like EGA standard) and with no feeling of medium or long perspective. Putting is often the Achilles' heel of PC golf games (as the famous pros say "Drive for Show and Putt for Dough"), and *Ryder Cup Golf* is no exception with a crude

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Gremlin Graphics' Litil Divil

and insensitive interface. In the real McCoy, it's often the delicate feel and skill on the putting surface that makes all the difference—forget this in *Ryder Cup Golf!* Nothing beats the real thing, and as a second best there are far better programs lining the fairways.

You Litil Divil, You!

The star this month is a delightful graphic adventure called *Litil Divil.* Produced by Gremlin Graphics and with its final coding being produced in the Emerald Isle, *Divil* has been a show stopper at the European trade shows for a few years. It has been delayed and delayed, and it appeared it might suffer the fate of so many products that just take too long to come to the shelves. Fear not—*Litil Divil* has now arrived and should cause quite a stir. Basically it is a cartoon-style graphic game with a very daft plot involving recovering pieces of pizza. If you can get beyond this tacky storyline you'll find that the keyboard or mouse will control the actions of a comical demon as he navigates a large and varied subterranean world.

The locations are full of puzzles and problems that mostly require an element of dexterity and can often only be solved after considerable trial and error. Treasure rooms are dotted around the world allowing you to spend the gold coins littered through the locations and buy special items and provisions.

The graphics are similar to those used in the Don Bluth laserdisk games, but *Litil Divil* is stuffed full of game play and long term enjoyment. The sound effects add considerably and the interface, although a bit quirky, works well. The main plank of this product is the devilish sense of humor that pervades from start to finish. Your character takes some real stick—from being eaten by swamp creatures to having pianos fall on his head. It's all great fun and there is a fair amount of "cartoon violence." If Tom and Jerry disturbs you, so will *Litil Divil,* and it's as funny!

So, unusually, it looks as if it's been worth the wait, and *Litil Divil* is almost certain to result in a Slightly Bigger Divil sequel and a host of clones from other software houses.

The above games and any of the other games mentioned in past columns can be obtained from:

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Tel 01144-81-977-8088,
Fax 01144-81-977-4822,
or on CompuServe at 1000014,3466

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Robin Matthews can be contacted on CompuServe on 76004,3456 and welcomes comments and requests (within reason!). **CGW**

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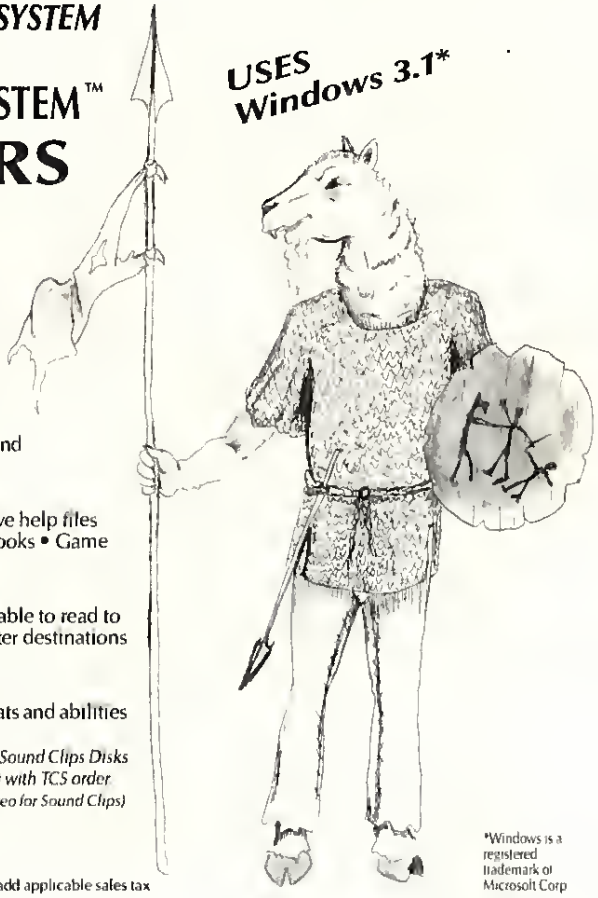

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Hitler Was A Litter-Bug

Merit Software's *Kronolog: The Nazi Paradox*

by Charles Ardai

Judging by its packaging and ads, you'd rhink *Kronolog: The Nazi Paradox* wants to be a hard-core exercise in speculative history, grappling with the classic "What If" question—What if the Nazis had won Wotld War II?—in the manner of Robert Harris' *Fatherland* or Phillip K. Dick's *The Man In the High Castle.* Alas, *Kronolog* has nothing so noble ot purposeful in mind. Whar *Kronolog* wants to be, as it turns out, is *Captain Planet*-meets-*Logan's Run,* with bits of *Indiana Jones, Mission: Impossible,* and *Back to the Future* thtown in fot good measure.

The game features lots of skulking about, hiding in barrels, and crawling through air vents; a surfeit of secret passwords, codes, and double agents; some Native American spirit magic hokum rhat comes out of nowhere (and then, thankfully, disappeats); and, for the finale, a bang-up acrion sequence that quotes, of all things, the *Die Hard* movies ("Auf Wiedersehen, schmuck!" being the PG version of Bruce Willis' unprintable signature line). All this is strung rogerher by a sroryline based on the premise rhar in 1945, through subterfuge, the Thitd Reich developed the atomic bomb first and dropped it on the Unired States.

"All right," I can hear you say, "so the Nazis won the war; that's a fine premise, but whar did they do next? What arrociries did rhey perpettate? What crimes against humanity?"

I'll tell you, but you'd bettet sit down first. This is serious stuff. The Nazis....

Ler me rake a deep breath.

Okay. The Nazis....

Failed to tecycle.

Yes, you heard me right. Those dastardly goosesteppets, now in charge of most of the known world, make the most of their power by leaving empty soda cans on their desks. They have plastic ferns in their offices, because they've polluted the air too much fot real ones to survive. Over the 75 years since the end of the war, they've made several endangeted species extinct. They also use unsanitary sewage-handling practices. It's enough to make yout blood boil.

The Not-So Nazis

Whar else do they do? Well, they threaten and hiss in Peret Lorre voices; they collect tacky art; they pur out "tetmination orders" against their polirical enemies; they weat peculiar facial hair; in the case of one scientist, they eat, and are eaten by, giant cockroaches. But mostly they pollute. In the naive and sanctimonious manner of so many recent games (not to mention films and television shows), *Kronolog* paints "ecocide" as the worst evil imaginable and asks you to "save the world" in much rhe way an aged flower child might stop you on a street cotnet and exhort you to save the whales, the spotted owl, the cotal reef, the ozone layer, or some other victim *du jour.*

Now, maybe it's just me, but I'm getting a little tired of the use of ecological miscreants as out era's villain of choice. To begin with, I find ecological "crimes" extremely unintetesting: as awful as their consequences are, they are almost never committed on purpose (Exxon did not set out to smothet the Valdez wildlife in crude oil) and are typically committed by faceless buteauctacies rather than individuals, which greatly diminishes their dramaric porenrial.

Second of all, I always get the feeling that I am being fed ecological storylines the way a dutiful mother feeds her childten strained peas. It's something good for me, I'm told, often explicitly—to which I teply that I don't want something good fot me, I want entertainment. Political advocacy and social propaganda have their place, but I don't want them forcibly injected into my computet games, not least of all because as bad as some game designets are ar designing games, they are infinitely worse as pteachers of corrective philosophy. Their P.C. nosttums typically bear the same relation to persuasive argumentation that sttained peas bear to the normal sort: they're mush, pap, pabulum, call them whar you will.

Finally, there is the matter of the Nazis. Computer gaming has room for all sotts of Nazis—realistic Nazis, cardboard Nazis,

Kronolog: The Nazi Paradox

TITLE:	Kronolog: The Nazi Paradox
PRICE:	$69.95
SYSTEM:	IBM
REQUIREMENTS:	386 or better, 2MB RAM, VGA graphics, 25MB hard drive space, mouse supports AdLib, PAS and Sound Blaster sound cards
PROTECTION:	Folding cardboard device
DESIGNER:	John Henson
PUBLISHER:	Merit Software Dallas, TX (214) 385-2353

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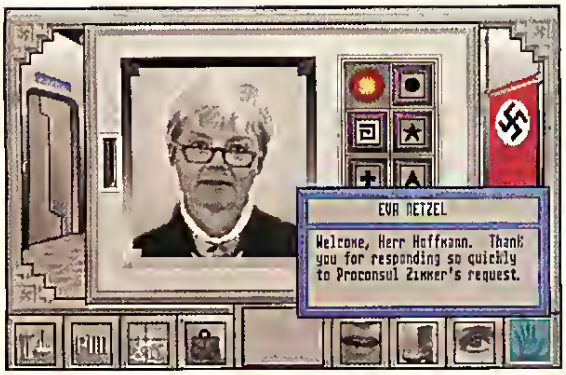

Raiders of the Lost Ark Nazis, *Schindler's List* Nazis—but using Nazis as your villains and then accusing them of no worse than ecologically destructive acts is, to my mind, like using the Huns but accusing them only of mistreating their horses, or using Jeffrey Dahmer but only accusing him of keeping the wattage of his refrigerator turned too high. These are the Nazis, for crying out loud! If the worst they do is erode the soil, foul the air, and commit the occasional necessary crime, then you're talking about SPECTRE, SMERSH, the Republicans, Big Business, the Illuminati, or *someone*, but *not* the Nazis.

Never mind that no mention is made of torture or genocide or rapacious geographical acquisitiveness; the height of irresponsibility is that in painting the Nazis primarily as cold-hearted polluters, of whose errors they will themselves presumably be the biggest victims, the designers alleviate the Nazis' burden of guilt. *Kronolog*'s Nazis are willfully negligent, self-destructive fools, but not the oppressive, sadistic, wantonly cruel butchers we know from history.

To put it another way, *Kronolog*'s Nazis are James Watt instead of Josef Mengele. As much as I disliked James Watt, I'd much rather live in a country run by Watt than spend two heartbeats in the same room as Mengele. Sadly, the designers of *Kronolog* don't seem to understand the difference.

An Interactive Movie To Nazi

"Enough time spent on your soapbox, Ardai," you say. "Suppose I like playing games with ecological themes? What if a cheesy eco-adventure is exactly what I have been looking for?"

Well, then, more power to you—everyone's entitled to their own tastes. However, I should tell you that you'd better keep looking. Even if *Kronolog* satisfies you with its storyline, it is sure to disappoint with its clumsy design.

Start with a mysteriously elongated installation procedure that takes more than two and a half hours if attempted on a fragmented hard drive. Note that the game is then literally unplayable—in the sense that it might take up to half a minute of disk access between any two moves—until you run a defragmenter to optimize your hard drive. (When I asked the publisher why their game exhibits this peculiar behavior, they chalked it up to the enormous amount of digitized speech, which is true; yet other games contain comparable amounts of speech and run just fine on fragmented drives.)

Next, note that the speech in question suffers from dinner theater quality delivery and sub-dinner theater quality scripting, on the order of "I hear you're doing some kick-ass work" and "I've just doomed the world for eternity!" Add the fact that many sentences

are cut off ("I just want to say goodb—") when the computer starts searching for the next sentence, and the fact that the game doesn't even attempt to synchronize the audio with the characters' wildly flailing lips, and you are likely to reach the same conclusion I did—the speech might as well have been left out.

Instead, what they left out are many of the technological niceties that adventure game players have grown accustomed to, without which *Kronolog* feels like a relic from half a decade ago. What's missing? To begin with, a movement system that allows you simply to click on the spot in the graphic window where you want your character to go. Instead, in *Kronolog* you must move your character right, then down, then left, then up, maneuvering him around obstacles (something no major game has required for years) since the computer refuses to do it for you.

"At least," you say, "you can stand in the center of a room and interact with the various objects around you, right?" Nope. Try to read a label on a box that's two feet away from your character and the game says "You can't read that from here." Try to open a door from one foot away and the game says "You can't open that from here."

And what do you suppose the designers put on almost every screen, considering that they have made moving around obstacles such a pain in the backside? That's right—obstacles! It took me eight minutes, no exaggeration, to move from one side of a Mexican pueblo to the other. Getting off a scientist's porch was a breeze, comparably, at only five.

"So," you say, "it takes five or eight minutes of clicking all over the place to get Hoffman to go where you want him to—that's not so bad. Patience is a virtue, right?" Wrong! Just to keep you on your toes, the designers have chosen to fill up the last few scenes of the game with several puzzles that are time-sensitive. Spend more than 30 seconds in Dr. Grossman's office and you're dead; spend more than five in the church basement and your condom will blow up (don't ask).

There's plenty more to criticize about *Kronolog*: graphics that range from decent to rotten; endless, hard-to-access text files on your Personal Information Manager; and the fact that all conversations are of the non-interactive, sit-back-and-watch variety. Add the occasional program crash, an ugly color scheme, a poorly devised plot (your character is trying to save his son, but he is still missing at game's end), and the regrettable cockroach-eating scene, and you've got a game that might have been used as a Gestapo interrogation device. This game is exclusively for masochists, and only uncritical, historically myopic ones at that. **CGW**

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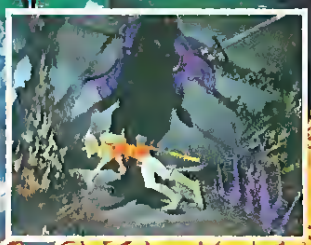

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Circle Reader Service #106

The New Age Of Crystal Power

Casady & Greene's *Crystal Crazy* Revamps A Classic Mac Addiction

By Douglas A. Winship

Really good computer game sequels are hard to find. They usually are so different from the original that they are a diffetent game entitely, or so bogged down with "enhancements" that the playability of the original is desttoyed. *Crystal Crazy*, Casady & Greene's sequel to *Crystal Quest*, shows how to do a sequel right. The player now has a variety of weapons and even some protective shields, has more things to do besides loot the crystal fields, and must fight his or her way through a whole new set of bizarre critters. Despite all the new features, *Crystal Crazy* is no mote difficult to play than its hallowed predecessor, and is just as fun.

All you Mac-types who've joined the faith since *Crystal Quest* disappeared from store shelves will need to get up to speed with basic game play. The first thing to understand about *Crystal Crazy* is that it is a mindless shoot-em-up. You move a ship around the playing area to accomplish some task or other while avoiding mines and other hazards. All of this is complicated by hordes of attacking creatures with wondrous names, such as Zinkleflashoxicationizers and Fractutefluffies, whose sole purpose is to shoot and/or bump into you, with unfortunate results. Once the task for each level is completed, doors open up to provide an escape to the next level. With each higher level, the creatures get appropriately nastier, and are accompanied by a collection of vety funny, and in some cases slightly naughty, sound effects.

Slip Slidin' Away

Crystal Crazy's method of motion is somewhat unique in action games. Moving the mouse in a direction does not move the ship in that direction, it *thrusts* the ship in that direction. When you stop moving the mouse, the ship keeps tight on going until it hits something (bad) or reaches the edge of the screen and stops (not necessatily bad). The result is a lag in response that takes some getting used to. Maneuvering in *Crystal Crazy* feels a little like running atound in penny loafets on an ice rink.

The ship has a single gun that fires bullets in the direction the ship is traveling, at speeds slightly faster than the ship's. Unfortunately, this means that to shoot something that's chasing you (a very common situation), you must first turn around and move ditectly towards it (don't miss!). Another tactic is to use Smart Bombs that kill everything on the screen and provide a few ptecious seconds of peace and quiet. Smart Bombs are limited in supply, but mote can be found lying atound on most levels. Using them is really a legal sort of cheating, so be sure to collect as many as possible.

Kinda Puzzlin', These Critters

The point of the game—if it can be said with a straight face to actually have one—is to clear each level's objective as quickly as possible. If the original *Crystal Quest* could be said to have a weakness, it was this "open the escape hatch to the next level" approach. The standard tactic was to run the ship over all the crystals scattered about the screen, which became a bit boring after about 30 levels. *Crystal Crazy* alleviates this monotony by adding four more possible objectives. On some levels, you must assemble one or more jigsaw puzzles. Another objective is either erasing or filling in several picture frames that float atound the screen. Probably the hatdest to accomplish on levels with heavy ctitter problems is Pool, in which you must move the ship sequentially over eight or more billiard balls rolling around the playing area. The most fun new objective is Vandalism, where you shove various ftagile objects such as goldfish bowls and busts of Julius Caesar into the walls to shattet them. At the higher levels, escaping to the next level requires completion of more than one of these objectives. After each wave, you may be awarded a completion bonus based upon how fast you escaped. A new wrinkle added in *Crystal Crazy* is the Bonus Wave which appears after every third successfully completed level. On these levels, there are no Nasties or navigational hazards. You can zoom around collecting all the free points and Smart Bombs lying around. The only problem is the gigantic steel walls closing in to crush the ship if you wait too long to escape.

There ate 20 different Nasties in *Crystal Crazy*, of which all are new except for the Patasites. Those players who ate *Quest* veterans will recognize them as the white, "M-shaped" buggers who ate so relentless in their pursuit that they even managed to follow into the sequel. Nasties are teleased at various rates from dispensets around the screen until you are killed or escape, or you smart bomb them into tomorrow. Nasties come in two sotts: those who want to shoot the ship, and those who want to touch it. Touching the ship always tesults in unfortunate consequences, usually immediate death. Those who don't kill the ship are some of the

Crystal Crazy

Title	Crystal Crazy
Price	$49.95
Requirements	Any Mac with System 6.0.2 or higher, 2MB RAM (3MB with System 7), 3.5MB hard drive space
Protection	None
Designer	Patrick Buckland
Publisher	Casady & Greene Salinas, CA 93908 (800)359-4920

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more interesting new Nasties. Valiumlouts, for instance, only slow down the ship, making it hard to escape the other Nasties on the screen. Valiumlouts also leave antidote pellets behind them, but hitting these can be deadly too, as the uncontrolled burst of speed they impart might run the ship into a mine or other hazard. There are lots more new critters, all of which richly deserve extermination.

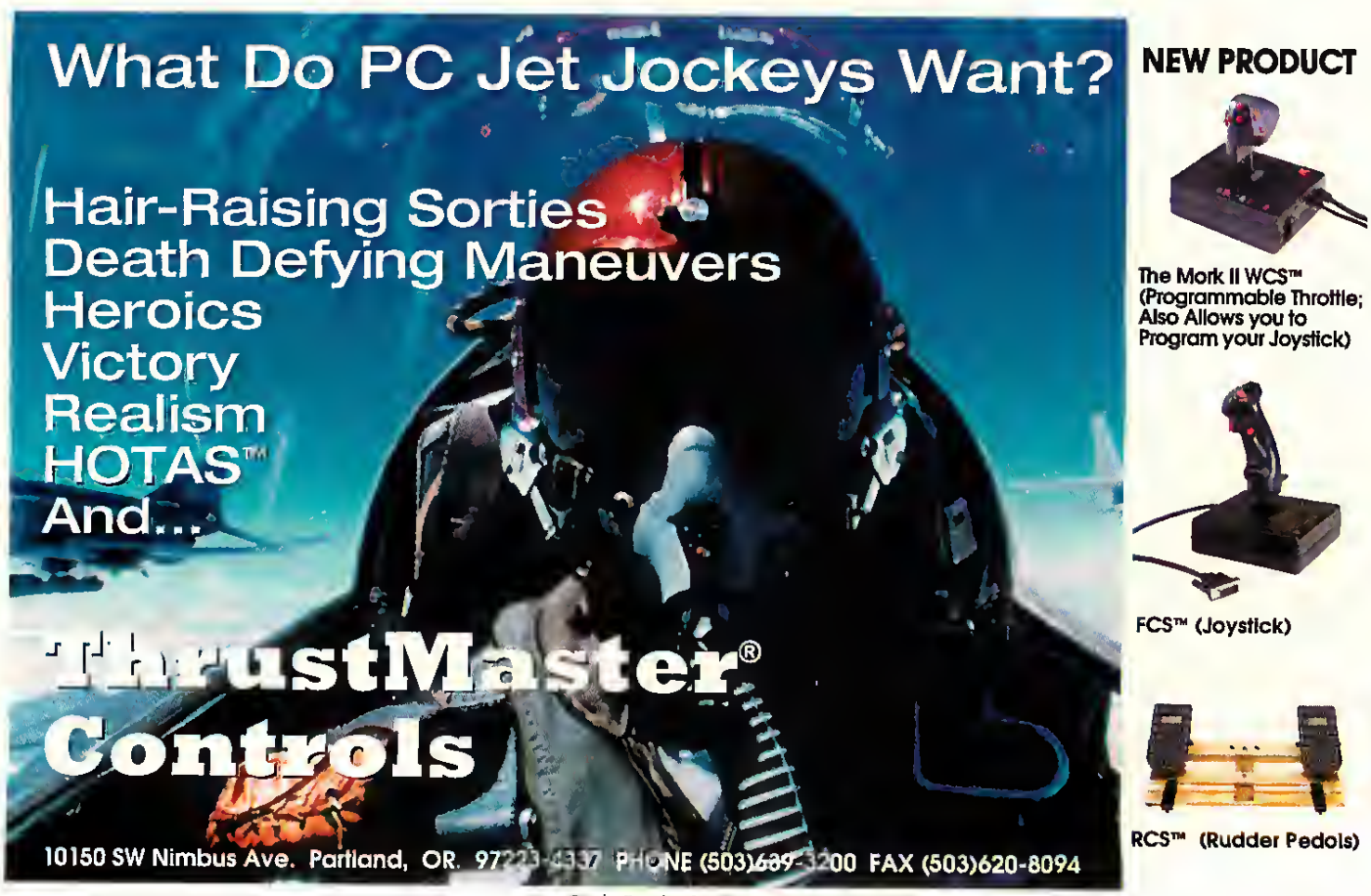
Over all, the new set of Nasties is a much tougher bunch than in the old *Crystal Quest*. This, combined with the more complex objectives in *Crystal Crazy*, would make the game almost impossible to play effectively, had the designers not also introduced the special guns and shields. These are left scattered around the playing area, along with Crystals, Smart Bombs, Bonus Points, and even the occasional free ship. The five different shields offer protection from different threats. At the low end, the Rubber Hat protects against bad driving by saving the ship from collisions with Mines, the edges of Gates, Dispensers, etc. The best shield for most occasions is the Mace-Head, which makes the ship deadly to the creatures it touches, rather than vice-versa. The five special guns pack the ship with better offensive punch. The Multi-Gun, for instance, fires four shots simultaneously in various directions. Guns and Shields are lost whenever a ship is lost. Ships can mount only one Shield and one Gun at a time, so when wearing the Mace-Head you must be careful not to accidentally turn it in for a wimpy Rubber Hat!

"We're Safe! Nothing Out There But Black & White Critters"

Crystal Crazy can be played in black and white or color. In color, the game uses its own graphics system, called MegaDraw, which runs only in 16-color mode. The game will transfer to 16-color mode by itself and reset the monitor to its previous setting after the player quits. To me, this speaks volumes about the developer's commitment to a quality product. Too few of even the best Mac game developers provide this simple and much appreciated feature when a game must be run in a specific color mode.

There are only two problems with the game that I can see. First, it is extremely hard to play in black and white, only because it becomes almost impossible to tell the difference between billiard balls without actually reading the numbers. This can take a fatal amount of time with Git-Brains blowing up and spreading shrapnel all over the screen. The other problem is that *Crystal Crazy* is not really suitable for wasting large amounts of time with a PowerBook. First, most PowerBooks are still B&W, and second, unless the player is a trackball jock of a sort I've never seen, the game really needs a mouse. The only other concern I have is for the designers and their unsettling obsession with cows.

By now it should be abundantly clear that *Crystal Crazy* is a pretty spiffy game. It's fun, easy to learn, silly, doesn't get boring quickly, and indulges our violent tendencies egregiously—but in a manner unlikely to prompt a Senate Hearing. **CGW**



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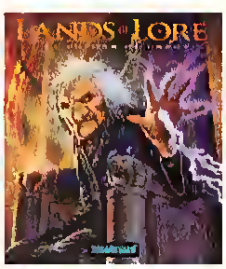

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TERMINATORS MAKE FOR POOR HOUSEGUESTS

Bethesda Goes On A Shoot-em Up *Rampage*

by Dave Pyron

Two years ago, a little-known shareware company from Texas created what was to become the most popular action game in recent memory. The game, *Wolfenstein 3-D* from id Software, swept across the U.S., stealing much time from productive people, and perhaps contributing to this nation's economic recession.

As is typical in entertainment software, other companies immediately began to emulate *Wolfenstein 3-D* and its success. One such company was Bethesda Softworks and their form of sincerest flattery is *The Terminator: Rampage*, an action-packed, kill or be killed, maze-like shoot-out in the now-familiar 3-D perspective. If *Wolfenstein 3-D* didn't have enough Nazis to knock off, or if the chaingun didn't have quite enough firepower, then this all-out shooting fest will set up thousands of baddies for you to violently knock down.

You Are Not Sarah Connor

Rampage begins with an interesting cinematic sequence, introducing the player to the plot. The premise, a close cousin to the plots of the well-known movies, *Terminator* and *Terminator 2*, sets the stage with the player acting as a special forces commando, sent back in time from the year 2024 to 1984. The mission? To desttoy the Meta-Node, a cunning machine zapped back in time by Skynet, the evil Artificial Intelligence bent on the destruction of all mankind.

The Meta-Node's strategy was to infiltrate the giant arms-producing complex called Cyberdyne, a hi-tech, multi-level building perfect for establishing a base. In that base Meta-Node planned to manufacture the thousands of lethal robots, androids, cyborgs, needed to wipe out the race. At the time the player begins the game, the Meta-Node has taken control of the Cyberdyne complex and is lurking in the deepest basement, trying to break into the supercomputer network in order to start World War III. Obviously, this beast of a machine needs a radical re-adjustment, preferably in the form of a molecular dispersion treatment by the player's Particle Projection Cannon (PPC).

Taking the role of humanity's savior, you must search through the entire complex, scooping up medikits, armor kits, and weapons on the way to the ultimate encounter with Meta-Node. The weapon fanatic has eight types of hardware, from a weak 9mm pistol to the powerful PPC, with which to truncate his enemies' appendages. Naturally, these weapons are scattered throughout the complex and get proportionally better as you progress deeper into the Cyberdyne labyrinth.

The grenade launcher and shotgun are single shot weapons, but have devastating firepower. Assault weapons, sub-machine guns,

and a chain gun are available en toute to the final showdown. One of the major challenges in the game is discovering the 16 parts of the PPC super-weapon. Its assembly is a necessary task intrinsic to the play sequence, and no small amount of time will be spent prowling all cornets of the complex searching for each essential part.

Relentless...Or Repetitive?

Mechanical monsters come conveniently packaged in seven shapes and sizes, but their strengths are in their great numbers. I actually shot and destroyed 2,241 machines over the course of one game, and that with the game difficulty on moderate! 2,241 monsters! Ye Gods!

The most common opponents within the depths of Cyberdyne are the seeker and scout robots. They move around the complex with speed and precision, searching out all human life-forms for immediate termination. The most human-like machines are the Enforcers. Clothed in suit and tie, these androids yell out "Halt!" at initial contact. They also have a relatively intelligent AI and will give chase if they catch sight of you. It was indeed an eerie feeling to duck through a doorway and slam it shut, only to have it opened seconds later by a virtually unstoppable man of metal!

Around level 9, a weird, haunting sound will alert players to the Terminator robots. These are shiny metal caricatures of humans, with red baleful eyes, and a leering grin. The slow hiss of these hard-to-kill monsters makes hairs stand on end and skin crawl at first contact.

Meta-Borgs—half-man, half-machine—can take an enormous amount of punishment before being incapacitated. Literally hundreds of these slow, hulking machines haunt the passageways in the lower levels, armed with devastating automatic machine guns. The Meta-Guards, with their backward-jointed legs and awesome firepower, are fast-moving robots that constitute the final defense of the complex. The closing encounter with the Meta-Node "Minotaur" was rather a disappointment, since other than being bigger, badder, tougher, and having more firepower, it was nothing remarkably different than the previous 2,240 metallic monsters.

Daze in the Maze

The first-person, 3-dimensional view of the playing screen displays the digitized walls, corridors and offices with amazing clarity, although the game suffers from the familiar

Terminator: Rampage

TITLE	Terminator: Rampage
PRICE	$69.95
SYSTEM	IBM
REQUIREMENTS	386 or better 4MB RAM, VGA graphics, 18MB hard drive space, joystick or mouse, supports most major sound cards
DESIGNER	V. J. Lakshman
PUBLISHER	Bethesda Softworks 1370 Piccard Drive (301) 926 8300

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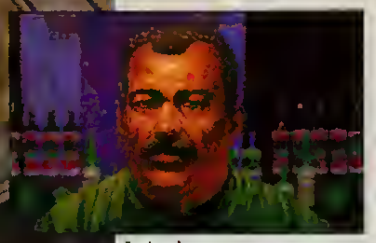

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"blockiness" when viewing very near objects. Centered at the bottom of the screen, the player's hands are shown in a semblance of virtual reality, flesh tone and all, holding the selected weapon at the ready. The hands even jiggle in cadence with the player's gait. A targeting window appears in the lower right corner when enemies are sighted within range. Weapon and ammunition information is shown in the upper left corner for easy viewing during those frantic firefights. An overhead map displaying the immediate surrounding area proves extremely useful.

Rampage benefits from high-resolution graphics, and the designers enhanced the game immensely by scattering numerous plants, chairs and dead bodies throughout the complex. The walls are covered at times with photos, paintings, flickering monitors, and other paraphernalia.

Like *Wolfenstein 3D* the environment creates a great sense of anticipation. You must always be checking behind and to the sides when coming to a fork in the passageway or a large open area. At times, the sound of far-off doors opening and closing adds to the suspense. These audio effects were so realistic that at one point I thought there was a prowler in his house, instead of identifying the sound with the game!

Termination Schedule

Though it captures many of the elements that made *Wolf 3-D* successful, it also shares in its failings. The hi-res objects in the world are completely non-interactive. There are no buttons to press, no light switches to switch, and no cabinets to search. Even the retrieval of weapons, armor or medikit caches occurs automatically. At least *Wolf 3-D* had secret passageways to discover, but with *Rampage*, what you see is what you get—no imagination required.

The game is essentially a shooting gallery, with the player being forced to explore practically every square inch of each level to find the necessary elevator pass card and the parts to the PPC in order to advance down to the next level. This exploration requires the elimination of virtually every enemy unit, turning the game into a long and tedious stalk through 32 levels of endless corridors, bangity-bang-bang all the way. Picture it in your mind...2,241 dead machines and both trigger fingers covered with blisters! When you finally reach the grand finale, the feeling is not a sense of accomplishment or satisfaction, but of relief that the game is finally over.

True, *Wolfenstein 3-D* offered the same repetitive game play, but it was novel and it was the first. *Rampage* offers a "me-too" product with a design that emphasizes "maximum overkill." Its thousands of monsters, miles of passageways, and multiple weapons may thrill players with a shooting gallery mentality and the patience of a computer, but those looking for novelty in their 3-D shooters will want to pass *Rampage* by. It's a decent attempt for an imitative product, but you might say that the effort to catch-up to and cash in on id Software's success was doomed from the beginning. **CGW**

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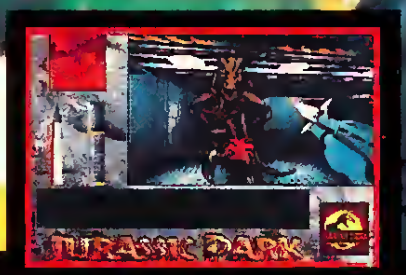

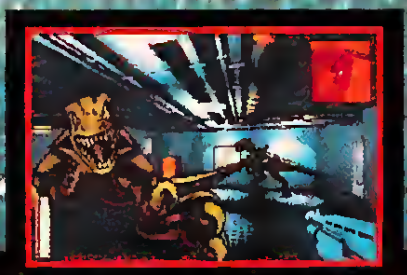

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JP™

The Genetically Perfect General

Unnatural Tactics For Maxis' *Unnatural Selection*

by Ed Dille & John Withers

Unnatural Selection, the unchatacteristic watgame from Maxis, is your average mad-scientist, btilliant general, hassled by command, gotta bteed warriors little game. But since there aten't any other games in that category, mote than a few people out thete might need a little help to become the Ghengis Khan of the genetic world. Never fear: read on and you will be provided with the information to give both breeding and battlefield btavado.

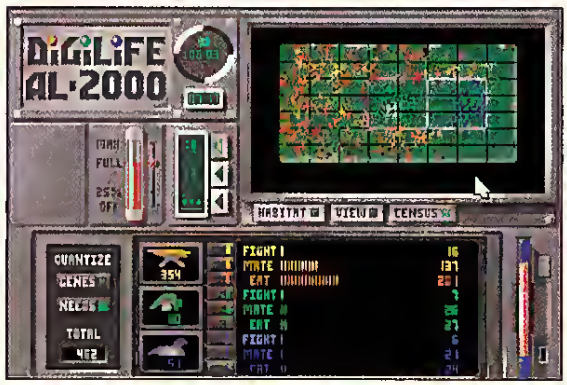
The Lab Or The Slab, It's Up To You

The most important part of the game is using the lab, and there ate some important techniques to maximize productivity duting these time constrained sequences. The first trait you must emphasize is breeding. Theroids that breed quicker than theit competition are mote likely to conquet an island than fighters. It might not be as glamotous to outbreed the enemy as to fight them down, but it works.

Experience shows zips ate the best body type for the breeding game, because by virtue of their speed they also bteed fastet. When the game starts, three pens filled with an equal numbet of each body type are given. If the walls between the pens are dropped, the hulk body type will come to dominate. Instead, make a much larger pen around all three pens. Fill it with food and let the zips out onto this little home-made tange. When the zip population outnumbers the othet types by about 5 to 1, release the walls to the other pens. In this manner the zips will dominate, but the traits of the other theroids will be assimilated into the population.

As soon as the Synthetic Neural Injector comes on-line it can help strengthen the population. Many players may think that since they already have a stable population of zips, thete is no need to use the SNI, but nothing could be further from the ttuth. When theroids with an ahundance of one trait are added to the population, it tends to raise that trait in genetal. As such, cteate as many dominant matets as the fluid level will allow and inttoduce them into the mix. Adding some vision to the population at this time doesn't hutt either.

The real work begins as soon as the database comes up. Now the ability to cull the population is in yout hands, and proper culling is ctucial. In a perfect world, we would be able to spend plenty of time sorting theroids of different types into little pens and carefully breeding fot the perfect beast, but with Colonel Gtiggs there to help you along, it shouldn't be too hatd to remembet that this isn't a perfect world. In a combat zone, time is of the essence.



A strategy that works for us is to breed zips in an outer pen until they outnumber the others by 5:1. Then you can release the other types and absorb their traits into the population.

Thete is a technique to using the database and mutation dials for optimum wartime efficiency. As soon as a stable population of 200-300 theroids with homogeneous stats is established, turn the mutation dial up to three and leave it for about five seconds before hitting the database. In the database cull out the viruses first, then kill all the low scotes in the particulat ttait you are breeding fot until you have around 50 to 100 theroids. Let this population stabilize and rebuild up to 200 without any mutation, then repeat the process. This will increase the beneficial stats in manageable increments without putting the whole population at tisk.

The ultimate breeding goal is mate and speed ratings of 255. Don't worry, you won't make this goal by the first battle, but scores of ovet 100 in each category are easily achievable. The only thing to be careful of at this point is the eat score. It needs to be kept down. An eat score of over 100 is going to cause the theroids to want to eat more than breed, and in food minimal battle conditions they will die for want of supplies. Once these two goals are met, the remainder of the stats can be btought up to par, but at the statt it is critical to get fast, love-minded theroids.

The number in an optimum population is a hard choice. The more theroids alive, the more precious time each culling takes. However, if Griggs calls you to battle and you don't have enough troops teady, death and dishonor are just a step away. The best population for sorting and culling seems to be just over 200. At this level, there are enough theroids to get a good variation when mutated, but few enough to do quick sorts. Howevet, in the later battles 200

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theroids aren't enough. The best solution is to get a feel, though liberal use of saved games, exactly when Griggs is going to call. Once the exact time of the bell's tolling is known, start letting your culled population breed without limits two to five minutes before the battle. At the start of the next lab sequence, kill any extras left over from the battle past your optimum population.

At first, population size can be trimmed universally by cutting down on the food supply, but later, if breeding for low "eat", theroids can survive with no food (and this does come in handy on the battlefield). When you reach this point, a few minutes must be spent killing off the extra troops each lab sequence. To minimize this, keep sending troops to the front, even when you have the island firmly in control. The more troops left on the island, the less precious time wasted in killing back in the lab.

And speaking of population, leave the little pens to the folks with cushy research grants back stateside. What you need are combat troops, and lots of them. To this end, the proper pen set up is one huge breeding pen that takes up almost the whole screen. One, or maybe two, eight-block pens can be kept for a tiny bit of segregation, but bigger is generally better.

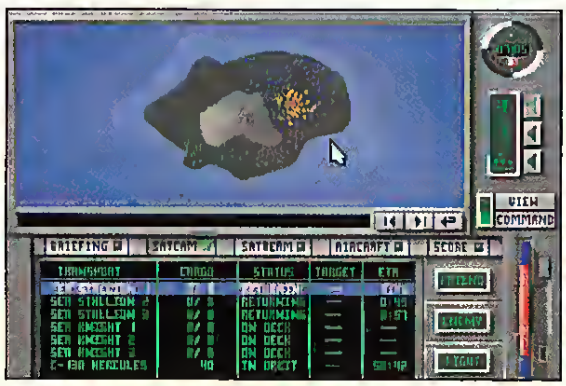
And with the small pens we come to the last point about the lab: perfection. There will be those times where the perfect theroids are among the population, but getting their traits to spread is just about impossible. There is a very chancy trick that can be performed to perfect your population, assuming the mate scores are all at 255 and stamina is reasonably high. As a general rule, you never want to cull below 50 or so theroids, but with luck, a high "mate" population can reproduce with only 9-18 theroids. If a small number of perfect creatures can be isolated in time, there is a good chance of getting them to breed true. There is also a good chance of killing them all off. As such, before attempting this dicey procedure, ensure you have a back up population working in the main area.

Battle Stations

It is fine to muck about in the lab, but the real test of mettle is what the theroid warriors do on the battlefield, and even though a designer never feels ready, sooner or later the tender little theroids have to be pushed out of the nest to go and kill everything in sight. The most important element in the battle (just like in most real battles) is air support. There are six helicopters available, three Sea Knights and three Sea Stallions. The Knights have a much larger cargo capacity, but they are slower than the Stallions. There is also a C-130, but it only provides generic food.

Col. Griggs is always on your case, but you don't have to let him surprise you. Save the game at the beginning of a scenario, play until Griggs appears, note the time, and then start over using the time information to plan your strategy.

The helicopters are troop carriers, but they also carry supplies to the battlefield, and the use of supplies is an integral part of winning all but the first couple of battles. Of the four food types, Lust is the most important. When dropping your own troops, it is normally wise to drop liberal amounts of lust-inducing food with them. Remember, breeding is the key to winning. Bran and Rage can be dropped among enemies to kill them off.



Using a noise maker, you can create a landing zone amidst enemy creatures. By encircling the first noise maker in a ring of others, you can create a safe perimeter in which your troops can breed for a few precious seconds.

Two other items are available from supplies: noise makers and decoys. The proper application of noise makers and decoys is the difference between winning and losing many battles. Noise makers can be used to get a clear landing zone for your theroids. One of the best techniques is to drop a single noise maker in a relatively open area. After a couple of minutes, drop a ring of noise makers in a perimeter. As soon as the first noise maker runs out, drop theroids and supplies inside the perimeter. This gives your creatures a few minutes to breed before wading into battle.

Decoys can be used to seal small openings and make walls. Dropping a single decoy on an opening will cause enough battling theroids to cluster that they will block the opening. By arranging the decoys inside the helicopters in a line, they will come down in a line on the landing zone and make a wall with the same properties. A bit of practice and the decoys make a good augmentation to the noise maker rings to give friendly theroids time to breed up to strength.

An important consideration of ferrying troops and supplies is timing. The Stallions and Knights have different flying times, and it is an easy matter to accidentally drop your troops in unintended "waves", either lacking important supplies, getting to the battle after their supplies have been overrun by the enemy, or arriving in numbers too small to survive. This can be avoided by careful planning. Highlight an aircraft and put the cursor anywhere on an island and the flight time is shown beside the craft. Send out Knights, the slower machines, first. Then highlight the Stallions and set the cursor on the same landing zone. When the numbers for ETA of the Knights and flight time for the Stallions are the same, launch the Stallions.

The other point of aircraft control is the C-130. Since all the C-130 can do is drop normal food, it is an easy matter to control it. Just send it out as often as possible to "paint" friendly areas with food. It is sometimes easy to forget about the C-130 in the heat of combat, but that is a dire mistake, because the food the cargo plane provides is "free"; that is, it doesn't count against your total available supplies of food. Using the C-130 to its optimum can be the difference between happy troops and hungry troops.

After dropping theroids and supplies there isn't much to do but watch what happens. Maxis provides a satellite that can induce certain behaviors in a single theroid, but when most islands are rapidly populated with a thousand or more troops, the only real effect of the satellite is to make you feel like you're doing something useful. As such, *Unnatural Selection*, reinforces the most basic lesson of command: prior planning prevents poor performance. It's tough to be relegated to the role of spectator, but the guiding general is often little more than that once the action begins. CGW

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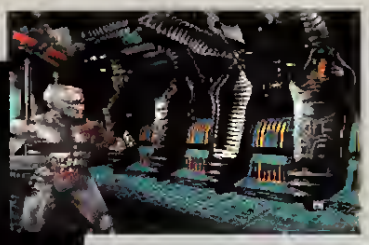

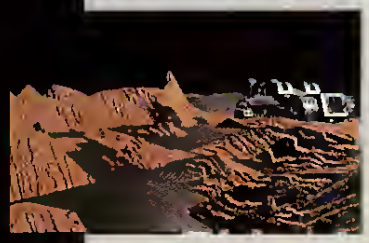

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Jaeger's Air Combat

The Second Flight Of *Fighter Duel Pro*

by Jim "Hawkeye" Rathgeber

"In air combat there are no points for second place."

– Roy Brown
R.A.F.

Fifty years ago, in the winter of '43-44, a desperate struggle for control of Europe's skies was being waged, with each side striving for the best fighter technology that its engineers could offer. The end result ushered in the age of jets along with the defeat of fascism. A half century later these superlative aircraft are again available to flyby-wire enthusiasts in Jaeger Software's new *Fighter Duel Pro 2.*

The original *Fighter Duel*, which first appeared on Amigas two years ago, was an instant hit among the serious Amiga flight sim crowd. Its realistic flight modeling was difficult to get used to, but once mastered, the program awarded the diligent with an incredible frame-rate and excellent head-to-head modem play. Jaeger Software has since taken the suggestions from their tight-knit group of fans and incorporated them into *Fighter Duel Pro 2.*

Upon booting the program for the first time, *Fighter Duel* fans will notice that the entire interface had been revised with a much easier button format, replacing the previous version's pull down menus. This interface proves handy in adjusting the many simulation options and selecting from the huge hanger of aircraft.

On my virgin voyage into the program, I chose to fly one of my favorite planes of WWII: the FW TA-152, a plane with speed to burn. Once selected, a silhouette of the aircraft appears along with a list of stats such as power plant, armament, climb rate, turn rate and vulnerability. Moving on, I selected four different bogeys and set their skill levels all at Ace, figuring I'm a pretty hot pilot. With a click of the "Begin Flight" button, the screen darkened, then burst into the *Fighter Duel* world as I had never seen it before, including a horizon that is dithered with a shaded sky.

After duly admiring the skyline, I figured it was time to sight some bogeys. I cycled through the many different view angles with the cursor buttons trying to find the enemy. Off to my left at 9 o'clock low, they came in a finger four formation.

Hitting the "War Emergency Power," I winged over and dove on the climbing formation. One of the past complaints about *Fighter Duel* was the weak AI, so I moved in figuring to blow away at least two in a quick pass. I saw tracers coming at me, my plane shook violently as the hit counter ran up like a pinball machine, and within two seconds I was kaput. Blown up. Swiss cheese. Dead meat. Thus I was introduced to a vastly improved *FDPro 2.*

Keyboard Cockpit

The major problems with the previous *Fighter Duel* incarnations have been addressed in this release. No longer do you have to juggle the flight controls with the left hand on the mouse and the right hand on joystick. All controls can now be manipulated via the keyboard, and the program now supports both the Thrustmaster and FlightStick Pro, including "top hat" view control.

More colors have been added to the simulation world, the most notable being the individual fuselage colors on each aircraft. Another outstanding addition is the deflection gunnery. In this version, it's very tough to hit anything unless you're up close. The new gunnery plus the shaking of the aircraft while firing can create visuals reminiscent of actual film footage taken in WWII. Jaeger has also gone a long way in improving the one-player mode. You can fly in Wingman, Standard or Tournament mode, pick the bogeys, set the altitude, and change fighters without having to reboot—a nice improvement over previous versions. An addition I find personally appealing is the ability to man an anti-aircraft gun and practice shooting at diving enemy planes.

In anti-aircraft mode I must have fired over 500 rounds of 20 millimeter cannon fire before I hit anything! Manning the AA gun at first seemed like it would get boring quickly, but two hours later I was still firing away and unwilling to quit. This is an extremely useful feature for mastering the deflection shot.

In past versions of *Fighter Duel*, half the kills occurred at over 800 yards. Because of the laser-like straight-shooting bullets, you would simply put the sight on the target and pull the trigger—no deflection necessary. Long distance kills are now a rarity in *FDPro2.* In order to get good results you must get within 400 yards or less, and even then,

Fighter Duel Pro 2

TITLE	Fighter Duel Pro 2
PRICE	$59.95
SYSTEM	Amiga (reviewed), IBM (summer '94)
REQUIREMENTS	Kickstart 1.2 or higher, 2MB RAM, AGA mode requires an Amiga 1200 or 4000 with a monitor capable of displaying DBLNTSC or DBLPAL NoFlicker screen modes, hard drive installable
PROTECTION	None
DESIGNERS	William Manders, Mathew Shaw, Andrew Dorman
PUBLISHER	Jaeger Software Rockville, MD (301) 948-6862

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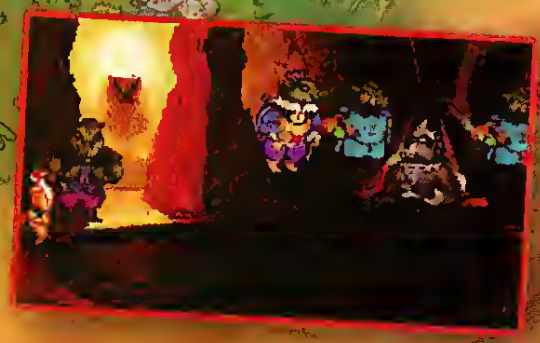

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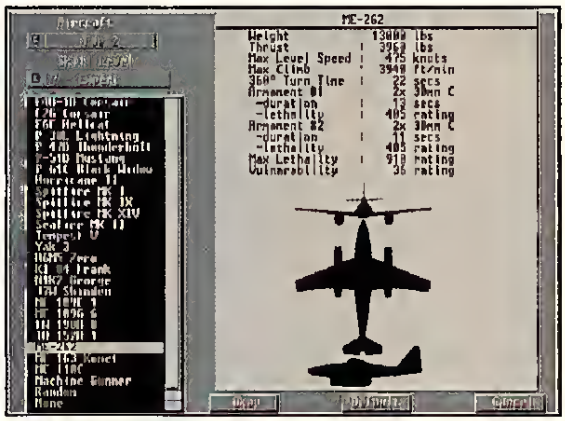
IBM screens shown. Actual screens may vary.

nailing the target is not guaranteed. Jaeger has added a lead-computing gunsight, which does help in lining up deflection shots, but in general the idea is to get as close as possible before pulling the trigger (not too close though, as the explosion may kill the attacker). Thankfully, the game includes an "unlimited ammo" option so duelers won't be running out of bullets.

Modem Wars

Playability has been drastically increased in two-player mode. There are now four options for dueling. In standard mode the starting altitude can be set for each side from 1,000 up to 26,000 feet, which can help in handicapping a better player against a beginner. As in the original game, there's a huge learning curve in *FDPro2*. A new flyer will need to spend many hours practicing in order to compete with the experts. Thanks to the new chat feature, a new player can get on-line instructions and tips from many of the duelers listed in the program's "phone book."



In the two seater mode you can team up with a fellow player via the modem and take on the computer bandits. I tried the top turret in the P-61, and though I couldn't hit anything, I enjoyed the roller coaster ride. Extra RAM and a fast machine are required.

My favorite modem option by far is the Wingman mode. Both players hook up via the modem, beginning in a wing or lead position, and go hunting for two computer bogeys. Each time a player or bandit is shot down they reappear within seconds at their original starting altitude. The arena becomes a constantly raging furball. It can really get hot if the wingman decides to send some lead into his/her partner, initiating a real free for all! Add the ability to turbo around at 16 times the normal speed and a real donnybrook is in the makings. When the seriousness of dueling gets too intense, I recommend a tour of duty in the Wingman arena for a little R&R.

Comparisons

I've found only one sim that comes anywhere close to matching *FDPro2*. Kesmai's *SVGA Air Warrior* at times beats a distinct resemblance. I get more of an actual "feeling" of flight in *Fighter Duel* due to the unique programming methods of Bill Manders and company. This is not to knock *Air Warrior*, a sim I enjoy immensely, especially in scenarios involving 80 people. The difficulty Kesmai faces is that it can't dwell on just the duel because they have a whole world of data involved. Both Kesmai and Jaeger handle G forces differently. Jaeger lessens stick and rudder effect to simulate the forces that would keep a real pilot from moving the stick and rudder, while *Air Warrior* uses red-outs and black-outs. *Air Warrior* does model debris falling off planes, something I'd like to see Jaeger put on their wish list for future improvements. Collisions add to the realism in *FDPro2*, while they just aren't feasible in *Air Warrior*. Both are fine sims and in my opinion are not really competing for the same spot on the map. When the IBM version of *FDPro2* (coming this summer) comes out, it will sit nicely alongside *SVGA Air Warrior* on the hard drive of both novice and veteran pilots alike.

Propwash

Enough cannot be said about Jaeger's unending quest for the perfect dueling sim. They started out with an aerodynamically correct flight simulator, added guns, then designed it to run at a smooth 28 frames per second over the modem. The effort they've made in listening to gamers and implementing their suggestions speaks volumes of their commitment. *FDPro2* does not have lots of scenery or specific campaigns built into the program; it is not and has never been meant to be an *Aces of the Pacific*-type game. On the other hand I've never found a flight simulator with such a heavy emphasis on each aircraft's aerodynamics and their abilities when pitted against other fighters. *Fighter Duel Pro 2* rates as a top-notch simulator and a must have for anyone who appreciates realistic, edge of the seat, high intensity combat in 25 of the best fighters WWII ever produced. Check six!

CGW

Top Guns

Jaeger has added nine new aircraft to *Fighter Duel Pro*, and of those nine, eight are among the most advanced fighters to come out of WWII.

Spitfire XIV: Arguably the best prop fighter of the war, this outstanding fighter climbs like a bat out of Hell. It's only drawback is a slow roll rate.

Focke Wulfe TA-152 "Tank": Extremely fast and deadly. Has a very good roll rate making it hard to stay with. It's also my personal favorite!

KI-84 "Frank": A fast and highly maneuverable Japanese fighter meant to counter the Mustang, Hellcat and Corsair. In my opinion it can give all three a run for their money.

Corsair F2-G: This 3000 hp monster has an excellent climb rate. That coupled with a very fast roll makes this heavy machine a deadly weapon in the hands of an experienced pilot.

Yak-3: For some odd reason, the Russians named the first version of this fighter the Yak-9 and then slowly worked their way down to the Yak-3. Its ability to climb at over 5000 ft. per minute, along with its good handling characteristics, more than makes up for its lack of firepower.

P-61 "Black Widow": A huge two seater that's hard to approach due to the four fifty's in the top turret.

ME-110: The only real dog in the game. After flying this beast I understood the 110 pilot's reluctance to engage Allied fighters in a dogfight.

ME-262: This jet brought chills to bomber and fighter pilots alike! If you can keep the speed up, the 262 is pretty much invincible. The problem is, it's tough to hit anything while flying at over 500 mph, and if you slow down, you become vulnerable.

Komet-163: A fitectacket that moves fast and handles well. The Komet's Achilles' heel is its liquid fuel rockets that tend to blow up after taking 1 or 2 hits.

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Letters from Paradise

Sub-Subscriptions

Your magazine is solid! But is it true that you mail the issues that are of bad printing condition to your subscribers? So far, two out of four issues I received had torn pages and cover.

W. Yasa
Ann Arbor, MI

We refuse to pay extra in order to get the pages and cover torn at our printer, so we let the postal service do it for free. Seriously, we do not send the issues out in bad condition. They are usually torn when they are at the top or the bottom of a postal sort bundle.

Real Computers Have Keyboards!

Thanks for the 3DO coverage. It's the machine I'm using for all my gaming, now. It's incredible! Please keep covering it and the games available for it in the future. I love your magazine.

Brady Brock
Nampa, ID

We appreciate your sentiment, but it wasn't the majority viewpoint.

I applaud the expansion of scope in the magazine (i.e. Kids & Computers, Shareware, etc.), I just hope the central focus remains *Computer* Gaming World. Dedicated game machines are not my idea of computers.

B. Rosapo
Crestwood, NY

I can understand your wanting to cover 3DO and all of those neat game systems, but this is *Computer* Gaming World. Evetyone who subscribed, probably did so because of your outstanding work with computer games. Please leave those cheap little video game systems where they belong—in other lousy magazines. By the way, I loved the telecomputing article. It really helped a lot.

Lars Bergstrom
Dyer, IN

Please concentrate solely on *computer* games. The game boxes are just that—boxes. Until the carts can show the depth of computer games, please exclude them.

Mathew Lu
Houston, TX

While I appreciate your desire to cover as much as possible, I don't particularly like your reports on "game box" machines and software. If I wanted to learn more about such things, I'd buy a magazine devoted to them. Otherwise, you continue to do a fine job.

Michael A. Lavoie
Nashua, NH

Computer Gaming World should *not* be wasting my money on Nintendo or Sega or arcade-type games in reviews.

Dave Fulford
Peoria, AZ

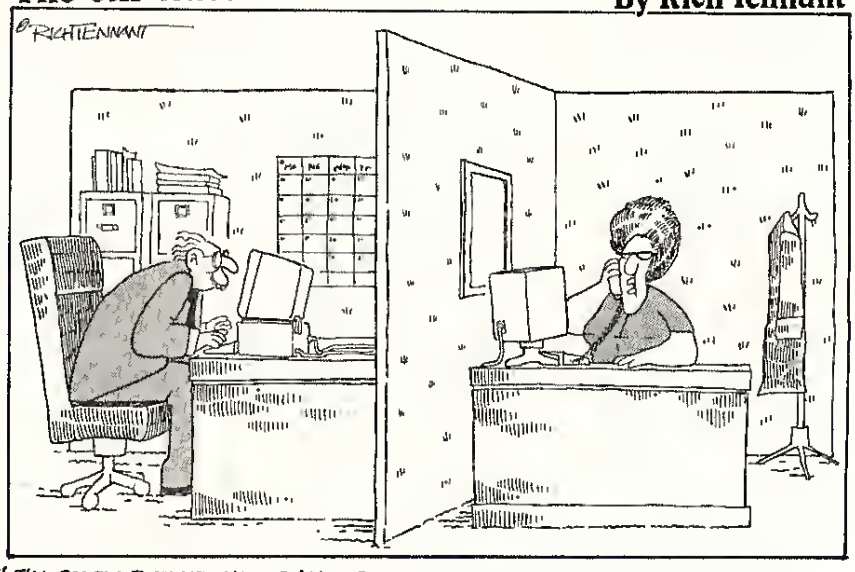
Stay away from 3DO coverage. I buy your magazine because it's *Computer* Gaming World, not the Kids' Videogame Survey.

Steve Rodick
Chicago, IL

First, we want to thank you for your concern. We're feeling much better and the doctor says we could even be in our right minds, given a month or two to recuperate. Seriously, we knew that we would catch a certain amount of flak by covering the console conflict. There is always a backlash among computer users whenever console coverage sneaks into their publications. There is a good reason for this backlash. Videogame consoles have historically been successful enough to crowd computer software out of shelf space. For example, one major retailer, who went way overboard in restricting computer game shelf space in favor of videogame shelf space, recently had to change the mix in favor of more computer game titles because of soft videogame sales. Nevertheless, it is easy enough to understand how we can invoke fear in our readers whenever we use valuable editorial space for cartridge reviews or hardware reviews. The concern is that they will get less space for specific computer game coverage.

We do not want to cheat our readers out of the editorial coverage that they need, either. How-

The 5th Wave **By Rich Tennant**



"I'M SORRY, BUT MR. HALLORAN IS BEING CHASED BY SIX MIDGETS WITH POISON BOOMERANGS THROUGH A MAZE IN THE DUNGEON OF A CASTLE. IF HE FINDS HIS WAY OUT AND GETS PAST THE MINOTAUR HE'LL CALL YOU RIGHT BACK, OTHERWISE TRY AGAIN THURSDAY."

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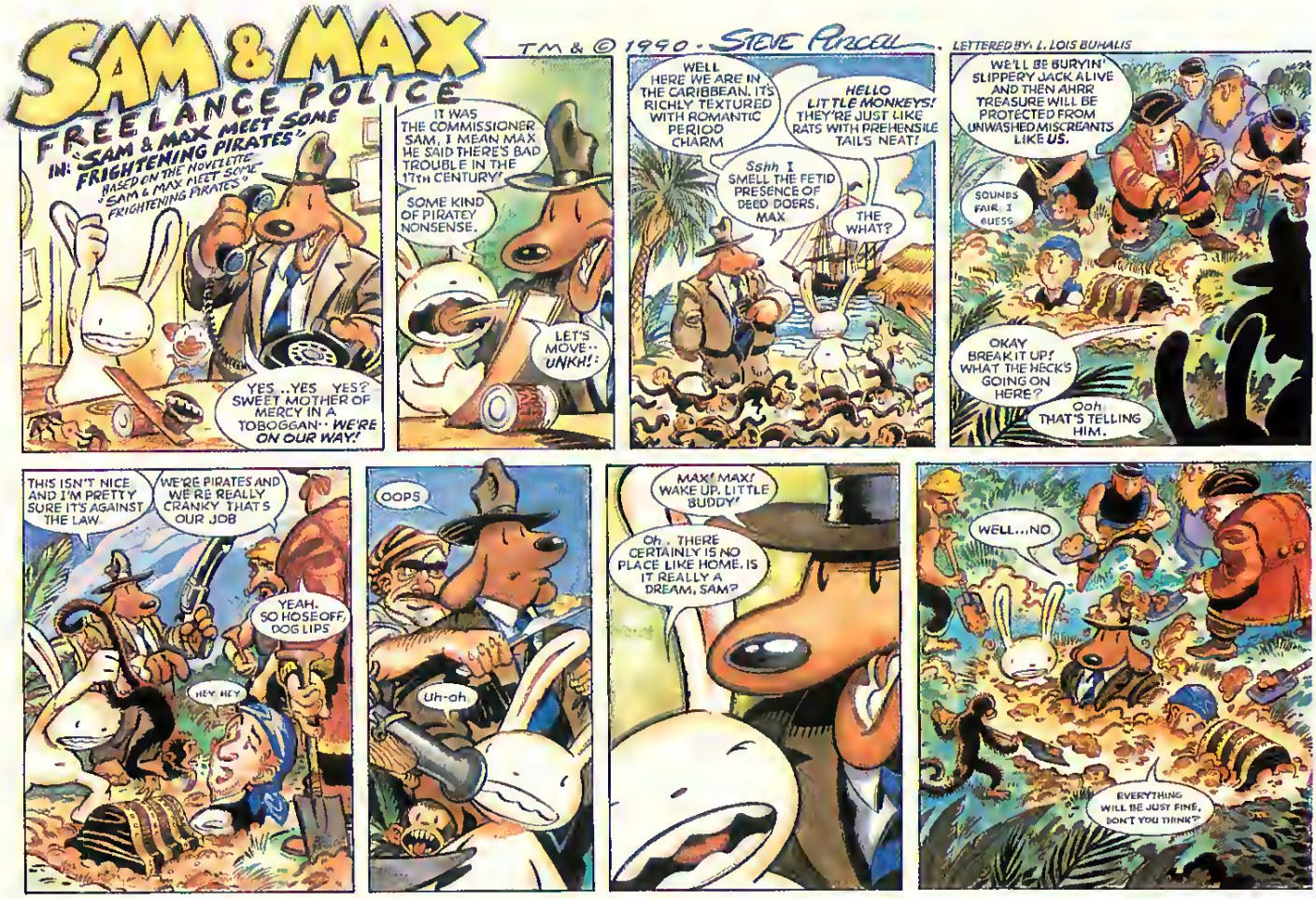

ever, many months ago (before we were purchased by Ziff-Davis), the editorial staff decided that it would be both interesting and useful to cover the new generation of game machines. We were being asked lots of questions about these machines, both on-line and in person. So, we decided to publish the feature, not start a trend. Obviously, we don't believe that too many of our readers would ever convert to these machines as their exclusive gaming platform, but we do think they might buy them as a supplement to their computers. As for other coverage of these machines, expect to see it restricted to occasional software titles that we find worthy of note (and not duplicated on personal computer platforms).

Help For Addicts

Where is the Betty Ford Clinic for Computer Game Addicts?

Sleepless in Seattle
Everett, WA

Sorry, Bill. We're not hiring at CGW *right now.*

Journeyman Question

I recently purchased a CD-ROM game entitled *The Journeyman Project.* This game is cool and I would like to see it reviewed.

Eric Press
Hamburg, NY

Take a Quantum Leap backward and grab CGW *#108 (July, 1993). Your wish is our command. Back issues are available at $4.00 each.*

Highway To Heaven?

The forthcoming information highway may not be a godsend as much as something to be feared. We will now be able to work,

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socialize, play and bunk from our living rooms. Does this sound healthy to you? Most Americans already watch roo much television. Whar happened to books, or conversation? Our culrure is doomed.

J.B.
Paterson, NJ

As with all of the discussion of the 500 channels, it is easy to miss the point to connectivity. Having 500 channels does not mean that people will try or should try to watch all 500 at once, nor even that all 500 channels are worth watching. Instead, it should supply more options so that viewers can watch what they want when they want it. In the same way, we like to take hope in noticing what has happened with traditional on-line services. Many of us have friends in all 50 states whom we have never met face-to-face. Yet, every so often we meet them at a gaming convention, through business or by design. It's exciting to expand our gaming universe. The information highway can expand that gaming universe exponentially. We also hope that people will learn to work smarter as opposed to working more. The potential of this information highway to allow us to search more databases or poll more samples should enrich our work, not dilute it. Of course, the potential for abuse and misuse exists in every technological advance.

CGW As Hard Drive Optimizer

I only wish I would have discovered your magazine before I bought half the trash cluttering up my hard drive. Grear job.

Alex Koers
Marysville, CA

Great point. Maybe we should release our negative reviews on disk as "The Ardai Utilities," "Scorpia's Defrag" and CGW Tools "Compress."

Taking A Puke

To make your magazine perfect, "Taking A Peek" needs to be discarded or replaced. I don't know what to replace it with, but I'm sure the people ar *CGW* can think of something.

Kris Scubla
Laguna Niguel, CA

When a game appears in "Taking A Peek," it should tell our readers that we just received a copy of the shrink-wrapped, retail product as the magazine was going to press. Since we do not review games based on beta copies, a position not universally held in the computer game magazine category, the inclusion of a product in "Taking A Peek" signals that the product is available and may be reviewed.

Co-Co For Computers

J. Wilson's editorial (*CGW*#114, p. 8) put into words exactly the way I feel now abour "cutting edge" buying. I've been computing since the "Color Computer" from Radio Shack came out. I'm currenrly on my seventh computer upgrade. I'll wair and see.

Edward Leferink
Martinez, GA

Unfortunately, too many gamers are discovering that the cutting edge slices both ways—for them in power and against them in the ever-shortening upgrade cycle. Here's hoping that the 486 generation gives gamers a chance to assimilate the technological advances of the last 18 months before having to move on to the next generation.

All GUSsied Up

All the GUS users should call the Advanced Gravis' BBS. They'll give patch files for much better Sound Blaster emularion on most games.

Lars Bergstrom
Dyer, IN

GUS users can reach Advanced Gravis via CompuServe by typing GO PCVENB or call the Advanced Gravis BBS directly at (604) 431-5927. **CGW**

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KIDS & COMPUTERS Reviews

Four Footed Friends

This interactive book (the first in a planned series) presents a charming children's primer about a variety of quadripedal creatures.

After reading a four-line verse (which is also read aloud by the computer), the child is free to click on any one of three on-screen guides, who provide further information on that page's featured animal. Albert the Number Worm provides interesting facts and figures and invites kids to click on various parts of the selected animal. In doing so, kids are rewarded with surprising and generally amusing results.

Four Footed Friends

Price: $57.95

In Brief: An animated, interactive children's story book.

Requirements: Macintosh with 4MB RAM; 256-color display; hard disk with 12MB free space; System 6.07 or higher.

For Ages: 3 and up

Other Versions: Macintosh CD-ROM, Windows, Windows CD-ROM (all $57.95 each)

T/Maker
1390 Villa St.
Mountain View, CA 94041
(415) 962-195
Circle Inquiry #130

Wendy the Word Worm uses the selected animal as a springboard to teach important reading and language skills. (She'll also read the words aloud in French, Japanese or Spanish. What a worm!) Finally, Pablo the Picture worm (complete with beret and goatee) invites kids to paint the animal in whatever colors they see fit using a small, built-in electronic paint program. Kids can also print these pictures to color in with crayons or markers.

Every screen within the program is in full color. No matter where a child clicks, he or she is rewarded with a charming, and usually quite extended, audio and visual effect. There is always some creature dancing around or some animal sounding off, eager to provide a laugh or educational tidbit.

Curiously, the storybook, which is the heart of the product, is only five pages long. This brevity is due, no doubt, to the fact that full color graphics and extended digitized sound take up so much disk space. (The CD-ROM version saves the family hard disk from premature overload.) Space constraints do nothing to change the fact that five pages isn't much of a book. It must be said, however, that the little that is here is a shining example of interactive children's entertainment.

— Ken Levine

Yearn 2 Learn

Good grief! Here's a program with five terrific concepts for kids activities, great animation and great music. It could easily have been split into five separate programs. *Yearn 2 Learn* provides a little something for everyone, but it stretches itself a little thin in the process.

To its credit, the program's Comic Strips is a terrific reading activity with familiar characters, fun stories, great animation and lots of audio and visual reinforcement. Kids can read and re-read words and phrases as often as necessary — the comics make it fun. Kids are challenged to find hotspots on the screen that trigger animated sequences. While the search for hotspots detracts from the reading activity, the program doesn't claim to be a reading-tutor program.

Yearn 2 Learn's math activities encompass several skill levels, from very simple counting, addition, and subtraction, to complex multiplication. Students choose their activity by skill level. The Easy activity involves counting Woodstock's friends as they come and go; the Medium activity is a bowling game; and the Hard activity involves calculating the weight of a pumpkin. Again, the auditory and visual reinforcement is terrific.

Yearn 2 Learn

Price: $64.95

In Brief: Snoopy and the Peanuts gang read, color, count, and play.

Requirements: IBM compatible with 4MB RAM; VGA display; hard disk with 12MB free space; Windows 3.1 or higher.

Audio Support: Sound Blaster, Pro Audio Spectrum, and compatible devices.

For Ages: 3 to 10

Other Versions: Windows CD-ROM ($64.95); Macintosh ($64.95); Macintosh CD-ROM ($64.95)

Image Smith
1313 Sepulveda Blvd.
Torrance, CA 90501
(800) 876-6679
Circle Inquiry #131

Then there's the Flying Ace games. These include an activity that asks kids

to match a picture with a sound effect, and an unsophisticated, arcade game billed as a memory skill tutor.

The Geography Games are great introductory activities in a puzzle format. Depending on the skill level chosen, kids can drag states to their correct positions (the state's name appears and is spoken by the computer); or, kids must not only position the state, but name it as well. More options for configuring the game (like turning the guides on or off) would have been welcome.

The program's Coloring Book activity consists of ten black-and-white comics that kids can color. This activity may promote tactile coordination skills in the very young, but it's too unsophisticated for older children. Crayons pop up when selected (the computer describes the color — an outstanding feature), but kids won't be able to print their finished pictures (an egregious oversight).

Overall, the concepts in *Yearn 2 Learn* are solid. Every child will find challenging things to do. But it's questionable whether parents will want a program geared to address their child's abilities seven years down the road. With the disparity between kids' abilities between the ages of 3 to 10 (the self-proclaimed target for the program), it's hard to see how an activity that entertains and challenges a three-year-old can hope to sustain the interest of a 10-year-old sibling.

— Felicia Donovan

Discovering America

This somewhat novel approach to learning about history lets students learn about early Spanish exploration in the Americas by experiencing it. Success and high scores do not come easily. Kids must read short passages and plan their moves with cunning.

Playing this game takes patience and determination. For those youngsters who like to solve puzzles, this game is a sure hit. For those who prefer action and glitter, *Discovering America* may not sustain interest. Each player takes the role of a Spanish explorer who learns about America in a simulation of traveling and trading with natives.

The game tries to combine traditional computer text-based games with the latest multimedia sights and sounds, but it doesn't always succeed. Brief musical interludes accompany movement around a map of the southeastern part of the North American continent. A dotted line marks the course of the journey between current and selected locations.

Discovering America

Price: $59.95

In Brief: The Spanish exploration of America comes to life in an action adventure game that develops critical thinking and reading skills and builds decision making abilities.

Requirements: IBM compatible with 640K RAM; VGA display; hard disk with 1.6MB free space. A mouse is optional.

For Ages: 8 and older

Other Versions: Macintosh; $59.95

Lawrence Productions
1800 South 35th St.
Galesburg, MI. 49053-9687
(616) 665-7075
Circle Inquiry #132

The graphics are less than stunning. Colorful native villages and wilderness scenes provide a backdrop for dialogue boxes that pop open in the center of the screen. Players must constantly click arrows to scroll through the text.

The playing screen combines the message box and background picture with a control panel on the bottom portion of the screen. This control panel shows icons and numbers representing the status of the explorer's health, wealth, and supplies. The panel also shows two rows of command buttons. Pressing a button results in a dialog box displaying the results of the command.

These command buttons are the only interaction between player and game. The choices are: Trade, Convert, Find Gold, Pillage, Move, Encamp. Depending on which command is pressed, a message box may ask the player to press a key for the number of days the action will take or the number of gifts offered. Players can get slightly different results by redoing a command and changing the number response.

Discovering America offers few surprises. Players must discover how the game works as they read about early American life.

— Jack M. Germain

Kid's Studio

This exciting and innovative children's product is, at heart, not really a children's product. CyberPuppy (they get a point for the company name alone) has taken what is essentially a business presentation program (like *Aldus Persuasion* or *Microsoft PowerPoint*), and stripped out all the overly complex and non-entertaining elements. The publisher then added pictures and sound effects that invite kids to let their imaginations loose.

Kid's Studio is a story-making program. Here's how it works: First, kids (and parents too) may browse through Treasure Chests, which are scrapbooks full of photos, illustrations and cartoons. (Many of the photos even display educational captions when kids click on them with the mouse.) Two hundred fifty pictures come with the program, and the publisher has promised to make more pictures available in the future. As if that weren't enough, kids and parents can import pictures directly from Photo CD discs. These discs are available for families who want to develop photographs for use on CD-ROM drives that are capable of displaying the pictures, either on a computer or on another Photo

Kid's Studio

Price: $59.95

In Brief: A computerized storybook maker.

Requirements: Macintosh LC or better with 4MB RAM, 256-color display; hard disk with 7MB free space, System 7.0 or higher. CD-ROM drive supporting Photo CD is optional

For Ages: 6 and up.

CyberPuppy Software
P.O. Box 19500
Rochester, NY 14619
(716) 436-3570
Circle Inquiry #133

CD device. (There's even a five-dollar coupon for CD processing from Kodak included in the package.) Each picture used in a *Kid's Studio* document can then be placed, resized, and even edited (with the program's paint program).

Kids then add text to the image and, if equipped with a sound-capable Macintosh, record music or voice to play along with the images. Each screen they create is called a *page*. Pages can include any number of pictures and sounds, and the sounds may be played in any order. Kids string together numerous pages to create a story. Budding video artists can use the program's canned transitions to move from page to page. All of the created pages, sounds, and transitions can be edited at any time.

Kids can play their finished story as a slide show by setting timed intervals between pages. In addition, any story may be saved as a QuickTime movie (QuickTime 1.61 is included in the package) so friends and family who do not have *Kid's Studio* may see the show for themselves.

This is a fairly comprehensive, easy to use product that has much to offer. The only major problem is the contents of the Treasure chests. The pictures contained with the program, while of good quality and exceptional variety, are fairly useless in trying to tell a story. The broad range of subjects is hampered by the use of each subject in a limited way. For example, because the program's dinosaur picture offers but a single pose, there is a limit to what can be done visually with the picture in the context of a story. A better approach would have involved using body parts that could be manipulated by the story makers to create a variety of different poses, moods, and situations.

Despite this limitation, *Kid's Studio* is an exceptional product. It provides a valuable creative outlet for kids, and is sophisticated enough to appeal to parents. Bringing kids and adults together around the computer is always a welcome idea.

— Ken Levine

Zurk's Learning Safari

Imagine a magical place where storybooks come to life, letters change into animals, and kids can play hide and seek with crocodiles and caracals in the African Serengeti. *Zurk's Learning Safari* offers a combination of seven different content-rich activities designed to allow children plenty of exploration and discovery time. It also introduces and reinforces basic skills like shape recognition, letter recognition, matching and counting.

Zurk's Learning Safari

Price: $59.95

In Brief: A delightful multimedia early learning journey.

Requirements: IBM compatible (386 or better) with 2MB RAM, VGA display, hard disk; mouse.

Audio Support: Sound Blaster, AdLib, Disney Sound Source, and compatible sound devices

For Ages: 3 to 7

Soleil Software
3853 Grove Ct
Palo Alto, CA 94303
(415) 494-0114
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This program distinguishes itself from the standard basic skills learning programs in many ways: from the beautifully illustrated, watercolor graphics to the rhythmic African-flavored music. In Explore Story, the cursor becomes Maya, the lion cub. Kids can easily control Maya's movements without having to hold the mouse button down as the cub explores a fully interactive jungle and tries to get back to her mother. In Hide and Seek (two separate activities), kids can hide or search for camouflaged animals and magically change animals in the "transputer," a unique transformer complete with sound effects.

In Puzzles, kids can play with five different puzzles and place pieces simply by clicking on them and dragging them around. Shape recognition skills are covered in the Magic Box. Positive reinforcement is provided by Zurk, an animated character that leads kids throughout the program.

In addition to *Zurk*'s rich multimedia learning experiences, the Parent's Guide (also a Rhyming Book) provides many supplemental activities for parents which can be performed at the computer or away from the keyboard. Background material on Zurk's African adventure includes an explanation of African rhythms and instruments; pictures of all the animals mentioned throughout the program; and a bibliography for further reading and exploration.

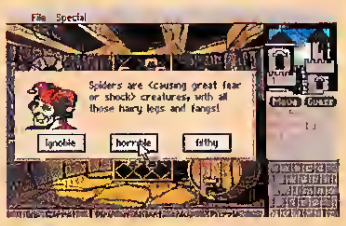
— Felicia Donovan

Mind Castle

Here's an intriguing word-skill game that takes the drudgery out of learning vocabulary. The game is ideal for independent home study or team efforts in the classroom.

Players enter the Word Wizard's castle to begin a series of puzzles. They can only solve the puzzle by clicking on objects in a room and picking the correct meaning to a word challenge. Wrong answers prompt a new clue and more chances to answer correctly. Each correct answer provides another piece to a larger mystery question. When players get enough correct answers, they progress to a higher level of play.

Graphics are an integral part of this game. Players move through 20 rooms in the five story castle looking for clues. Selecting various objects in each location reveals a word challenge. If enough



Mind Castle

Price: $59 95

In Brief: Players build vocabulary skills in this challenging puzzle game

Requirements: IBM compatible with 640K of RAM, VGA display; hard disk with 1MB free space. A mouse is optional

Audio Support: AdLib, Sound Blaster, and compatible sound devices.

For Ages: 8 and up

Other Versions: Macintosh, $59.95

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PUBLISHER: Binary Zoo
DOS

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Ages 4-8. A magical typing program that builds skills for young children. A friendly dragon named Keystone guides children through three exciting activities that familiarize them with basic keyboard functions. Kids can explore the keyboard with unique and animated imagery in the Magic keyboard. As they type, different animations appear that reinforce letters and key positions. Once children are familiar with the keyboard, they can play Dragon Tunes and the Alphabet Song Game. Features easy-to-read type, digitized speech, music and sound effects.

PUBLISHER: Davidson
DOS

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PUBLISHER: ATI
DOS

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PUBLISHER: Brederbund
DOS, MAC

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PUBLISHER: Time Warner
IBM-CD, MAC-CD

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PUBLISHER: Magic Quest
DOS, MAC

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PUBLISHER: Sierra
WIN **$28**

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PUBLISHER: Sony Imagesoft
IBM CD **$55**

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PUBLISHER: Davidson
WIN **$33**

MARIO'S TIME MACHINE

Join the Mario Brothers on a wild ride through time as they relive great moments in history in this new series. Take a romp with the dinosaurs during the Jurassic period, step off in ancient Egypt to meet Cleopatra and arrive just in time to witness the first successful powered flight of the 20th Century— all in a day's work for the popular plumbers. See Mario visit the workshop of Thomas Edison, ride along with Neil Armstrong and cheer for Babe Ruth. In addition to witnessing scores of other historic events. Entertaining and educational for the whole family.

PUBLISHER: Software Toolworks
DOS **$28**

RICHARD SCARRY BUSY TOWN

Introduce your child to the world of discovery in Busytown. It's a fascinating world of total interaction where the lovable characters from the Busy World of Richard Scarry are up to all kinds of fun. Twelve unique playgrounds rich with real-life experiences gives your child the thrill of learning by doing. Thirteen original music scores, including everything from rap and reggae to salsa. Develops skills in addition and subtraction, body parts, counting, directionality, pattern matching, problem solving and reading.

PUBLISHER: Paramount Interactive
IBM-CD, MAC CD; DOS, MAC **$29**

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PUBLISHER: Discovery Channel
IBM CD **$31**

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PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts
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PUBLISHER: MECC
DOS, MAC **$33**

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questions aren't answered before the digital timer reaches zero, the game is over and players must start again.

Mind Castle is based on proven language learning strategies. Players respond to vocabulary drills in a non-repetitive manner that draws them into reacting positively. Vocabulary questions are posed with context clues so youngsters can rely on their reading skills rather than mere memory. The game reinforces spelling skills, too. And it teaches students to choose the appropriate word meaning among words of multiple meanings.

Students learn more than word skills playing this game. They also learn to budget their time wisely. Guessing wildly and moving aimlessly about the castle takes time. Solving puzzles adds bonus time.

Mind Castle is ideal for students with either weak or strong language skills. And players who get easily frustrated can use shortcuts to locate the hidden puzzles.

— Jack M. Germain

Mario's Early Years: Fun With Letters

Good teachers know that the best way to teach a new concept is to introduce it; then teach it in as many possible ways to address all different learning styles. This learning game follows the same formula with fun activities that introduce letters and letter sounds. At the opening screen, kids decide whether Mario or Princess Toadstool will be the active character. They then select from ten different worlds for their learning adventure. These worlds include a variety of activities: simple songs; letter recognition; alphabetic order; sentence fill-in; letter-sound recognition (phonics); vowel recognition; letter blending; letter building; and identification of first letter and last letter sounds.

Several of the game's activities can be played in one of two modes; Discovery Mode or Learning Mode. In Discovery Mode, Luigi sleeps soundly and kids click on interactive objects or characters without any restrictions. In Learning Mode, Luigi wakes-up and invites kids to participate in specific activities such as pointing to particular letters or finding words that end in specific letters. Kids can easily switch between the two modes by clicking on Luigi.

Mario's Early Years!
Fun With Letters

Price: $39.95

In Brief: Mario teaches letters and letter sounds in 10 fun-filled activities.

Requirements: IBM compatible (386 or better) with 640K RAM; VGA display; hard disk with 14MB free space; mouse.

Audio Support: AdLib, Sound Blaster and compatible sound devices.

For Ages: 3 to 6

The Software Toolworks
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Circle Inquiry #136

A Parents' Information Center provides a resource with a wealth of information on what each world attempts to do, which helps parents guide young learners toward specific skill areas. It includes an explanation of the natural stages of learning in young children; home play follow-up activities; and what the purpose behind each activity is. Parents can also configure the program in a variety of ways to suit their child's learning styles. The only option missing is a printing feature.

All of the activities are fun, and they cover just about everything kids need to know about letter and letter-sound recognition. *Fun with Letters* has enough balance between active and passive activities to keep kids engaged for hours.

— Felicia Donovan

Mr. Drumstix' Music Studio

Even a novice can't help but acquire new musical skills after using this engaging program. Its games and activities provide serious musical training for young minds eager to learn about the world of notes, rhythms, and chords.

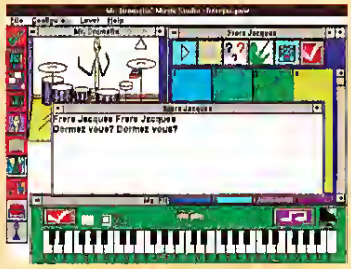
For beginners, the program offers activities as basic as a Karaoke-style singalong. Twenty classic children's songs come with the program. Kids can belt out a tune to Mr. Drumstix's musical accompaniment, adjust the tempo, and even change the instruments — all with the click of the mouse. Additional song files are available from the publisher.

Several musical games of varying complexity challenge young ears. These range from a simple test of counting notes, to a more advanced game that trains kids to recognize and distinguish different chords.

To help guide them through the musical games, kids can rely on three computer characters: Ms. Florida Keys, Guitar George and, of course, Mr. Drumstix. Kids use these campy characters to make music, while learning about the instruments at the same time. Before long, kids will be improvising new musical compositions.

Ambitious young composers can take advantage of the program's rhythm editor to create original melodies and drum parts, which can be played back using any of the 128 different musical instruments that are synthesized within the program. Sounds range from the sublime to the ridiculous, and can be plugged in at virtually any point of a composition.

Mr. Drumstix is easy to install and use. The clear and readable manual does a good job of explaining all of the compo-



Mr. Drumstix' Music Studio

Price: $69.95

In Brief: A lively and entertaining program that lets kids express their creativity while exploring the world of music.

Requirements: IBM compatible (386 or higher) with 4MB RAM, VGA display; hard disk, sound device or MIDI interface; Windows 3.1 or higher

Audio Support: Sound Blaster compatible devices

For Ages: 3 to 9

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My son and I love this game!!!

Great work!!

Robert Strauss, Burbank

My daughter (11 years old) and I have became "Oxyd" addicts. We cannot wait to begin exploring the many other levels. Thanks for creating such an excellent product. R. S., Germantown

This is, without question, the most impressive game I have ever seen. I am amazed at the audio, visual and action. George L. Tanty, Arlington Heights

Outstanding program!!!! John Bernauer, Los Gatos

Wow! That's all I can say about Oxyd. What an incredible game! Hurry! I can't wait to play!!

This game is highly addictive. Stuart Ritchie, Canada

One of the nicest games I have seen in a long time.

Thanks for creating such a challenging piece of software. Steve Brannon, Canada

I'm completely hooked! Patricia B. Smith, NH

The game is a blast! Excellent graphics, extremely well done. Interesting challenges in each landscape also. I look forward to the next 90 landscapes. David Mangini, CT

The game is really slick, well designed. Those first 10 levels alone were worth paying for!

One of the most elegant games I've played. Thanks a lot for a great game. Jeffrey Jandahl, San Diego

OK so we got hooked!

I enjoy this game a great deal and so do my children and their friends. It is just what I have been looking for !! Jerome Wescott, Minneapolis

My whole family enjoyed your game a great deal. Michael C. Moore, Columbia

Oxyd has to be the most artistically superb piece of programming that I have seen. From my position of having completed about one third of the single-player levels, the landscapes have been continuously varied with a marvelous attention to graphic and audible detail that makes each new one a continuing delight. I especially appreciate how the marble interacts in seemingly realistic but different ways when rolling over or bouncing against different "natural" (or unnatural) substances like stone, wood, swamp, freefall etc. At this point, I'm already worrying that I'll run out of levels (assuming I keep solving the puzzles). Jeffrey R. Harrow

Even our 3yr old enjoys the game.

I just had to write to tell you how much fun I've had playing Oxyd. The attention to detail - the sounds, the textures of the surfaces - really adds to the fun of the game. It invites the imagination for a ride.

Thanks also for making all of the landscapes challenging but not impossible. At first I thought that landscape 76 was unfairly difficult, but when I found the way through it, I really admired the ingenuity. Tom Phoenix, Portland

It is rare to find such a visually appealing, addictive and playable game. Kathryn Wilson, Australia

I'm really impressed with your game, Oxyd. Congratulations on a unique and fun product, and best luck to you all. John M. Dodd, Thousand Oaks

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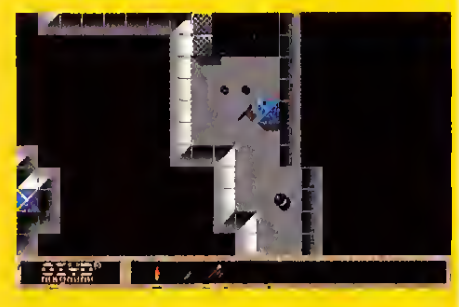


Oxyd Credits

Best Brain Game
MacWorld Game Hall of Fame 1993

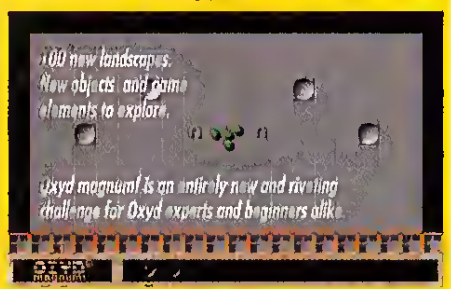
Game of the Year
Computer & Pädagogik 06/93

Score this game a solid 10
Current Notes 06/93

"A" roting - Wow! Exquisite. A must for your games library.
AmigaWorld 06/93

Game of the Month.
MacWelt 07/93

Top of the Charts
Brain Teaser Category PC Games German edition



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nents. Some advanced computer users, especially those skilled in using Microsoft Windows, may object to certain design elements, such as the inability to minimize the program to the desktop. But if parents recognize such features as a means of guarding important computer data against accidental erasure, the design makes sense.

The ease with which kids can begin to explore music and sound is the major attraction of this program. It's notable features will have kids singing its praises.

— Dennis McCauley

Parenting

Young parents and would-be parents are always looking for good reference books about parenting. This interactive reference provides six different popular publications in one location, produced by a husband and wife pediatrician and pediatric nurse team who, with their four children, have survived the parenting process.

The *Parenting* guide is primarily a set of electronic books, bringing to bear the convenience of the powerful search-and-cross-referencing ability of the CD-ROM medium. The sparse utilization of the full powers of multimedia in this program is the largest weakness of this mostly excellent reference. Still, it gives parents a tool that provides immediate answers to thousands of problems that arise with children during the first formative years.

Six minutes of audio examples of children's normal language development is followed by a child development specialist's comments and examples of normal child-to-adult conversations. There are over 400 color and black-and-white digitized photographs of parents and children from different ethnic backgrounds, and *in utero* fetal development pictures.

The six references are controlled and cross-referenced by a logical system that performs searches and retrievals on the information. Those who find extensive text difficult to read on the computer display will find the ability to print a welcome feature. Saving information to a file for use in other programs, like a word processor used in a research report, is also available.

Topics covered in the book include: fertility, pregnancy, baby book, birth, baby name book, question and answer book, and a children's medical guide. Many parents will enjoy the complete baby name book. The home medical guide is a thorough reference of useful information. Most parents will find their prenatal-to-preschool concerns answered with this publication.

— Al Giovetti

Parenting

Price: $79.99

In Brief: A set of six books on CD-ROM subjects concerning the prenatal-to-preschool period.

Requirements: IBM compatible with 640K RAM; VGA display, CD-ROM drive.

Audio Support: Direct CD audio output

For Ages: 10 and up

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King Arthur's Magic Castle

A medieval playground sandwiched in plastic is a good description for this child's adventure game. Kids are free to explore one of four areas, but the game offers nothing new to distinguish it from other adventure games, or from educational games using the adventure motif.

From the Castle, players may click on any one of a number of on-screen hot spots (the moat or the drawbridge, for example). Each spot provides a little animation and an accompanying narration explaining the purpose of the particular structure. This tour is essentially the entire educational portion of the game.

After the grand tour, nascent knights may try their lances at a joust. Jousters are given their choice of horse and opponents. The Joust is an extremely simple hand-eye coordination contest, which all but the youngest will soon find tiresome. The interest level generated by this contest cannot compete with more modern battles waged on popular video games.

Following the Joust, kids can make a quick stop up in Merlin's tower. Here, a player may click on any visible object and be rewarded with an entertaining animated sequence. But while every click brings about a musical, witty surprise, there are only so many places to click, and the animation and sounds are repetitious. Unless Merlin comes up with some new guests for his party, he will most likely find himself a very lonely wizard.

Finally, there is a fantasy role playing element that takes place underneath the castle. Players wander through a relatively simple maze, hunting for treasures and fleeing danger. This type of game has been done before, with much more panache.

Despite the overall attractiveness of its sound and graphics, *King Arthur's Magic Castle* tries to be too many things and loses its focus in the process. Parents whose primary educational goal for their children is to make them marginally conversant in the layout of a medieval castle should make this addition to their software library. The rest of us will find more food for thought elsewhere.

— Ken Levine

CGW

King Arthur's Magic Castle

Price: $49

In Brief: A mix of fact and fantasy for entertaining kids.

Requirements: Macintosh with 2MB RAM, 256-color display, CD-ROM drive; System 6.07 or higher.

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BEST OF THE REST

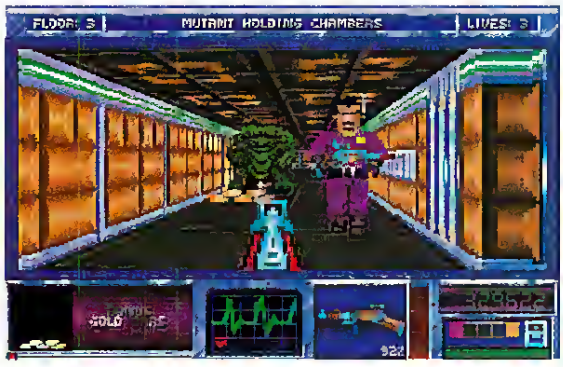
Blasters, Dinos and Voodoo Dolls Du Jour

by Chuck Miller

This month's menu of shareware picks features rather eclectic fare. Topping the list, our main course is another Apogee release destined for success—*Blake Stone: Aliens of Gold*, a 3-D action game in the tradition of *Wolfenstein 3-D*. Also being served is *Dino Slot* from BFM Software, a *Windows*-based slot machine with a prehistoric twist. For dessert we have *Voodoo Doll for Windows*, a program that allows you to "stick it" to friends and foes in more ways than one.

I Think You've Got Your Genes On Backwards

Dr. Pyrus Goldfire, a sinister madman from the future, is using genetics to create a bizarre army of creatures with which he intends to wage war against Earth. In the timeless tradition of the B-movie, Goldfire's plan of conquest and destruction must be stopped, and only our illustrious hero can save the day. Six hidden mutant hatcheries must be cleared to put the dastardly fiends out of commission.



Blake Stone: Aliens of Gold

Blake Stone: Aliens of Gold, produced by JAM Productions, is Apogee's follow-up to the eminently successful *Wolfenstein 3-D*. While not quite up to the overall quality of Id's latest creation, *Doom*, *Blake Stone* is nonetheless a high quality, first person blastfest. Those who already have the first release should note that version 2.0 is now available, featuring several improvements, including lowet memory requirements, light sourcing, and auto-maps that rotate to show your actual facing direction.

With 66 levels of explosive action through six missions (the shareware version provides one mission to lure you into ordering the othet five), *Blake Stone* takes you on a futuristic, mutant-mangling adventure. Of course, sevetal levels of difficulty have been provided to tune the quantity of mass destruction to your prefetred level.

Regardless of the difficulty level chosen, the ovetall scote is detetmined by several factors: total points earned, informants left alive, and the number of enemy creatures destroyed. Scores are tallied for each floor and mission, displaying ratings based on Blake's proficiency, and they can be viewed at any time to check on progress. Just a hot key away is the auto-map of the floor currently occupied. Major features such as open and locked doots, and the player's position are clearly depicted. As in *Wolfenstein 3-D*, secret doors and walls exist, tequiring your thorough and careful efforts to loeate. A new featute—one-way doors—add to the difficulty of clearing a level. Fortunately, the weaponry provided eases that burden for those less-subtle players.

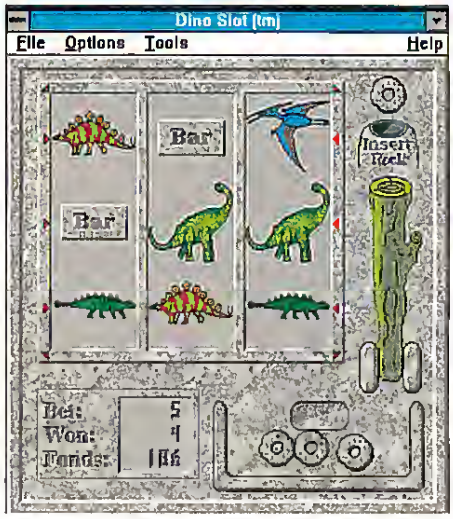
Visually and audibly, *Blake Stone* has much the same feel as *Wolfenstein 3-D*. High quality 256-colot graphics offet a familiat look, but feature brighter colors and greater detail. There are also more opponents to face in this sci-fi setting, giving a total of 20 unique characters. Graphically, atmosphere rates high, accompanied and enhanced by 15 musical soundtracks and apptopriate digitized gunfire, punctuated by screams and thunderous explosions in AdLib and Sound Blastet sound. Ovetall, *Blake Stone* delivets the goods on all counts.

All six missions of *Blake Stone: Aliens of Gold* are available for a registration fec of $59.95, plus $5 shipping and handling. As a special concession to CGW readers, Apogee will give you a $10 discount if you mention this article. Included with the registered version is the game manual, a hints and secrets guide, and cheat code (enabling full health, all weapons, full ammo, and all necessary level access key cards). To otdet, send yout payment to: Apogee Softwate, PO Box 496389, Garland TX 75049-6389, or call (800) GAME123 with a charge card in hand.

Ugh! and Bunga Binga! Take Gambling Back To The Stone Age

Regatdless of whether cave men and women gambled, today's dino lovets can cettainly do so with *Dino Slot*, a cute and educational game from BFM Software. Play is simple, as you place a bet of one to five rocks and pull the slot machine (cluh) arm. The more bets placed, the greater the chance of winning (five bets, for example, increase the total ways of winning by five—across each of three rows and diagonally ftom cotnet to cotnet). As the last wheel comes to rest, your winnings, if any, pour from the slot (watch your toes!). An "Ugh!" means no win, while "Bunga Binga!" reaps cold, hard...stone.

In addition to the basic slot machine functions, *Dino Slot* allows you to increase yout winnings by taking a Dino-Quiz. Answet the posed questions correctly and eatn extra rocks. Guess incotrectly and feel that continental shift in your pockets. For the most part, the questions ate relatively easy, though a few tingers ate thrown in to keep it from being too simple. Also provided are a handy Wheel Editor and Payoff Editor, with which



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you can edit the wheel combinations and payoff combinations to your liking.

While *Dino Slot* is geared primarily for the younger gamer and does not classify as a true gambling program, more mature types will certainly gain some pleasure trying to bear the odds in this prehistoric game of chance. Both fun and educational, *Dino Slot* will keep players entertained long enough to learn some interesting facts or, at least, relieve some workday stress. *Dino Slot* may be tried free for 15 days, after which it must be registered. Just send a check or money order for $13.95 made out to Bretr McDonald at: BFM Software, Brett McDonald, 38602 Lancaster Drive, Farmington Hills MI 48331.

Voodoo Doll for Windows

When You Do The Voodoo That You Do

Certainly not a game but still entertaining, *Voodoo Doll for Windows* allows you to "pinpoint" good and bad curses to inflict on the people of your choice. Curse a friend, neighbor, spouse, boss, anyone actually. The good news is that curses need not be bad. While you can inflict others with disease, rashes, baldness, job loss, divorce and a visit from the in laws, you can also "curse" them with the benefits of happiness, good health, a pay raise, love and healthy hair. You cannot mix curses in your recipe, however. All must be either good or bad.

To assist in the proper placement of voodoo pins, a handy burton calls up an overlay of vital areas. Head, brain, eyes, heart and groin (yow!) are carefully identified for greatest of accuracy. Once pins are placed, you can either remove them ro start again or effect the curse. Choosing the larter will result in some visual mumbo jumbo—the screen dancing left and right for a few seconds, then disappearing. At this point, you can consider your "victim" to be under the spell of voodoo magic.

Thankfully, *Voodoo Doll for Windows* is just a software toy and is not inrended to be a functional program. The author, Ian Firth of Diversions Software, while visiting New Orleans, found the subject of voodoo to be interesting and put together rhis neat little digital plaything. *Voodoo Doll for Windows* is available for a modest $5 registration fee. Checks and money orders are accepted, and upon regisrration, the author promises you the peace of mind that he won't use his voodoo doll against *you*. To register, contact: Ian Firth, Diversions Software, 966 Kramer Court, Aurora CO 80010, CompuServe 76450,3711.

This concludes our look at sharewate for another issue. Software reviewed in this column is available through distributors of shareware and public domain software, as well as on many on-line services. And remember, if you find a shareware program enjoyable, please register it with the authot. Until next time, be sure to get your fair "share" of great games! CGW

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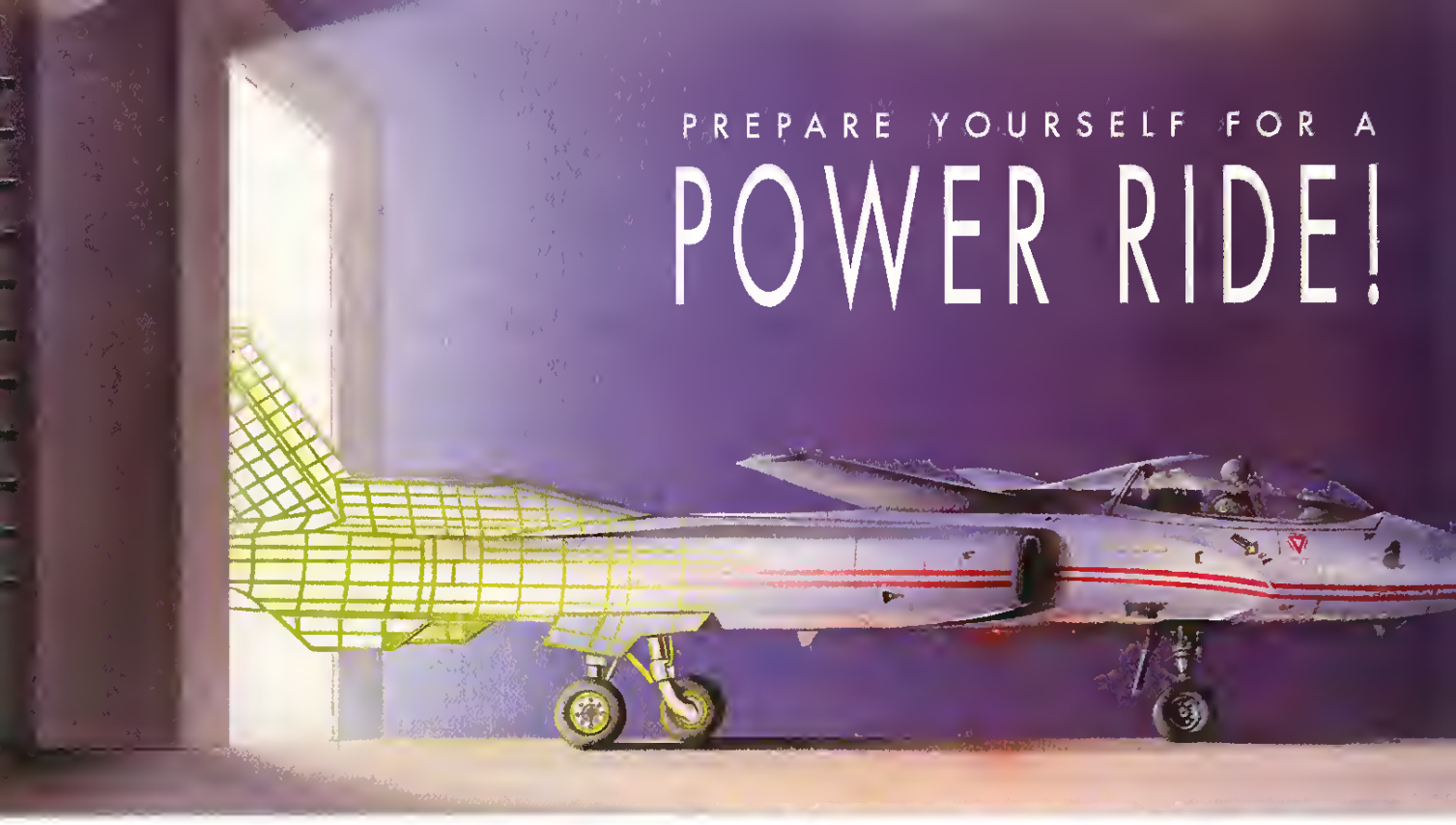

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A Bridge Too Near

A Glimpse At The Cards Of *Positronic Bridge*

by David E. Lindeman

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." So Charles Dickens started his classic story, *A Tale of Two Cities*, at once providing not only a great work of literature, but a quote to be used by endless generations of writers to describe duality. Bridge is, itself, a game of two parts, bidding and play. Many players are stronger in one area than another, sometimes markedly so. It should come as no surprise that we now have a computer bridge game that shares the same characteristics.

Positronic Bridge is a recent entry into the computer bridge game market, coming on the heels of such earlier products as *Grand Slam Bridge II* and *Micro Bridge Companion*. Since I reviewed both of these games previously in *CGW*, I'll use them as a basis for comparison. Coming a year after *Grand Slam II* and three after *Micro Bridge*, one would expect it to capitalize on existing techniques to make general improvements on both. Well...

Silent Screens

Positronic opens with a simple screen, featuring a small rotating planet and the *Positronic Bridge* logo. No sound, just a little note saying "Press any key to continue," whereupon you get another screen, again with the *Positronic* logo. This gives way to a menu of thtee options—Setup, Play and Exit—which is rather teminiscent of a BASIC game written for an EGA display. Even worse, about one third of the options under setup are non-functional until you buy the *Positronic Bridge Advanced Edition*. Apparently, the enhanced version provides a whole series of bidding options—but more on bidding later.

The display improves once you select play and get to the bidding screen—a simple and attractive layout that uses a grid to represent possible bids. The mouse may be used to select the bid you want, or to ask the program for a suggestion. Once bidding is complete, the hand play is similarly simple and attractive. The left corner displays the cards played on the preceding trick, the open hand(s) are revealed on the table, with the cards displayed in the center. When *Positronic* stops to evaluate a play or bid, it displays a cute graphic of a brain with neurons firing in the upper left corner. A feature of *Grand Slam II* that I miss is the ability to display all tricks played up to the current point.

At the conclusion of each hand, *Positronic* shows the contract and current score. The game scores all hands using the rubber-bridge method. There is apparently no option in the works to support duplicate scoring like *Micro Bridge* does. You can then choose to replay the hand, go on to a new deal, or exit. Selecting exit does not, however, return you to the main menu, but to the two logo screens instead—as if we don't get enough advertising on TV.

Do You Wish To Bid?

Bidding is the most varied and hotly argued part of bridge. There are more systems and conventions in the wide world of contract bridge than any one person can possibly remember. Your reactions to any bidding system depend a lot on your personal experience and how you think about the game. Of course, this is the most difficult part of the game to represent by computer, since human play depends on agreements and is subject to change, error and intuition.

Positronic comes with precisely one style of bidding. The book that accompanies the game describes most of its bidding conventions. Not to worry, though, because *Positronic* will not allow you to bid incorrectly. If you make a bid other than the one the program would make, it will tell you that your bid is wrong and to try again or ask the suggestion box for the right answer. While the attempt at tutoring the player is reasonable, it comes across as pattonizing, especially to seasoned players. The bidding system *Positronic* uses is similar to Standard American, although it does not use the five card major suit convention for an opening bid of "one" that is so common today.

Since I play a bidding system known as "two over one," I found the game's bidding system to be occasionally confusing, providing me with ample opportunity to read the "Your bid is incorrect" box. If you are new to the game of bridge, however, you will find the program to be a consistent, if not brilliant, bidder. It does do some things that I find to be poor practice; for instance, since it will open a 4-card suit, you may find yourself in a 3-notrump contract when you have a 5-3 major suit fit. And since *Positronic* won't let you vary from its bids, you cannot correct such hands to 4 of the major, which is where most people agree they should be played. This is, to some extent, an artifact of the bidding system, and one of the primary reasons for the use of the five-card major opening 1-bid. It also denies the human player the

Positronic Bridge

TITLE:	Positronic Bridge
PRICE	$49.95
SYSTEM	IBM
REQUIREMENTS:	286 or better, EGA/VGA graphics, 2MB hard drive space, mouse supported
PROTECTION:	Key disk check
DESIGNER:	Dr. David Lever
PUBLISHER	ReadySoft Inc Ontario, Canada (416) 731-4175

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opportunity to make a brilliant bid, or to make an incredibly bad bid and learn why at the school of hard knocks.

The Advanced game may correct these problems. It claims to provide a tool for building a new bidding system using an artificial intelligence model called an engram. Since this was not available for the review, I cannot comment on its ease of use or features.

It's Your Turn, Buddy

Positronic has options to use both suit count and attitude signals. Even better, it actually pays attention to your suit count and attitude signals, a consistent problem with *Grand Slam 2*. While *Positronic* does not seem to understand suit shift signals, this is a universal failing in computer bridge games. *Positronic* uses very standard openings, making it fairly easy to understand, and it also goofs from time to time by sticking too closely to the standard leads, as do other bridge programs. On the plus side, *Positronic* will lead the top card of your bid suit, giving it an advantage over most other bridge games.

A minor failing in play is an option to claim all remaining tricks. *Positronic* will take your word for this and concede all remaining tricks even if it holds a clear winner that you have missed, so be careful. Another quirk is the help option. If you ask for help after the first lead, you will get a mathematical display claiming to show the relative number of tricks winnable by each card you could legally play. Being a computer programmer by profession, I took a fair amount of math in college, but I found this display to be rather uninformative.

According to the instructions, *Positronic* will learn and adjust to your playing style over time. Some part of its artificial intelligence routine theoretically grades the results of each hand and makes minor adjustments as it accumulates data. In the time I played the game to prepare for this review, it is hard for me to state that the game adjusted to my playing style. My opinion is that it had made some changes, but I would be hard-pressed to explain exactly what. *Positronic*'s play is consistent and generally good, which makes it a good practice tool for playing hands. It will occasionally get creative with a lead, with mixed results, which can be a little disconcerting, but I like this feature. The program encourages you to stay on your toes, to constantly think about why a specific lead was chosen, and gives the program the chance to make an occasional really great lead.

A Jumbled Scoresheet

If you are a beginning bridge player, *Positronic*'s bidding system is an adequate one for learning the game. If you already play bridge and are looking for that 24-hour game, it might conceivably turn you into an ax murderer. I found the bidding to be so irritating that I had to take periodic breaks from the game. A feature like the bidding flowcharts used in *Micro Bridge* would be incredibly helpful in explaining how to get *Positronic* to make the bid you are convinced is correct. This serves as a necessary replacement for the feedback you would get from a human partner as you reviewed hands after play ("No, no, when you made *that* bid, I thought you had 6 spades, because otherwise you could have just bid notrump..."). I found this to be particularly frustrating because its play is good and, if the documentation is correct, will only improve.

I would only recommend the current version of *Positronic Bridge* to a beginning player or to one willing to learn an entirely new, albeit primitive, bidding system. The features advertised as being part of the Expert edition might make it a truly useful, if not terribly attractive, tool. I hope this is true, because I find the concept of the product to be very interesting. CGW

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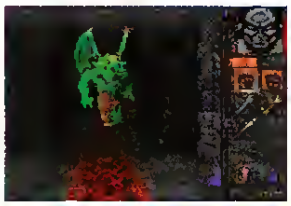

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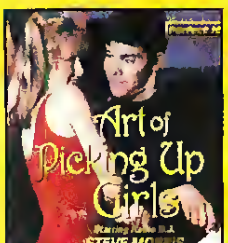

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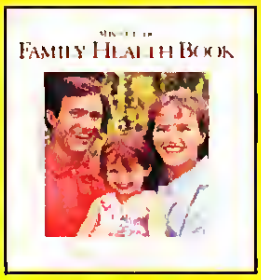

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A Wargamer's Scouting Report From CES

by Alan Emrich

Although you'll have to read our CES feature for the complete picture, allow me to present a quick wargamer's-eye view of upcoming products shown at CES. In general, things look pretty good for wargamers for the next six months to a year.

In the Things Are Often What They Sim department, I had a great time at the Origin booth. While I appreciate deep flight sims, I *enjoy* easier ones. Along those lines, both *Pacific Strike* and *Wings of Glory* games cover their respective WWII and WWI aerial combat eras with grace and narrative story lines. Apparently, they've listened to a lot of player feedback, and have made *playability* their primary design objective. Both games add an enjoyable *Wing Commander* feel to their subjects, and I quickly found myself having a good time with them.

Changeling Software is still working away on an IBM version of their hot Macintosh space conquest game, *Pax Imperia*, although they were not sure if modem support would make it in time for the IBM release. Also unsure about modem support was Impressions with Ed Grabowski's next wargame, tentatively titled *D-Day*. Based on an improved *The Blue & The Gray* engine, *D-Day* includes distinctions between leaders unlike its predecessor. Also showcased was *Castle Conquest*, a sort of *Caesar* meets *Castles II* in medieval England which will support up to two human players via modem.

I was a Spy at SSI

SSI had a five wargame line-up to talk about, not all of which were available to look at. Norm Kroeger's *Iron Fist* will present tactical armored combat from WWI to the near future at the platoon level (200 yards per hex) in a computerized board game style. It will feature scenarios, campaigns, and design-your-own features in eras such as 1917/8, 1939, 1967, etc. Their *Great Naval Battles II* voyages to the Pacific and includes carrier operations a la *Carrier Strike*. From the team that brought you *Clash of Steel* will be *Operation Overlord*, a D-Day to Berlin campaign with that same strong boardgame feel.

Gary Grigsby is busy working on his as yet untitled *Panzer Strike!* update. Armed with some SSI power programming tools, Gary will be hot-rodding his future games, and art director Tom Wall will greatly enhance their graphic look. What really knocked my combat boots off was the announcement of *Panzer General*, inspired by—brace yourselves—a Japanese SEGA cartridge wargame. Now, I can imagine what you're thinking, but keep an open mind. I've actually played the game that inspired this highly Americanized version and it's pretty addicting. Players conduct campaigns, such as the invasion of Poland, overrunning the west, etc., at the appropriate operational level. *Panzer General* has a familiar cozy hexgrid structure and enough tactical nuance to make any wargamer feel right at home. I admit to owning a lot of Japanese wargames, but none have I enjoyed as much as this one.

"I Came, I Played, I Conquered"

Art by Rodger MacGowan, Copyright 1994 RBM Graphics

At QQP, always a wargamer's favorite stop, they were showing *The Perfect General 2*, which I've become a *de facto* play-tester of. The new unit types have been carefully chosen, and a lot of spunk has been added to the look and feel. Since the AI isn't in any version I've seen yet, I can't comment on how it's coming along. Their *Grandest Fleet* is something many have been hoping for—*The Lost Admiral* on steroids. They're putting a lot more of both sizzle and steak in this product, particularly on the economic side of the game. While *The Grandest Fleet* looks like QQP in their glory, I was very pleasantly surprised to see an out-of-house design they're calling *The Pure Wargame* (what a great title!). The first volume (can you say series?) features airborne battles on an operational scale. It's a real *historical* wargame from QQP, with a fine graphic look and all of the bases covered from what I could see. Lacking the time to shake down the AI, I am curious to see if it's up to the *Lost Admiral*. It's a shame that it lacks modem support, as it would seem a natural for on-line play.

Take That Hill!

For the finale of my CES tour I stopped by the Avalon Hill booth where they were showing *Kingmaker*, based on the advanced version of their popular board game (see Johnny Wilson's preview in this issue for more details). AH was also showing a very *V for Victory*-looking operational WWII desert wargame called *Operation Crusader*. Both *Crusader* and the upcoming *Beyond Squad Leader* are projects Avalon Hill is working on with Atomic Games. Designer Keith Zabalaoui from Atomic and Jim Rose of The Hill's computer division were eager to answer many tough wargamer questions, particularly those about their *Computer Third Reich*, which they were also showing (albeit without AI).

And that's my thumbnail scouting report. Don't forget that we're still beating the drums for strategy, replay, player aid and "deep analysis" war/strategy gaming articles. Contact me at the office, (714) 283-3000 x25, or on any on-line service if you have an idea to pitch. CGW

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Circle Reader Service #70

A Throne By Any Other Name

The Gamer as *Kingmaker* in Avalon Hill's War of the Roses Game

by Johnny L. Wilson

"And therefore, since I cannot prove a lover,
To entertain these fair well-spoken days,
I am determined to prove a villain
And hate the idle pleasures of these days."

—Shakespeare, Richard III, I, i, 28-31.

Though Richard III's opening monologue begins by implying that England's long "winter of discontent," featuring the red rose of Lancaster upon the throne, is finally over, the self-proclaimed villain announces a chilling series of plots and schemes designed to bring himself to the throne. The history of his machinations would be written in the blood of his fellow nobility. Between 1455 and 1485, three kings (Henry VI, Edward V, and Richatd III), one ctown prince, nine dukes, one matquis, 13 earls and 24 barons lost their lives, and two royal houses, both the Nevilles and the Beauforts, were totally destroyed.

Computer Kingmaker, like its boatdgame predecessot (Kingmaker), focuses on the actions and alignments of the nobility, as opposed to the strategies and tactics of pitched battles, during the War of the Roses. The graphics constantly underscore this fact, as each noble is represented by his apptopriate hetaldic shield, and the shields move about the map to show the location of each noble. Each noble has the same sized shield, regardless of army strength ot political position, and is assumed to have his atmy with him. Hence, the flow of the game seems to emphasize the leadetship of the nobles tather than the movements of armies and the numbers of casualties as in mote traditional wargames. Kingmaker (in both boardgame and computer forms) focuses upon the partisanship, power and survival of individual nobles such as Neville, known historically as "Warwick the Kingmaker."

As in the boardgame, gamers represent factions to which are dealt hands of nobles, titles and tesoutces. You can play with as few as two factions and as many as five. The larger the number of factions, the smaller the number of resources to be distributed within each faction. Then, it is your job as leader of a faction to divide the titles (a noble must be at least an Earl in order to hold an office within the kingdom and be able to wield more power) and resources (offices, ships, archers, crossbowmen, soldiers, etc.) among the nobles in order to assemble the most formidable fighting forces and determine the initial starting positions of each noble (when there is a choice). It is very important to balance your nobility with regard to strength, because the game contains enough randomality from the effects of plague, weather, and a wide vatiety of summons to assure that any noble may end up alone and vulnerable to another faction at any point in the game. Indeed, when a noble is killed by plague or execution, the entire military and political strength of that noble is lost to the faction. Hence, a well-balanced faction, with its power divided equally between its nobles, is a faction that is likely to survive.

Once the resources ate distributed, your task is to maneuvet the heraldic devices teptesenting yout nobles across the map of England. In so doing, you attempt to captute a claimant to the throne to be your puppet monarch and to capture rival claimants in order to extinguish the claims of the rivals by surgical decapitation. The player who manages to have the highest surviving claimant and btings enough episcopal force to bear to effect a coronation will win the game. The clear nature of the victory conditions is, within itself, an improvement over the boardgame where many gamers have never actually finished a

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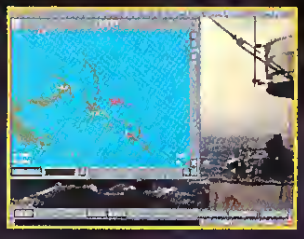

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game of Kingmaker. *Computer Kingmaker* can be won and offers a suitable challenge on many levels.

Naturally, acquiring a claimant and offing the rival pretenders requires the construction of forces large enough to besiege castles and defeat tival forces. As in history, however, you may find that you have wotked fot several turns to prepare an assault, only to have one of yout nobles summoned home to quell a peasant tevolt or to defend against a Scots raid. Worse yet, you may build a massive assault fotce and experience the plague on the vetge of winning. Fortunately, random factors may also benefit you. As in the boardgame, you may get the equivalent of "Fresh Horses" and be able to move further by land, or draw the equivalent of "Fair Winds Assist This Ship" and be able to move further by sea. The random nature of the game causes the sands of history to shift as swiftly as the circumstances faced by the feudal lords of that chaotic era.

Battle is initiated whenever a hetaldic device, tepresenting one or more nobles in a faction, stops in the same location as anothet tival hetaldic device. Battle is decided in one of two ways. First, you can click on the attack button, enabling the computer to make a quick and dirty calculation based on the general odds and to report the victoty, defeat or inconclusive result immediately. This is the way battle was handled in the original boardgame. Second, you can choose to control the forces. This allows you to deploy all of yout forces and to be able to set tactical objectives for each unit. This approach is much more satisfying to the traditional wargamer and offers something of a miniatures feel to the battles. To be sure, these battle sequences could easily be described as limited, but attractive, versions of the combat system found in Sword of the Samutai from MicroProse, Electronic Arts' Centurion or Impressions' Micro-Miniatures series.

Glorious Summer?

Computer Kingmaker plays so smoothly, once you get used to a few clumsy conventions (I had to force myself to remember to distribute titles and resources before moving my nobles and prematurely ending my turn when the nobles were out of movement points), that it feels like playing the boardgame with human opponents. Some of the artificial opponents (particularly the yellow, gray and purple factions) play with ruthlessness and abandon, rushing to seize and kill anyone or anything in their path. Others (particularly the blue and orange factions) tend to wait patiently and move seldom until oppottunistic circumstances arise. Unfortunately, there is no provision in the European version or the American beta version used for this sneak preview for multiple human players, whether by e-mail,

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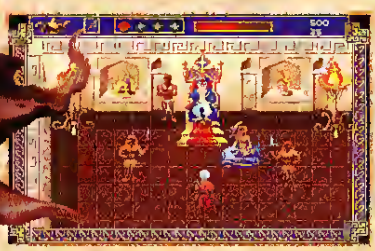

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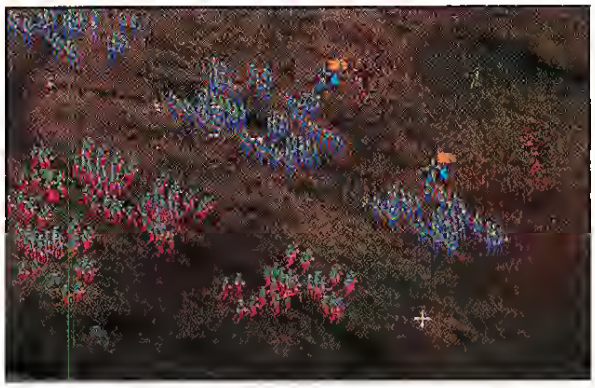

modem, or "hot seating" one computer. This is a loss, because *Computer Kingmaker* plays faster than any game I've played of the boardgame and would make a wonderful teferee/utility for multiple human players. Nonetheless, it is a very playable solitaire game until you learn the styles of the opponents and make mental notes like "Do unto Yellow before Yellow doeth unto you." Fortunately, there may be a mechanism for mixing up the AI in the final version, though this is not definite.

Computer Kingmaker plays so much like the boardgame that non-boardgamets may become impatient with the speed with which the artificial opponents make their moves. Because the emphasis of the game is upon the movements of nobles, each step of each noble is animated on the screen as the noble's heraldic device moves from location to location. This animated movement provides important visual cues to the experienced boardgamer, letting the gamer know about the artificial opponent's vulnerability or, as several nobles begin to zero in on a certain locale, strategic objectives. Those who dislike boardgames may feel that this sactifices the computer's strength of providing limited intelligence and may feel disappointed by this design choice.

Finally, many computer gamers will feel that the conceit of having the heraldic markers, taken literally from the boardgame, move across an analog to the actual game board is inadequate compared to the computer's capability of providing digitized video, detailed animation and CD-quality audio. Some will discount the limited animation available in the beheading sequences where nobles meet their end, the storm sequences telling ships to move directly to port, and the plague sequences where monks march from door to door announcing death. Some may counter that the battle sequences are nice, but purists may wonder if this is enough to justify the purchase of a computer game. Those of us who still play boardgames will answer to the affirmative. Others will wonder at our patience.

Capers Nimbly?

Computer Kingmaker may signal the emergence of the type of computer wargame that many of us have always wanted to see out of Avalon Hill. It does not challenge the state-of-the-art in terms of computer graphics, nor does it up the ante with expensive video footage. It merely replicates its colorful and distinguished predecessor. While the game does not provide unbeatable AI at every level, it still offers plenty of options for letting gamers discover their own level of comfort/competition. Indeed, its greatest virtue is the gamer's reward in that playing *Computer Kingmaker* is like—playing Kingmaker. Warwick would be proud. CGW

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Wargamers May OPFOR TacOps

ARSENAL PUBLISHING LAUNCHES A SURGICAL STRIKE ON WARGAMING

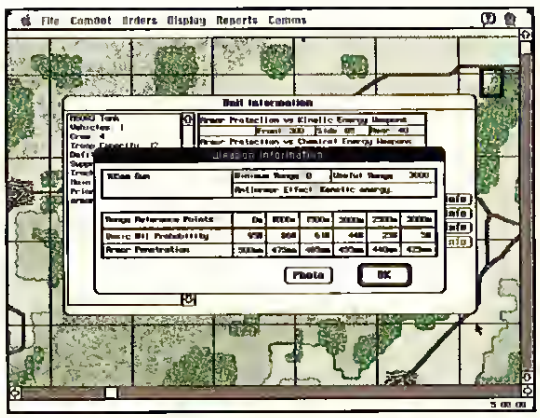
By M. Evan Brooks

Jim DeGocy, Ptesident of Arsenal Publishing, Inc., is a well-known wargamer and author. He is best known for his *Harpoon Battlebook*, and will soon release a similat guide for *V for Victory: Utah Beach* (co-authoted with Ed Rains), as well as *Weapons Free*, a battlebook on contemporary naval simulations. Though he and his company have emphasized publications, they are now prepared to enter the softwate tealm, and may well cause a stitting in the wargaming wotld.

Arsenal's philosophy may best be summed up as "setious wargames and serious entertainment." *TacOps*, the debut ptoduct for Arsenal and designer Major L. Holdridge, is a serious simulation of contemporary military *tac*-tical *op*-etations—serious enough, in fact, that an earlier version of the game was used informally by the U.S. Marine Corps for ttaining purposes. Based upon what I've seen, it appears to be both an excellent training tool and an excellent game system.

In *TacOps*, the units are portrayed at the squad/platoon level, with scenarios ranging upwards to regimental size. You may play eithet U.S. or OPFOR (opposing forces) in a two player game (face-to-face, E-mail ot network), or U.S. forces against the computer OPFOR. In the late 70s and eatly 80s, one could not call an enemy force "Soviet;" instead, OPFOR was the required designation. I still have manuals detailing the political history of OPFOR as well as insignia patches fot that totalitarian nation. By the mid-80s, the artificiality was dropped, and it is somewhat humorous to see the term OPFOR come back into vogue. Of course, now the Soviets are no longer available as a thteat, and therefore, OPFOR fills the requisite need. (Iraq attempted to supplant this void, but was quickly determined to be too matginal.)

TacOps is envisioned as a dynamic design, with revisions due to be published every 12-18 months. The enhancements will allow previous scenarios to be saved, but will tweak the model to the state-of-the-art. *TacOps 2* (with a 1995 telease date) will add fully digitized 1:50,000 DMA maps and a modem option, and will allow you to play either side in a solitaire contest. The modem option will feature a background communications program for real-time based opetations.



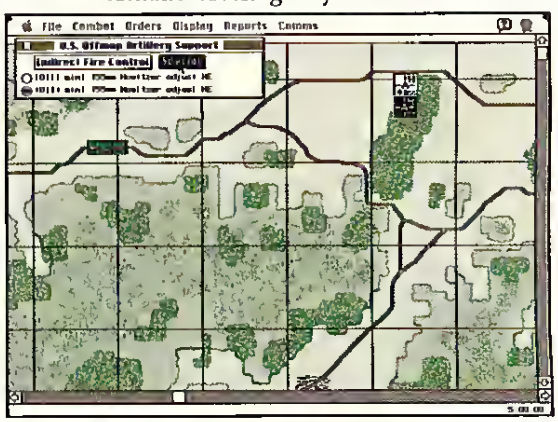
The initial release will offet 24 scenarios of U.S. forces (either Army or Marine Cotps) against OPFOR. But since you can vary the weapons systems (e.g., adjust from M1 Abrams to M60A3s, ftom T-80s to T-72s), in effect thete will be toughly 10 variants fot each scenario fot a total of around 240 scenarios.

The game is turn-based, with each turn consisting of four 15-second phases. Up to five minutes of turns may be pre-loaded. Artillery and air support are available, with the fotmer requiring registration and adjustment for fires. Of course, adjusting artillery fires and tactical air support comes with a built-in delay, and you can often end up destroying vegetation instead of the enemy. A 1000-meter grid square may be supetimposed on the map, with grid coordinates teptesenting the actual UTM military mode (in Version 2.0).

Line of sight can be checked by simple mouse input, and Pk (probabilities of kill) are detailed. In fact, normal Pk tables show petcentage of kill ratios delineated in ranges (from 0-500 metets, from 500 meters to 1500, etc.). *TacOps* uses information from the designer which stretches out the Pk. In effect, if a 50% Pk were normally noted for ranges from 1500-2000 meters, the program will have a highet Pk for 1500 meters, and it will gradually decrease as it teaches the end of the range.

The map itself is functional, although there is only one differential in elevation due to memory requirements. This will be adjusted in Version 2.0, which will also add a scenario editor. Note that the enemy AI is hatd-coded, so any scenario designs by the user will be two-player mode only.

TacOps 1.0 will emphasize hasty attack and defense operations. Although some prepared positions may be available, the emphasis is on a "come-as-you-are" battle. With the entite scenatio covering only one to two hours of



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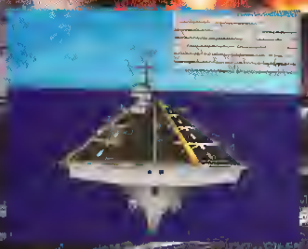

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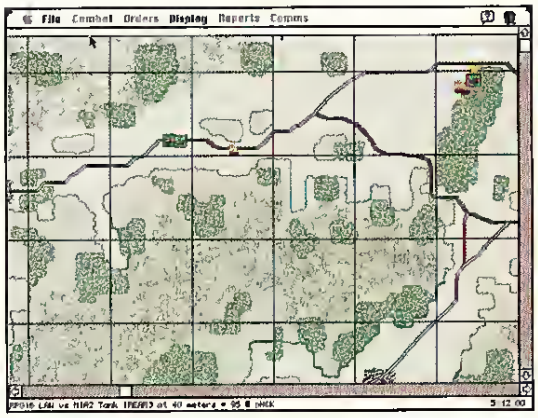
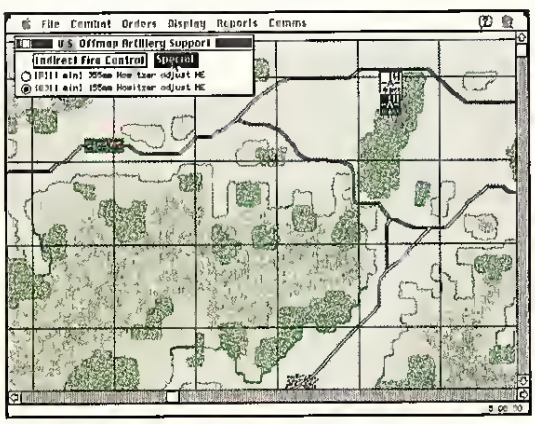
real-time, battlefield supply is not a critical issue. Units may be resupplied, and it occurs automatically. I initially questioned this, but with the short duration of the scenarios, it can be assumed that the supplies have been prepositioned in preparation fot the attack/defense. Units will be in either exposed or defilade (default) mode. You can play with all units visible or with "combat conditions," which would take terrain and smoke screens into consideration.



In a demonsttation at the Arsenal offices, I watched a Soviet reinforced battalion attempt to penetrate a Marine defensive line (victory conditions were simple—the *OPFOR* had to exit 40 percent of its forces), and its southern forces were virtually decimated by minefields and tactical ait support. The northern enemy forces deployed in line and attempted to break through a thinly-held Marine line, while the southern element was only beginning to regroup after its bout with the minefields and air opposition. What the *OPFOR* did not realize was that this was only the first of a string of blocking positions. After an hour of play, *OPFOR* casualties were almost 40 percent of engaged forces, while the U.S. Marines had incurred only a 10 percent loss. Nevertheless, the *OPFOR* still had not even brought its second echelon battalion onto the map, and if the first echelon had spotted most of the Marine positions, it would be difficult for the Matines to sustain theit defensive in the face of overwhelming numbets. What looked like a clear-cut victory in mid-game could easily develop into an indecisive battle at the conclusion of the scenario.



You can choose when to fite, and adjust your units accordingly. Just because a weapon can fire out to 3000 meters does not mean it is an effective killer at that tange. Thus, you may choose to hold fire until the enemy enters the "killing fields" of an ambush. Somewhat akin to *Harpoon*, the program will allow the user to view the weapons platforms and determine optimum uses.

Like *V for Victory*, you can use the mouse for virtually all operations. Uset input is intuitive, and you can spend most of yout time fighting the battle, and not fighting the system. While most of the Matine data is currently encoded, the Army data is being constructed as of this writing. MAJ Holdridge's military background is evident when the computer acknowledges user input with "Aye aye, sir!" Hopefully for us grunts, the response will be modified to a simple "Yes, sir!" Nonetheless, even with my look at a work-in-process, I was impressed. Yes, the two levels of elevation ptevent the product from simulating varied tertain features, but *TacOps* is a dynamic development tool which bodes well for tactical watgamers.

Curtent memory requirements mandate 2 MB, with 4 MB recommended (but 8 MB for optimization) for the next edition. You can play with less memory, but the map (which may be as large as 10 x 25 km) will requite disk access and teloading into memory.

Later anticipated releases will include Korea (historical and modern, *a la* Latry Bond's *Red Phoenix*), Arab-Istaeli (historical and hypothetical) and also Wotld War II. *TacOps* is a generational descendant of *Mech Brigade*, and its proposed incarnations will likely replace *Kampfgruppe* in the hearts and minds of grognatds everywhere.

TacOps will have a suggested retail price of $79.95, although it may be ordered direct by mail or phone for $49.95, and a uset returning the registration card will receive an additional 12 scenarios for five dollars (only available through ditect ordet). For more information contact Arsenal Publishing at (703) 742-3801. CGW

Also From Arsenal...

TacOps is not the only watgame in Arsenal's arsenal. *E.T.O.*, or European Theater of Operations, is currently in the works. Based on a preliminary look, it appears to be a cross between *Crusade in Europe* and the *V for Victory* series in terms of coverage and game play. Designed by Ed Rains (formetly of Atomic Games), the simulation covers the period 1 June 1944 - 15 September 1944, with the strategic map covering an area ftom Britain through France, Belgium, Holland and western Germany (to the Rhine).

Individual scenarios will include D-Day, Operation Cobra (the breakout from the Normandy beachheads), Operation Market-Garden (a.k.a. Monty's Airborne Follies), Anvil-Dragoon (the invasion of southern France) and the campaign. Also in development is a scenario involving a hypothetical invasion of France in 1943 (historically proposed as Operation Bolero, but never executed). Each game begins with a strategic tutn, whereby the Allies can choose whete to invade.

In terms of completion, the American and German units have been completed, and the designer is currently working on the British and Canadian forces (as of January 8, 1994). The scale is ten miles per hex with each turn representing three days. The map itself is composed of an area comprising 67 x 93 hex squates.

Units portrayed ate divisions, with three zoom levels breaking down to regiments and separate battalions. Generally, stacking is allowed with up to three divisions per hex. With over 300 units per side, historically accurate orders of battle and game play, *E.T.O.* appears to be a product that should receive an enthusiastic welcome.

The program will be released in SVGA mode only; in addition, user friendliness has been emphasized so that the entire simulation is playable without keyboard input. While the appearance of menus and input is similat to *V for Victory*, the map is larger since the menus are free-floating and visible only when accessed. Overall, *E.T.O.* looks to be a potential success for the fledgling company.

The designer hopes to follow up this release with *Blitzkrieg in the West*, the 1940 Invasion of France. It will use a similar system (and virtually the same map), but will recreate the strategic options available to the Allies and Axis in the earlier time period. CGW

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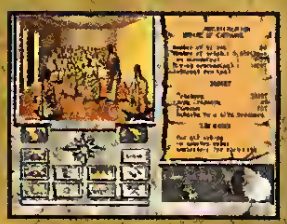

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BOMBS AWAY!

Air War In An Evening With *WW2 Air Force Commander*

by Bob Proctor

Air Force Commander is a solitaite sttategy game covering the air war in Wotld War 2. It's based on an interesting idea—to separate the ait war from other aspects and boil the decisions down to the basics. Should I bomb militaty or civilian targets? If I choose military targets, should I bomb airfields ot try to take out radat installations first? Since I don't have enough fuel to put all my planes in the air, how much should I allocate for fightets and how much for bombers?

By and latge, the game wotks. There is a winning strategy that you first must discover, and then you must implement that strategy in a variety of increasingly difficult situations. In some, you may be badly outnumbered; in others, resources may be very limited ot the population may not support the war effort. *WW2 Air Force Commander (AFC)* includes 14 scenarios that are tated for complexity, ftom a "one" fot Getmany vs. the RAF in Norway to a "nine" fot the entire air war in Europe. Your only option is to play against the computer, but you can play eithet side in any of the scenarios, giving you 28 choices in all. Each side is also rated for difficulty, from a "two" for playing Germany against the outmatched Poles, to a most difficult "nine" fot those brave enough to fly the RAF in the full *Battle of Britain* scenario.

In spite of the numbet of scenarios, *AFC* is a small game. It is the fitst in a long time that did *not* require that I temove something else ftom my hard disk. Those of you still using 286 systems, take note—here's one you can actually play! Graphics are 256-color VGA, and while sound is supported on the PC speaker, you may also use your AdLib ot Sound Blaster catd. The map, which fills most of the screen, is simple: land ateas are black and oceans ate dark blue. Aitfields show up as white dots, military targets as otange dots, and civilian tatgets as blue dots. At first, this seems rather simplistic, but once you statt playing and get a couple of dozen squadrons in the air, you realize that spotting enemy air activity quickly is a key to the game. Squadtons appeat on the map as columns: the bottom of the column teptesents the actual location, and the height of the column represents the altitude. Color coding indicates friend or foe and, for friendlies only, what type of aircraft. All of this works well enough, my only ctiticism being that a lot of space is devoted to showing you the altitude, when the altitude doesn't seem very important. You can't control it, other than to send your bombers in at (high) "altitude" or "gtound level." I would much rather see graphics that reflect the efficiency of my squadrons and bases—a much more ctitical factor.

The intetface uses the mouse heavily. Basically, you click on something with the left button to zoom in or get more information, and click with the right button to zoom out. To give otders to a squadron, you first select the base it is assigned to, pull up a list of squadrons, and use the left button to select one. Once you'te at the squadron ordet scteen, there are next and previous buttons to cycle through all the squadrons. It's easy to get confused here though, because when you cycle to a squadron there is no indication of which base it is at! If the name of the assigned base were shown, this would be a more useful scteen.

Don't Believe Everything You Read

The front of the box fot *AFC* says "Reach fot the Sky with this Epic Wotld War 2 Air Watfate Simulation" in big ted letters. Similar blandishments appeat on the back. Let's clear the air immediately—this is just marketing flak! "Simulation," as perceived by game players, implies that the game is one of the most tealistic available on the subject. Realism is tticky—out opinion of it is subjective, varies from subject to subject, is different fot boatd games and computer games, and changes over time. This WW2 version of

WW2 Air Force Commander

TITLE	WW2 Air Force Commander
PRICE	$19.95
SYSTEM	IBM
REQUIREMENTS	286, 640K RAM, VGA graphics, supports Microsoft mouse, AdLib and Sound Blaster sound cards
PROTECTION	None
DESIGNER	David Lester & Mark Saunders
PUBLISHER	Impressions Cambridge, MA (617) 225-0848

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AFC should not be called a simulation, at least not by today's standards.

Why not? Well, first off, there are no weather rules, and the game plays 24 hours around the clock with no day/night considerations. The time scale is all wrong, with the game's scenarios running a few hours to two or three days of game time, but the campaigns represented took weeks or even years. Furthermore, a squadron in the air is represented by a single airplane and therefore can only lose a maximum of one plane per mission. This devalues pilot and airframe superiority and even numerical superiority. No "Great Marinas Turkey Shoots" (where hundreds of planes are lost in a day) are possible. Airbases can be totally destroyed, at which point they disappear from the map and can never be brought back. I am not aware of a single precedent for this. And finally, all countries—even Poland in 1939—have radar installations!

The nail in the coffin of *AFC*'s claim to simulation-hood is that the underlying premise of the game is invalid. The manual states that prolonged bombing of civilian targets will make the population of the enemy country so unhappy that they will overthrow the government and sue for peace. You can't actually target cities in *AFC*. Instead, you bomb power plants, water treatment plants, hospitals, and other "amenities." If the Battle of Britain taught us anything, it was the fallacy of this theory of "terror bombing." If anything, support for the war increases when the population is being bombed. It is possible that the designers of *AFC* intended that we discover that targeting civilians is a bad strategy and included the possibility as part of the "simulation." If so, then what the game attempts to simulate is mote the military mindset of the pte-WW2 years and not the military reality of the war.

Pitfalls To Avoid

In spite of its failure as a simulation, *AFC* is a good game, though it does have some rather strange features. For one, it won't pause to let you give orders to squadrons. Maybe a better way to say this is that the game "unpauses" automatically as soon as you give an order. This becomes important immediately, because every squadron in every scenario starts in mothballs. As soon as you give the first activation order, enemy planes rise from their bases and head your way. You'd better get some kind of CAP in the air right away or bombs will be falling on you before you can activate all your squadrons. Maybe this is what happened to MacArthur in the Philippines? It sure would be nice to be able to activate more than one at a time.

The enemy will strike first if you fotget to slow down the clock. The game clock has five speeds and, for some reason, the default is speed four, which is called "normal" but is far too fast for the beginning of any scenario. Be sure to slow it down to speed one until you have all of your squadrons activated and missions assigned. If you are playing a defensive scenario, like the RAF defending Btitain, you may want to keep it slow so that you can scroll the map looking for incoming strikes and vector out interceptors in time to meet them before they reach their targets.

The computer does not do much to help you in your efforts. It can launch squadrons continuously on the same mission, which is the normal thing to do with bombers. Be sure to check their efficiency from time to time, as the computer will not rest them. Neither will the computer warn you when a target is out of range. Instead, it launches the mission, lets it fly to the limit of its effective range, and then aborts the mission. You don't lose the airplane (gee, thanks), but it is unavailable for the entite time of the flight. If any of Goering's staff had been this dumb, they would have been shot!

Lastly, there's no way to turn the sound effects off. This is a serious omission for two reasons. First, the sounds are not very good. They consist mostly of explosion sounds which play every time thete's a bomb run or ait-to-air combat. Second, the mouse goes dead whenever the sounds play, which is really irritating when things get hot. I finally unplugged my speakers to save my sanity, but that still didn't keep the mouse from going dead frequently.

Interestingly, there is no "Quit" command. The only way to stop playing is to reboot—unless of course, you are running under Windows or some memory manager that will let you kill the program. I am happy to repott that *AFC* runs nicely under Windows. Since it is a DOS program, you must create a PIF file for it. As there are no instructions on how to make *AFC* Windows-compatible, Impressions might want to considet making a PIF file available on the boards.

AFC is an intetesting and playable game. As long as you don't believe what you tead on the box and expect a state-of-the-art simulation, you won't be disappointed. I place it in the same category as *Empire*, as they are both solitaire strategy games based loosely on military conquest. It challenges you to find a winning strategy and then offers multiple levels of complexity to let you perfect that strategy. If you are using a "low end" system, this may be one of the hetter wargames you can still run. **CGW**

March On, Valiant Soldiers

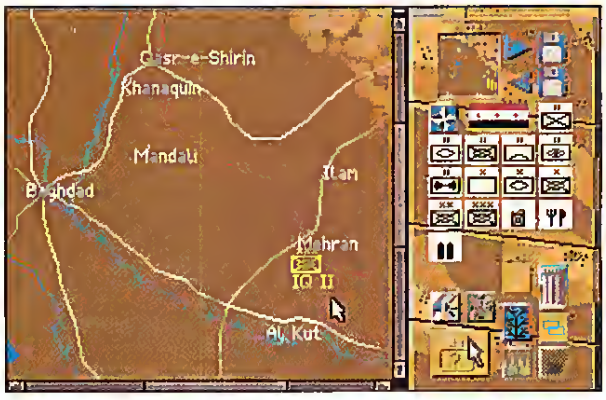
Empire Software Launches Another *Campaign*

by M. Evan Brooks

U.S. Army units in Korea (photo courtesy of D O D)

In 1992, Empire released *Campaign,* a game which met with somewhat less than a roar of approval. For an encore, gamers are now treated to *Campaign II*, a game covering the major wars since 1945: Korea (1950), Six Day War (1967), Yom Kippur (1973), Vietnam (1962), Iran/Iraq (1980), and Kuwait (1991), together with a campaign map editor for design-your-own scenarios. With the additional technology of modern warfare, the simulation adds helicopter/gunship support and battlefield missile systems (rockets/guided missiles/TOWs) in the appropriate time frames.

Fourteen training maps layet on complexity ranging from battalion (fairly simple) to corps level exercises (more difficult, with the added bonus of minefields). Operational maneuver zooms down to tactical level on separate maps, and you can choose to fight out particular engagements from the individual tactical vehicle viewpoint, or simply allow the computet to handle such details automatically and command from the top.



Strategy + Tactics = Confusion

The documentation consists of three manuals: a User Guide, an Equipment Fact Finder and the Images of Conflict. The Equipment Fact Finder is a detailed resource guide on approximately 150 pieces of military equipment, and is used for the copy protection. The last document is simply a 28-page black-and-white picture booklet (with perforated pages, suitable for framing?). However, although the photographs cover the latter half of the 20th century, they are unlabelled, static, and have nothing to do with the simulation.

The User Guide is the true tale of documentation, and a sorry tale at that. Aside from omitting cettain basic functions (such as how to quit the program—experimentation revealed that the standard "Ctrl-Q" does work), it delineates the program options in meager detail. Actual understanding of program mechanics is definitely an on-the-job task.

The narrative describing the distinction between strategy and tactics is muddled. "Strategy is the art of controlling multiple forces (groups or units). Tactics is the art of controlling individual vehicles." The former definition is cleatly wrong, and seems to apply more to operational warfare. *Blitzkrieg* is desctibed as "the most famous strategy of recent times," when it is really a form of operational maneuver. Similarly, modern US Atmy "strategy" (AirLand Battle 2000) is actually described in FM 101-5 (entitled "Operations"). The high *esprit de corps* of the Israelis is attributed to the fact that "they have always been the victors in any battles with their Arab neighbots," while much of their martial prowess may be actually attributed to their knowledge that, due to the geography of theit nation, they can't afford to lose a single battle.

The historical scenarios are challenging, but often wtong. Korea (1950) postulates an American force pinned in the southern extremity of the peninsula. While the Pusan Perimetet was a historical fact, the scenario only shows "Bulldog" Walker's Eighth Army; completely absent is the amphihious invasion of Inchon by Douglas MacArthur and the Tenth Army. Similarly, Vietnam (1962) postulates an American Army (west) and a RVN (Republic of Vietnam) Army (east) facing two NVA (North Vietnam) Armies. In 1962, American forces were less than 1500 "advisets"; the war was in a guerrilla phase, and both the Americans and the NVA did not commit combat troops in cohesive formations until 1965. When U.S. combat ttoops were committed, they did not assume responsibility fot the western sector; instead, the countty was divided up into corps *AO*s (areas of operation). Also, the course of the Vietnam Wat was not determined by traditional military prowess as much as it was by psychological factors. Hence, a scenario of military superiority yields flawed and incottect answers.

Discussions with the designet revealed that the scenarios were based on guesstimates. He simply could not find valid orders of battle for Korea, the Arab-Is-

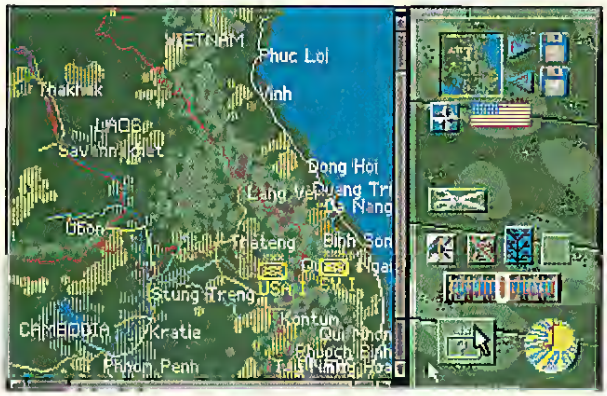
Campaign II

TITLE:	Campaign II
PRICE:	$69.95
SYSTEMS:	Amiga, Atari ST, IBM (reviewed)
REQUIREMENTS:	IBM: 386 (20MHz rec), 2MB RAM, VGA graphics, 3MB hard drive space, supports Sound Blaster and Roland sound cards
PROTECTION:	Oocumentation look up
DESIGNER:	Jonathan Griffiths
PUBLISHER:	Empire Software Gaithersburg, MD (301) 216-9707

raeli Wars or Vietnam. Quite to the contrary, such information is teadily available, and the "rush to publish" before the Christmas buying scene cannot be seen as justification for such an ahistorical background.

Finally, the documentation look-up scheme is flawed. When it asks for the range of the British "5-inch," there is no such data in the "Fact Finder." Similarly, it will ask for the tange of a vehicle—not specifying whethet it wants weapons range or operational (traveling) range (the latter tange is the correct answer).

If the program lives down to the standard of the documentation, we have a major problem.



Sounds Great, But Why Is The Enemy So Stiff?

The gtaphics are marginal. Map scrolling teveals an annoying flicker, as do the introductory screens. Upon booting up, several combat scenes are shown; the plane/tank is clearly imposed on a static background, and the foreground vehicle flickers unconttollably, mote akin to a silent film than a contemporary piece of software.

The scenario maps are easy to understand, but graphically mediocte. When battle is joined, the operational battlefield is reminiscent of SSI's *Combat Leader* (1984). What was accepted in 1984 is not even marginal today.

In zooming down to the individual vehicle screen, the tanks, vehicles and infantry are somewhat chunky, although they are clearly recognizable. However, the vehicles are fast, much faster than they should be, and it makes target acquisition and fiting more of a chore than a game. The designer simply chose to make off-road speed equivalent to 50% of the road speed, a choice easily proven incorrect by most data sources.

Son, If I Ever Get This Joystick Loaded, You're A Goner

Although the joystick is noted as being available, it simply did not wotk. There was no joystick calibtation toutine, no joystick recognition, period (although the designer has assured me that the joystick routine does in fact work on the *Amiga*). Mouse and keyboard inputs are used and present no problem in the scenario map, but are inappropriate for fighting battles.

While battles may be fought automatically, you can drop into individual vehicles and take the details into your own hands. Each vehicle ttead has a separate input, such as "H" for "left track forward." No template has been provided, although you can remap the keyboard to personal taste. As a result, moving is clumsy, awkward and titesome. Given that the other vehicles are moving too fast for reality, you can only get off an occasional shot before bailing out into a new vehicle.

It's Two, Two, Two Games In One!

Is *Campaign II* a simulation or an arcade game? It's both, and neither—it's a schizophrenic game that fails at all levels. At the tactical level, the user interface is awkward, and what does the tactical level portray? Only 16 vebicles are allowed pet side at any given time. Thus, vehicles only reinforce as losses occur. What this amounts to is a total negation of the military principle of concentration. The key to military success is to bring overwhelming firepower to bear on a hopefully isolated enemy fotce. Here, the playet engages in a tactical mishmash that yields little of the reality.

Merely driving around the battlefield can be a difficult task. Why a ptoportionate reduction in force could not have been implemented is unanswered. Fot instance, a division encountering a battalion could well have its 16 vehicles face only four enemy vehicles, thereby yielding a better semblance of massed and concentrated firepower. Destination orders seem to be reinterpreted by the computer, and even mote disconcerting is the automatic realignment of the main turret gun. Aftet shifting the turret to engage an enemy to the flank, you can fire off a single shot before the turret automatically returns to the front. When this occurs, the playet loses valuable time in regaining target acquisition, while the enemy forces close and engage. The designer once again maintains that this problem is not present in the *Amiga* version.

Units may adopt different formations (dispersed square, close otdet, diamond, line astern, etc.). However, it is virtually impossible to determine the effect that such fotmations have on actual combat operations in the game other than in the tactical setup. In a nod to reality, night-fighting is an option in more recent conflicts. However, one cannot keep the troops on the tun continuously. A unit using night movement will be forced to rest up for 16 hours before moving again. This is both sense and nonsense. Military writings are filled with articles delineating the impact of sleep

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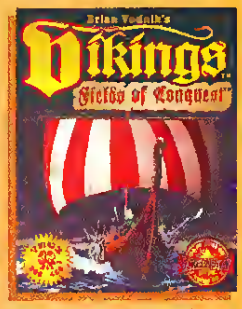

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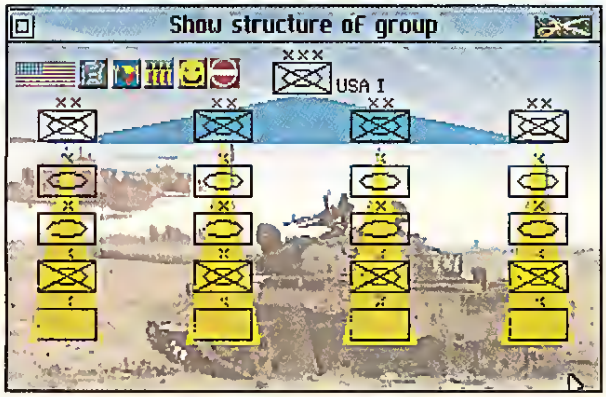
deprivation on troops; they simply cannot go without sleep. Still, in a hot action, a loss of effectiveness may have to be accepted in order to achieve mission success. When I rolled into Kuwait City in February 1991, I had been without sleep for nearly 60 hours. Would it have made sense for me to call my higher command and tell them that I would begin in 16 hours, after I had caught up on my sleep? I questioned the designer as to this aspect and suggested that a loss of efficiency would have been a better design decision, and he concurred.

Minefields can provide a major impact to battlefield success, and *Campaign II* is one of few simulations that attempt to portray the channelization of forces that minefields can create. Actually, military forces traditionally have underemphasized the employment of mines. Noted author and wargame designer Jim Dunnigan has attributed this to the fact that minefields are inexpensive, and not run by troops. Hence, no one wants to decorate a minefield for valor or military success. At any rate, minefields have a major impact on the modern battlefield, and it is a refreshing change to see them employed.

The actual campaign scenarios are flawed historically. The lessons they teach are simply wrong, wrong, wrong. However, the training



maps do provide an interesting and sometimes valuable lesson in managing military elements from battalion through corps level. The tactical engagement on a manual play level is too much of an arcade shoot-em-up, but you can complete such battles in a computer-automatic mode. While the computer often fights less than optimally (in Operation Desert Storm, both sides ran out of ammunition with little damage to either side), as a commander, is it really your role to get into a single tank and engage the enemy? In reality, a commander who would be forced to employ a direct fire weapons system would be one whose tactical position could best be described as "deep *kimchee*." Finally, troop levels of efficiency are the same; there are no elite troops or any distinction whatsoever. Hence, the Iraqis of Desert Storm will be of the same caliber as their Coalition opponents rather than conscripts.

Yet, the tactical engagement can be fun. Destroying trees, homes and the occasional enemy vehicle can be a satisfying diversion, but it has no relation to combat operations, and therein lies the largest defect of this product. As additional proof, engagement ranges are limited to around 300-500 meters. Why? Perhaps because contemporary engagement ranges of up to 3200 meters and beyond would have a target the size of a pixel, and hence "not gameable." Playability can affect reality, but in matters of this magnitude, the discrepancy is simply too strained.

Campaign II, although virtually bug-free, has flaws that prevent it from being an interesting wargame, and its arcade/simulation aspects are simply cumbersome. The program has aspects of *Patriot* (military organizational structure) and *U.M.S.* (campaign editor), and a game is known by the company it keeps.... **CGW**

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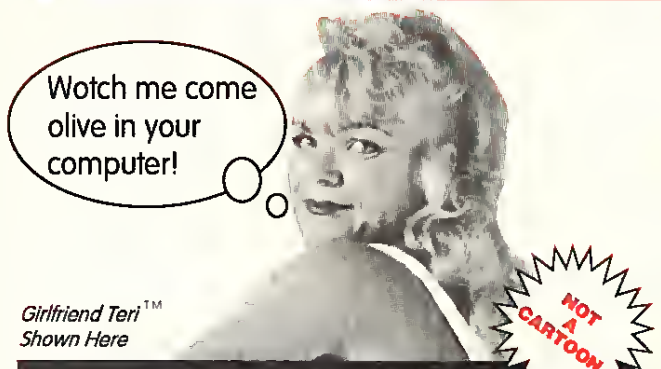

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What If Napoleon Was Himself At Ligny?

A Replay Of Ligny From *Battles of Napoleon*

by Terry Lee Coleman

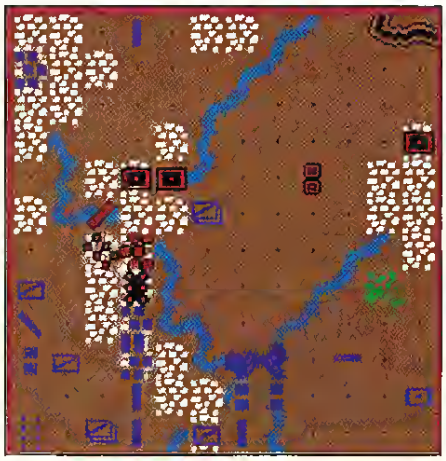
Released in 1988, *Battles of Napoleon* was ahead of its time in many ways. Most wargames at that time were generic, with the same system often being used to cover everything from ancient battles to WWII conflicts. Designers Chuck Kroegel and David Landtey actually played boatd wargames, which gave them a bit of an edge over many of their compatriots. Undetstanding what kind of detail gamers required, they set out to include it in a playable format.

Most wargamers will agree that they did quite well. The clean game system manages to showcase the differences between column, line, open and square formations. Cavalry charges and countercharges are implemented well, and are one of the most exciting parts of the game. Skirmishers are used ptoperly, giving the game at times almost a miniatures feel. Add the excellent command control rules, and you have a simulation which far outshines any Napoleonic game released since. With designer David Landrey continuing to crank out scenarios, the rumors persist that the game may be re-released—something both CGW and the game's many fans would very much like to see. With that in mind, we thought we'd take a look back at the game in a replay and talk to David Landrey about his continuing series of scenatio disks and the futute prospects fot *Battles of Napoleon.*

Ligny Redux

The small village of Ligny is quiet, like many others in 19th-century Belgium. Its sole strategic impottance is that it conveniently lies between France and Brussels. On a small hillock overlooking the town, a hotse stirs testlessly, sensing its rider's excitement. After quieting his steed, Napoleon looks out over the field of battle and says very softly, "Today, Blucher, old friend, you will not escape me. Ligny will be the beginning of a new era fot the people of France."

Far from looking to escape, Bluchet was preparing to meet his enemy head-on. The Prussian camp was filled with the smell of freshly polished boot-leather, bedrolls immaculately folded in that mannet only members of the Prussian military could achieve. Blucher looked at his aides and asked, "Firm, good ground, is it not? The French dogs will break their backs on our strong position!"



Napoleon surrounds the defenders of St. Amand.

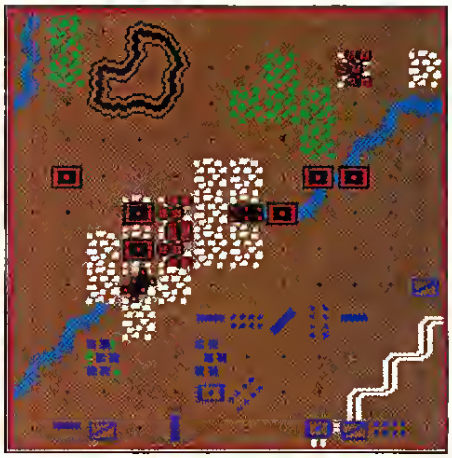
The Ligny scenario of SSI's *Battles of Napoleon* provides a good look at a classic Napoleonic set-piece battle, which helped to decide the fate of Eutope. The battle begins with the French having strategically outmanuvered the Ptussians. Napoleon plans to crush them befote they and the Btitish can combine to defeat him, as ultimately happened at Waterloo. The terrain is somewhat beneficial to the Ptussians, but they must be careful of the French fitepower.

A Whiff of Grapeshot

Napoleon's assault is well-timed, with St. Amand and half of Ligny falling almost immediately. The Prussians counterattack, and although unsuccessful, they are unconcerned about the number of casualties. Blucher believes that a war of attrition is the sure way to beat the French. Grouchy disabuses Blucher of that notion by ovettunning two of the Prussian's best artillery batteries, as Ligny is secured.

Blucher still holds the all-important bridges around Ligny, and while shaken, is confident that the French are running out of steam. Repositioning his remaining artillery on the heights overlooking Ligny, the old Prussian ptepares to bombard Grouchy's forces, which are now pinned down in the small town. Grouchy frantically brings up more infantry, but stops short of attacking Blucher's strong position. Napoleon sends cavalry undet Exelman far around the Ptussian left.

Gtouchy is unhappy about the use of his cavalry so far out on the flank. Still, he realizes that cavalry charges are useless in the bogged-down center, and the Emperor is in no mood for arguments in any case. The Prussian 21st Line attempts to sneak through the woods and countetattack at Ligny, but French forces discover and tepel them easily. Blucher learns ftom this setback, screening his thrusts on the French left with light cavalry.



The Prussians frantically deploy artillery to stop the French attack.

The Prussian infantry is raking a pounding, but fresh units keep arriving. Blucher rails at his staff for the haphazard way in which the units wete deployed, conveniently forgetting that he issued the otdets. Theilman is sent with both cavalry and infantry to the Ptussian left flank, as Blucher is well aware of Napo-

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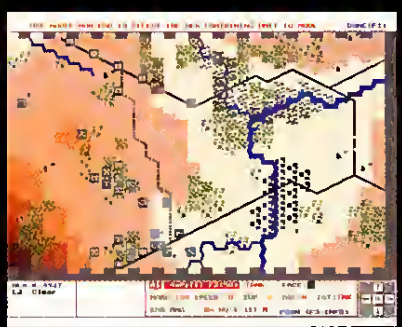

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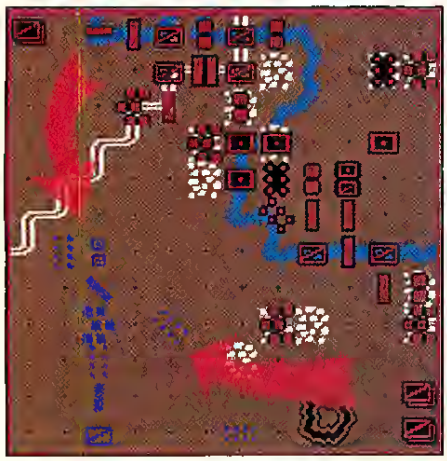
leon's fondness for outflanking maneuvers. Napoleon seems to be noodling about—has he forgotten where the victory point spaces are?

Even A Rubber Band Only Stretches So Far

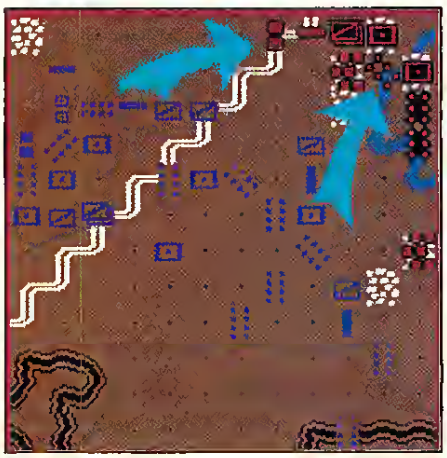
Napoleon may have been small in stature, but the dice rolls made him look larger than life, as his veteran infantry forced two of the bridges opposite Ligny. Blucher nevertheless stuck to his position on the high ground and waited for the inevitable assault. What the Prussian leader didn't count on was the power of the French artillery, who had heard the Prussians boasting before the battle, and wished to prove that Frenchmen make better marksmen. Blucher had deployed his troops



Blucher counterattacks

on the front side of the slopes, where the French could target them at will. Despite horrendous casualties, the Prussian forces still held the slopes, although the cavalry finally withdrew.

What Napoleon had been doing was stretching the Prussian line to the right, making Blucher commit the last of his reserves.



French pursuit

With the French having won the battle of the cannonades, Grouchy's troops finally burst out of Ligny, taking the Prussians from two sides. The Prussians fought bravely, but could not easily extricate themselves from the melee. Sensing that the time was right, Napoleon threw the Guard units into the fray, scattering the demoralized Prussian forces.

Meanwhile, Exelman's cavalry met Theilman's forces, trouncing their horsemen in record time. The Prussian infantry frantically formed squares, but were hit in the rear by advancing French forces from Ligny, and were captured. Their desperate struggle allowed some of the Prussian forces to escape, but those surviving could hardly be considered a cohesive force.

The attempted counterattack by the Prus-

More Napoleon Than You Can Shake A Saber At

Scenario Disks For SSI's *Battles of Napoleon*

If you prefer your Beef Wellington served in more of a wargame platter, then fret no longer, as a smorgashord of Napoleonic dishes are waiting for you. *Battles of Napoleon* designer David Landrey and friends have published (with SSI's permission) enough battles to keep even the most fanatical of Bonaparte connoisseurs delighted for years to come.

What's On The Menu

Scenario disk # 1 has a variety of struggles, the best of which is *Austerlitz*, Napoleon's greatest achievement, and one of the most flawlessly executed tactical plans in history. French players will have a hard time repeating history here. *Marengo*, from Bonaparte's early days, is also a tense affair. *Maida Utitsa*, and *Redoubt* round out the disk.

For our next course, disk # 2 offers the unusual *Albuera*, complete with Polish Lancers and numerous cavalry charges. *Medellin* moves us to Spain, where Hussars, Dragoons and cavalry meet in a wild engagement near the Guadiana River. Two more normal scenarios, *Bridge Battle* and *Santon* are included, but most gamers will have trouble resisting *New Orleans* with Andrew Jackson.

The American theme continues with disk # 3, where such Revolutionary War standards as *Camden* and *Cowpens* are showcased. If nothing else, the names are unique: *Kings Mountain*, *Hobkirk* and *Eutaw Springs*. While not as popular as the Napoleonic battles, they are still worth a look.

Disk # 4 is a return to the strength of the series, with several prime choice scenarios for the gamer with a hearty appetite. *Wagram* is a marvelously balanced affair, if somewhat long. *Smolensk* is tough for the French to win, and *Eylau* is an oddity, with its winter combat. *Plancenoit*, *Bladensburg*, the *Hill* are all here, in a near-embarrassment of riches. Even alternate *Waterlao* and *Leipzig* battles are offered.

Our next course is not quite up to # 4, but the fifth set of battles can be more easily digested. Another *Leipzig* is followed by yet another *Quatre Bras*, but *Vimiero* gives us Junot versus Wellington in Spain. *Aspern-Essling* is a quiet classic, balanced by *Podubno*, *Village* and *Retreat* (an apt title). *Ligny* is one of the best games in the whole collection, filled with lots of nail-biting decisions for the players.

For dessert, we have a look at the *Pyramids*, Bonaparte's Egyptian adventures. More exotic conflicts, such as *Raab*, *Craonne*, and *Corunna* are quite a change of pace from the ordinary Nappy fare, although we do have to put up with *Borodino 2* and the oddly-titled *North. Jena* and *Wavre* are some of the best games of the entire collection.

Battles of Napoleon Scenario Disks 1-6 will run on most any IBM, and require only EGA/CGA graphics. Mouse support is provided, but you will probably find the game just as easy to play with the keyboard. The scenarios were designed by David Landrey with Chuck Kroegel and Michael Merritt (who did disk #6). All scenarios are currently available from Novastar Games, P.O. Box 1813, Rocklin, CA (916) 624-7113. Scenario disks run $10, with an extra $2 for shipping, a bargain, especially considering what wargames tend to cost these days. Hopefully, SSI will see fit to re-release *Battles of Napoleon* in a format more suited to computer gaming in the 1990s. Until then, true Napoleonic fans will happily struggle through these fine collections of battles.

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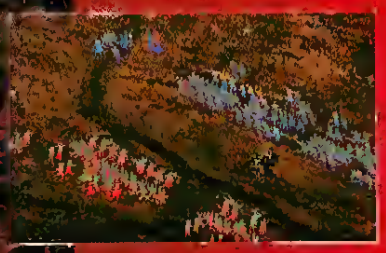

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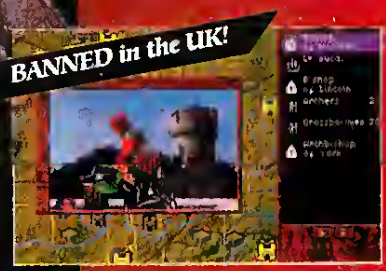

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sians past St. Amand took the French initially by surprise. Napoleon himself rode among the troops and rallied them by sheer force of will. After the front stabilized, it became apparent to the Prussians that they were facing the entire French army with a mere shell of their own force. Blucher, who had miraculously escaped the infantry assault and the cavalry charges near Ligny, took the hint and crept away to the east.

Silicon Bonaparte

Although a 5-year-old game, *Battles of Napoleon* still has a solid historical feel. The computer AI is reasonably fast-moving, and keeps its goal in mind. While striving for objectives and enemy casualties may seem at first to be artificial, it is more often than not similar to human strategies. The French side was played aggressively, almost with abandon. Stretching the enemy line to create a weakness was a tactic used often by Napoleon, particularly at Austerlitz, his most notable victory. That the computer conceived of and effectively carried out such a plan shows what might have happened had Napoleon "been himself" at Ligny.

While the computer side did not play the Prussian side as well from a technical standpoint, it did emulate Blucher's strategy of deploying on the wrong side of the slopes—with the expected results. Nevertheless, the counterattack on the French extended flank was very sound, and came close to succeeding. Only the timing of the French breakthrough near Ligny averted a potential disaster for Napoleon. The Prussian withdrawal was important, as it reduced the chance of a French major victory. The balance of the scenario is evident when you consider that the resounding French victory in this replay only gives Napoleon a tactical success, because the French would still have to face a victorious Wellington at Waterloo. Rather impressive, considering the recent state of AI opponents for wargamers. CGW

CGW Speaks With David Landrey

Battles of Napoleon is that rarity among computer games, one which has gained a veritable cult following despite its 5-year-old design. Amid persistent rumors that the game might be re-released, we thought it appropriate to touch base with one of *Napoleon's* designers, David Landrey.

CGW: David, for those gamers unfamiliar with you, why don't you give us some background information? What other games have you worked on?

DL: Well, in addition to *Battles of Napoleon*, I also designed *Shiloh* and *Gettysburg* for SSI, both of which did very well. Chuck Kroegel and I made a very successful team back in the mid-to-late 80s.

CGW: Are there any games that stand out, good or bad?

DL: When we did *Knights of the Desert* for SSI, it was very well received at the time, and won all kinds of awards. People liked it because it was one of the first computer wargames that *played* like a board wargame to a degree. Personally, I always liked the 19th-Century, American Civil War and Napoleonic, games better than the WWII-era. A lot of gamers seem to agree with me, given that *Battles of Napoleon* is still so popular.

CGW: Which brings us to the question of *Napoleon*. Is it being re-released and why or why not?

DL: First, let me say that SSI is not planning on redoing *Napoleon* at this time, although it has been considered. Sales of the average wargame are far below sales of role-playing, flight simulators and other genres of games. While I might be disappointed, it makes good business sense for SSI.

CGW: Don't you think that new versions of older games, such as *Empire Deluxe*, showed that strategy games and wargames could sell well, given the right treatment?

DL: Sure, but for every re-release that succeeds, there's one that doesn't. If I had a choice, I'd do *Battles of Napoleon* over again with 256-color VGA, digitized sound and really use the power of a 486. Before a company takes a chance with that, they have to be sure that the audience is out there.

CGW: So where does *Napoleon* stand now?

DL: As you know, I've had permission to publish official scenarios for the game for the last couple of years. With Michael Merritt, I've now published six scenario disks, with over three dozen battles to choose from, from my company, *Novastar Games*. Recently, a company in Germany wanted to publish *Battles of Napoleon*, letting us know that there was an overseas market. We are currently negotiating with a gentleman from Israel, who wants to carry *Napoleon* in his 300+ stores, which is why we are reprinting copies of the original game. Whether this will lead to anything more, I really can't say.

CGW: What is the appeal of Napoleon?

DL: For me, I was never into Ancients or Medieval warfare. Too much crash and bash—not a lot of subtlety. Modern warfare is rough, with the killing power of the weapons, and the guerrilla tactics and so on. I guess Napoleonics gives a good mix of tactics, with line and column, and enough movement to keep me interested. I suspect gamers are very familiar with Napoleon, since there is so much information available about him. Gamers like to think they can be Napoleon for a few hours. Lots of gamers have told me that they really like the cavalry charges! The main reason that *Battles of Napoleon* is still so popular, is that nothing on the market has come close to replacing it.

CGW: David, sum up your design philosophy for us.

DL: The research must be solid, of course. Never forget, though, that the game must be playable above all else. What good does it do to have a game which is praised for its realism, but collects dust on the shelf? I've felt very fortunate that *Battles of Napoleon, Gettysburg*, and some of my other games were perceived as giving the right historical feel, while still being played. Awards are great, but I listen most to my customers. From a more technical standpoint, I've always focused on the operational-level game, because it shows you things you don't get from the purely tactical or strategic viewpoints. I try to give the players a good mixture of strategic and tactical choices, to keep them involved in the game throughout.

CGW: Are there any designers whose work you particularly admire?

DL: Sid Meier is a marvelous designer, with a lot of good ideas. The guys at Atomic Games really impressed me with their *V for Victory* games; they looked incredible, just like a board game.

CGW: Where do you see computer games five years down the line?

DL: It's funny, because software still hasn't caught up to the 486, and now we have the Pentium. Then there are the new consoles, the 3DO and those types, which I think are interesting, but won't replace the computer. Wargames have come a long way in the past five years, so I can only assume that the graphics, sound and interfaces will continue to get better. Wargames still have a good following, and I figure they'll be just as strong five years from now.

CGW: We can only hope.

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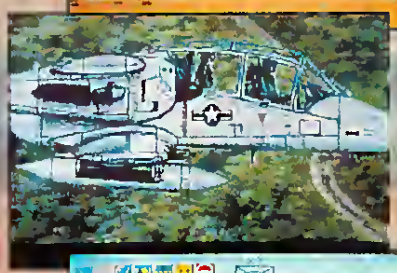
Campaign II heralds a new generation of War Simulations

Campaign II heralds a new generation of War Simulations with more depth than ever before and required real-time [illegible].

The depth to Campaign II is provided by the all new strategy. Expert Military consultant, Wilf [illegible], from recent conflicts has brought his knowledge to bear on computer gaming with an end result that looks and feels more realistic than ever before. All aspects involved in the running of an army have been considered, so that now you can place yourself in command of either side at any level in the chain of command. Over 130 templates of the most significant military forces from 50 different nations of the last 50 years have been included to gain an insight into real conflicts such as Korea, Vietnam and Operation Desert Storm.

The action takes the form of fast 3D graphics if you choose to enter the battlefield in one of the 152 types of military vehicles. APCs and Mobile Artillery, utilise weapons ranging from wire-guided missiles, rockets, homing missiles, and machine guns supported by laser rangefinders to tracer rangefinders, night vision and [illegible].



- Campaign II has emerged as the most comprehensive simulation with new improved strategy, at any level in the Chain of Command (C.o.C.), closely resembling that of a real military situation.
- Hands-on action as you fly helicopters in air-to-ground or air-to-air attacks.
- Deploy the animated infantry during fierce battlefield action in a new improved 3D environment.
- Featuring all the modern weapons systems: guided missiles, rockets, homing missiles, laser rangefinders, gun stabilizers and night sights.

CAMPAIGN WAS BIG CAMPAIGN WAS GOOD
CAMPAIGN II IS BIGGER, BETTER AND QUITE SIMPLY
THE MILITARY SIMULATION OF THE YEAR!

Empire Software, The Spires, 677 High Road, North Finchley, London N12 0DA Telephone: 081-343 9143

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Circle Reader Service #52

empire SOFTWARE

Taking A PEEK

A quick look at titles now appearing on a store shelf near you.

Accolade
5300 Stevens Creek Blvd.
San Jose, CA 95129
(800) 245-7744

RALLY: For every American who's ever wanred ro go blasting down English country lanes in a good old-fashioned high speed Rally, here's an alternative to tearing up a rented Renault and sending countless bystanders to the Last Great Pit Stop. *Rally* lers you hop in one of five 300 hp, turbocharged factory racers for the final stop on the World Championship Series. The actual course has been recreated to simulate the timed stages broken up among four days on British backroads. With your co-driver by your side calling out every bend and dip in the road, you'll go roaring down narrow country roads lined with trees, hay bales and race fans (read: fanblade fondue) through rain or shine to reach the end of the stretch in the shortest possible time. A number of customizable configs ler you change cars, driver, co-driver, tires, or keyboard controls, which is a must because joystick configuration on two test machines failed to calibrate. It might be a fun experience for serious rally sports, but those racing fans who've grow accustomed to more detailed driving sims will probably race on by. IBM ($59.95) Circle Reader Service #1.

UNNECESSARY ROUGHNESS: Accolade has long been known for exciring sports games. While *4th And Inches* might have been lacking in realism, having fun was never a problem. Instead of relying on the tested arcade formula, the designers of *Unnecessary Roughness* decided to make a simulation more akin to Dynamix's *Front Page Sports Football.* With the NFLPA license, you can test your gridiron knowledge againsr a host of all-pros. Problem is, the game resembles more of an arcade game, wirh none of the realistic feel of its more storied competirors. Moreover, the Super VGA graphics are not as enticing as the box cover would have you believe, and program crashes occur so often, you may feel like you've been tackled on astro turf. *Monday Night Football's* announcer Al Michaels is as rhrilling as ever in digitized voice, but he would no doubr wince ar the number of bugs infesting this half-baked dish. IBM ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #2.

Rally

Unnecessary Roughness

Spaceway 2000

The Zone of Avoidance

CD-ROMIX

Casady & Greene
22734 Portola Dr.
Salinas, CA 93908-1119
(408) 484-9228

SPACEWAY 2000: We Southern Californians were immediately drawn ro this Mac action game. The player is plopped in a space ship on an intergalactic freeway filled with all sorrs of "highway scum" out to run him or her off the road. Drones and Flies pursue you relentlessly, Wall creepers fire from the shoulder, Blockers try to hinder your movement—all acr like drivers we are all too familiar wirh. Yet, while driving this "freeway" is a daunting task, you can make it home using missiles, smart bombs, lasers and shields ro your best advantage and collecring every key, crystal and crate that crosses your path. Crisp, colorful graphics and great digitized sounds make playing this game of super arcade madness all the more exciting. Macintosh ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #3.

THE ZONE OF AVOIDANCE: Defending an enormous circling space station in orbit over an unknown planet is your assignment as you stand your ground alone on the edge of *The Zone of Avoidance.* Though you are not accompanied by any comrades in arms, you are not completely alone. There are plenty of asteroids, missiles and hostile aliens to keep you company as you man your solitary post. Defense: that's the simple agenda in a far from simple game of 3D space-flight. You've got missiles. You've got lasers. You've got radar. The only thing you don't have is time to spare! Linger too long or let down your guard, and be enveloped by the cold of space. If you like space-flight sims with a good dose of arcade acrion, *The Zone of Avoidance* is just whar the doctor ordered. Macinrosh ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #4.

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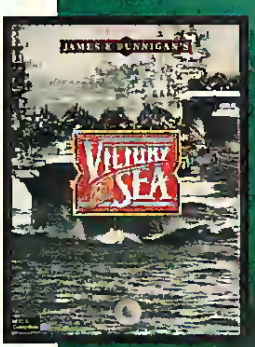

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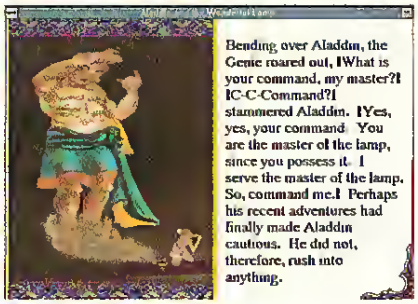
title contains over 130 panels and 60 screens. Stories may be viewed on "autoplay" or paced by the viewer. Each title also offers a "behind the scenes" interview with the creators of the comic characters and an overview of the Ultraverse world. So, if you're ready for the next step in comic entertainment, stop by your favorite software or comic retailer. IBM CD-ROM ($24.95). Circle Reader Service #5.

Ebook, Inc.
32970 Alvarado-Niles Rd., Suite 704
Union City, CA 94587
(510) 429-1331

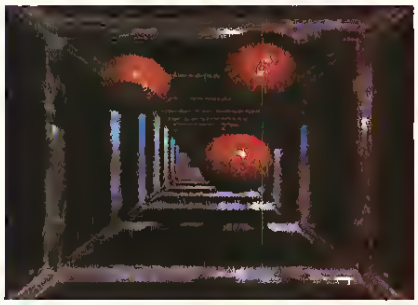
ALADDIN AND THE WONDERFUL LAMP: Polishing up EBook's newest CD title won't result in any unusual surprises. However, it is the most interesting and visually impressive multimedia storybook they have released thus far. Beginning with a *Video for Windows* full-motion video introduction by Sheherezade, the narrator, *Aladdin* is primarily an audio/video rendition of the classic tale, coming from the collection of stories known as the *Thousand and One Arabian Nights*. Though it follows the traditional storyline, interactive decisions made in *Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp* allow the viewer to throw Aladdin a few unsuspected curves along the way. A learning guide, preface to the *Thousand and One Arabian Nights*, and an on-screen dictionary enhance the value of this entertaining educational tool. Narration and music can also be played on a standard music CD player. IBM CD-ROM with Windows ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #6.

Forte
2141 Palomar Airport Rd., Suite 100
Carlsbad, CA 92009
(619) 431-6499

3DPC: *3DPC* bills itself as the first screen saver offering realistic 3-dimensional, ray-traced animations. And while it does deliver a sugary burst of eye candy, the rush quickly passes. There are nine animations here on 6.5 MB, which can be arranged and played when you want them as long as you want them. Options enable privacy protection with a password and the ability to start or stop animations on demand. A few of the animations show off the modeling technology used to create 3-D shapes with smooth, glossy, reflective surfaces, while the rest...well, wouldn't win any animation awards. The flying pigs are cute ("pigs in *spaaaace*"), and a folding, geometrical, Escher-esque design is intriguing, but the slithering sperm-like liquid silver slugs aren't exactly fetching. Marvel for a minute on the monitor at the computer store, and save your green for *games*. IBM ($19.99) Circle Reader Service #7.



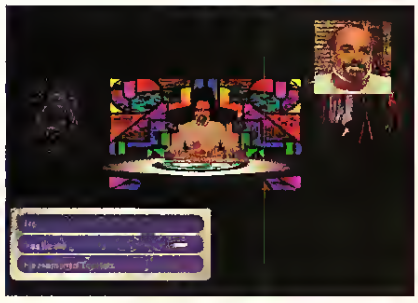
Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp



3DPC

Daemonsgate

Deliverance



Quantum Gate

Imagitec Design, Inc.
921 West Main St., Suite 13
Nashville, TN
(615) 824-1960

DAEMONSGATE: It's been 18 months and several publishers since *Daemonsgate* was scheduled for release, but it has finally emerged, quite damp, from Vapor Land. The graphics in this mega-role-playing environment are reminiscent of *Ultima VII*, but it's not so easy to interact with everything in the environment here. Some 70,000 words of conversation are included, with friendly types almost falling over each other for a chance to talk to our hero. Much of the artwork is quite stunning, and it will be a welcome sight for role-playing fans who have experienced a bit of a drought lately. Still, one can't help but feel that the game would have made a bigger splash if it hadn't been delayed for over a year. IBM, IBM CD-ROM. Circle Readet Service #8.

Inline Software, Inc.
308 Main St.
Lakeville, CT 06039-1204
(800) 453-7671

DELIVERANCE: Is it a river rafting simulation with a banjo score? No, it's an action game shooter in a fantasy adventure setting that mixes elements of *Gods* and *Shadow of the Beast*. As the StormLord, you must axe your way through Tnrom's Palace to free the fairies imprisoned there. Succeed in your mission and you will save the land. Fail and Tnrom will destroy all. Whatever the outcome, *Deliverance* will entertain action- and strategy-gamers for hours with its superb graphics and challenging play. A black belt in the joystick arts is required. Macintosh w/color display ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #9.

Media Vision Multimedia Publishing
47300 Bayside Parkway
Fremont, CA 94538
(510) 770-8600

QUANTUM GATE: No longer just a hardwate manufacturer, **Media Vision** debuts *Quantum Gate*, their first interactive movie employing a three-dimensional software interface known as VirtualCinema. Thanks in part to this interface and featuring over 1,000 pages of text, almost two full hours of video, and extensive audio, *Quantum Gate* provides an intriguing "you-are-in-the-movie" gaming experience unmatched by many other interactive CD titles. It is also the first in a series of science fiction adventures on CD-ROM. Set in the year 2057 A.D., the game's focus is on saving an environmentally doomed earth. Interaction is comprised of dialogue choices during video segments, 3D movement through the station on Planet AJ-3905, accessing on-line information terminals and virtual arcade sequences similar to that of *Spectre*

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VR. The quality of acring is good ro excellent, with actors participating under a performance agreement approved by the Screen Actors Guild. Whether or not this latest CD extravaganza is a "quantum" leap beyond the competirion, ir's nonetheless one of the most engaging CD titles yet to appear. IBM CD-ROM with Windows ($79.95). Circle Reader Service #10.

MicroLeague Interactive Software
University Office Plaza, Bellevue Bldg., Suite 201
262 Chapman Road
Newark, DE 19702
(800) 334-6572

ALIEN BREED: *Alien Breed* brings some traditional top-down perspecrive, four-way scrolling arcade action to the PC. Your mission, as srated on the box, is to "kick some mean, green Alien butt!" That ahout sums up the game. Trapped on a space station set to self-destruct, you must survive 18 levels of alien-infested turf before losing all your allotted lives. Run out of ammo before locating a new supply and say your prayers! One or two players can rake part in this 256-color alien blast-fest. Though hampered by asinine copy protection (you must locate code numbers on one of four faint yellow code tables—each time you begin play), *Alien Breed* is still a good action title for those who like rheir play quick and simple. IBM ($29.95). Circle Reader Service #11.

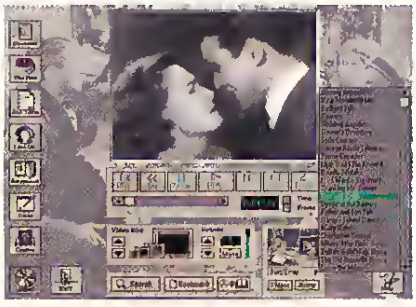
MicroProse
180 Lakefront Dr.
Hunt Valley, MD 21030-2245
(410) 771-0440

IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE CD-ROM: Yes, it's a wonderful movie, but this heavenly story did give us a devil of a time with some improperly working control mechanisms. Still rhe prospect of examining rhe entire film under the multimedia microscope can be worth ir. This package includes on irs two CD-ROMs the full, uncur (black & white) film, rhe rrailer, the entire shooting script, stills, reviews—all cross-indexed for reference use. While this product has enough bells to earn its wings, at least *one* CGW edirorial curmudgeon still prefers the jazzy nighr life in Pottersville ro the warmth of Bedford Falls. IBM CD-ROM ($79.95). Circle Reader Service #12.

Microsoft Corporation
One Microsoft Way
Redmond, WA 98052-6399
(206) 882-8080

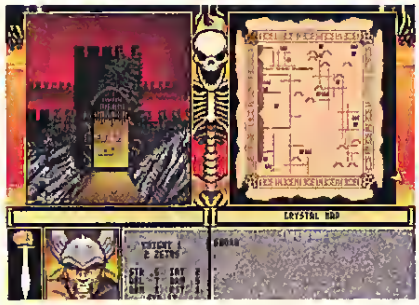
MICROSOFT NEW YORK and MICROSOFT PARIS: It's only been a short time since Microsoft took off with *Flight Simulator 5.0.* Now with a couple of new add-ons, pilots everywhere can srrap themselves in and take an aerial tour of two of the world's most interesting and renowned cities: New York and Paris. Both of these new scenery packs offer the larest in phoro-realistic detail, adding a much needed touch of life. While over Paris, you can soar above the Eiffel Tower or the Louvre, and test your skills as you maneuver through the pinnacles of rhe French skyline. In New York, you can circle rhe Srarue of Liberty or swoop in low over Cenrral Park. As you dive between rhe canyons of towering skyscrapers, keep an eye on the streets below. There you'll see the tiny yellow taxis cruising in search of their fares. Requires *Microsoft Flight Simulator 5.0.* IBM ($39.95 each). Circle Reader Service #13.

Alien Breed

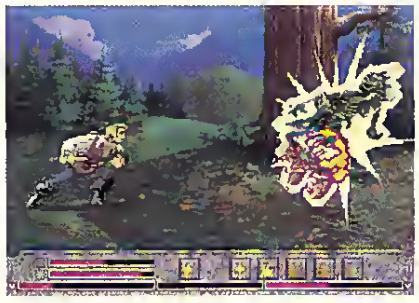


It's A Wonderful Life CD-ROM

Microsoft New York and Microsoft Paris



The Red Crystal



Quest For Glory: Shadows of Darkness

QQP, Inc.
1046 River Ave.
Flemington, NJ 08822
(908) 788-2799

THE RED CRYSTAL: This arcade strategy can be summed up as *Gauntlet* gone amuck. In a good-sized world inhabited by many towns and casrles, a player's fantasy character will travel ftom encounter to encounter to defeat the ubiquirous UBG (ultimate bad guy) and, in the process, learn the seven secrets of life. Alrhough players can interact with others in towns and dungeons, it is in the latter where the arcade combat takes place, and one must use cowardly hit and run tacties to excess in order to develop their characters early on. While modem play is supported, many have reported difficulty making connections via the game's software. Other communication programs, however, can be used. IBM ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #14.

Sierra On-Line, Inc.
P.O. Box 485
Coarsegold, CA 93614
(800) 757-7707

QUEST FOR GLORY: SHADOWS OF DARKNESS: The latest installment in rhe award winning *Quest for Glory* series by Lori and Corey Cole, *Shadows of Darkness* takes our fighter/mage/thief to a mythical Transylvanian valley in an unusual blend of the adventure and role-playing genres. Prior ro rheir final encounrer with the Dark One himself, you will have to face a land fraughr with the undead, wraiths, vampires and grotesque monsters. Of course, your success in *Shadows of Darkness* will depend primarily on how well you can fighr, conjure or steal your way ro rhe game's conclusion. Improved fearures in this new Sierra title include a refined icon bar wirh more available options and an upgraded arcade combat sysrem. As before, you can begin anew or import your hero from previous *Quest for Glory* titles. Three skill levels allow for basic customizarion ro provide jusr the right blend of arcade elements and puzzle

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Changeling

Changeling Software, Inc
596 Elm Street
Windsor Locks, CT 06096

Imperial Stardate 2407...
Melina Pariknova Lands The Fleet In The Vega System.

Circle Reader Service #50

solving, while audio and graphics are of traditional Sierra quality. Offering a unique mix of dark mystery and light humor, *Shadows of Darkness* is another award winning adventure. IBM ($69.95). Circle Reader Service #15.

Spectrum HoloByte
2490 Mariner Square Loop
Alameda, CA
(510) 522-1164

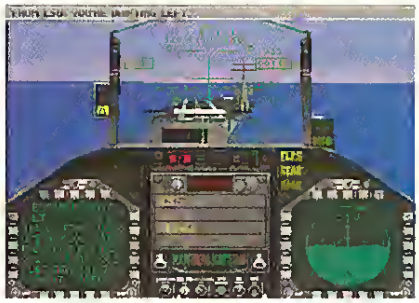
HORNET: NAVAL STRIKE FIGHTER: Flying against those *MiG-29s* gor you down? Reinforcement for *Falcon 3.0* fans is on the way in the form of the F/A-18 Hornet, evetyone's favorite carrier-based strike fighter. Flight sim fanatics will thrill to this craft's ability to make tight turns at high speed. Sleek, beautiful and deadly, the Hornet sports Hughes AN/APG-65 multimode radar, with which ro more effecrively target its complement of Maverick missiles. A real challenge is the trial of landing this high-rech, expensive aircraft on a moving carrier. If you survive the landing, your next mission could take you to Bosnia, Israel, or any of five other theattes, where you can fly via network with your comparriots against those dreaded MiGs. Quire srunning for those whose systems—both human and computer—can handle it. Requires *Falcon 3.0* or the stand-alone version of *MiG-29*. IBM ($48.00). Circle Reader Service #16.

TAC Enterprises
422 210th Ave. N.E.
Redmond, WA 98053
(206) 868-6150

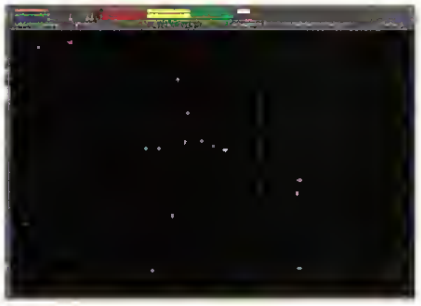
GALAXY TREK: The zero-gravity action of Asteroids combines with fearures from the early Trek games to create this straregic science fiction shooter. The player takes command of a supership on a mission to blasr rhe alien hordes threatening the galaxy. Not only must you cleverly probe sectors and blast tiny spaceships, but you must also acquire comets and space pods that will provide the materials for continued existence and full operating capacity. Choosing between three weapons types, using the tractor beam, switching power between engines and shields, and so forth, are the strategic options of which this simplisric game is made. IBM ($34.00). Circle Reader Service #17.

Villa Crespo Software, Inc.
1725 McGovern St.
Highland Park, IL 60035
(708) 433-0500

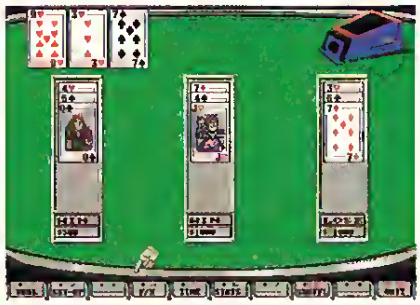
CASINO GAMBLER KIT: This "shovelware" collection combines five of Villa Crespo's games into a single collection. Included are *Dr. Wong's Jacks+ Video Poker* (an excellent little program for students and addicts of the game), *Dr. Thorp's Mini-Blackjack* (again,



Hornet: Naval Strike Fighter

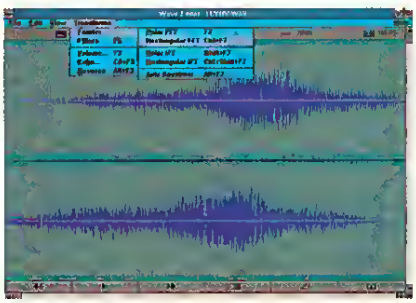


Galaxy Trek



Casino Gambler Kit

Xplora 1: Peter Gabriel's Secret World



Sound Effects Playhouse

another fine learning rool), *Ruckus Roulette*, *Ruckus Poker* (for less serious, more ruckus games, complete with rudimentary player personalities), and *Casino Craps* (a quick-and-dirty foray that covers all the basics and then some). Nothing new has been added ro the games, but many dollars have been subtracted from their individual retail prices. IBM ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #18.

Interplay Productions, Inc.
17922 Fitch Ave.
Irvine, CA 92714
(714) 553-6655

XPLORA 1: PETER GABRIEL'S SECRET WORLD: From his early days with the art-rock group Genesis, Peter Gabriel has been nothing but innovative. Musically, he draws from every influence imaginable, and his music videos defy all traditions with their originality and depth. No surprise then, thar Gabriel comes up with a mulrimedia presentation of his work, focusing on his latest album, *Us*. Nearly two hours of video foorage and 30 minutes of audio combine with more than 100 still images, allowing you to search through the making of *Us*, the filming of the *Kiss That Frog* video, or sample music of 40 different artists from around rhe world. While viewing artwork, videos or backsrage shors ar the Grammy's mighr be interesting, explorers will have the most fun remixing their own Peter Gabriel music videos and joining in on jam sessions. Multimedia is a much abused rerm, but this beautiful work deserves the title. Macintosh CD-ROM ($44.99). Circle Reader Service #19.

Waite Group Press
200 Tamal Plaza
Corte Madera, CA 94925
(800) 368-9369

SOUND EFFECTS PLAYHOUSE: From those productive folks at Waite Group comes another entertaining book/disk combo for the DOS or Windows user. With *Sound Effects Playhouse*, you can create, edit and play sounds on your PC, plus assign sounds to events such as switching drives, scrolling the screen, and changing directories. In addition, you can instruct your computer to execure DOS commands at the sound of your voice or direct the action of voice-activated games (microphone not included). Among the many shareware and freeware programs provided on the two supplied 3.5" floppy disks are QSound samples that exhibit multi-dimensional sound effects and several sound edirors. Anyone with an ear ro hear more abour WAV, VOC, IBK, MID, and MOD files, and how to edit them, should tune in to *Sound Effects Playhouse*. A Sound Blaster compatible sound card is required. IBM ($24.95). Circle Reader Service #20. CGW

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 (The Software Toolworks, 1986)
Many Formats
Civilization (MicroProse, Inc., 1991)
Amiga, IBM, Macintosh
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, Inc., 1988)
IBM
Gettysburg: The Turning Point (Strategic Simulations, Inc., 1986)
Amiga, Apple, C-64, IBM
Gunship (MicroProse, Inc., 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 On-Line, Inc., 1990)
Amiga, IBM, Macintosh
M-1 Tank Platoon (MicroProse, Inc., 1989)
Amiga, IBM
Mech Brigade (Strategic Simulations, Inc., 1985)
Many Formats
Might & Magic (New World Computing, 1986)
Amiga, Apple, C-64, IBM, Macintosh
M.U.L.E. (Electronic Arts, 1983)
Atari 8-bit, C-64
Pirates (MicroProse, Inc., 1987)
Many Formats
Railroad Tycoon (MicroProse, Inc., 1990)
Amiga, IBM, Macintosh
Red Baron (Dynamix 1990)
Amiga, IBM, Macintosh
SimCity (Maxis, 1987)
Many Formats
Starflight (Electronic Arts, 1986)
Amiga, C-64, IBM, Mac, Sega
The Secret of Monkey Island (LucasArts Entertainment Company, 1990)
Many Formats
Their Finest Hour (LucasArts Entertainment Company, 1989)
Amiga, Atari ST, IBM
Ultima III (Origin Systems, Inc., 1983)
Amiga, Apple, Atari ST, C-64, IBM
Ultima IV (Origin Systems, Inc., 1985)
Amiga, Apple, Atari ST, IBM
Ultima VI (Origin Systems, Inc., 1990)
C64, IBM
War in Russia (Strategic Simulations, Inc., 1984)
Apple
Wasteland (Interplay Productions, Inc., 1986)
Apple, C-64, IBM
Wing Commander (Origin Systems, Inc., 1991)
Amiga, IBM, Sega
Wizardry (Sir-Tech Software, 1981)
Many Formats
Zork (Infocom, 1981)
Many Formats

Ultima IV

Origin Systems, Inc., 1985
Amiga, Apple, Atari ST, IBM

The world of CRPGs was revolutionized by both the character-generation system in Ultima IV and the concept of Avatarhood. From the time players responded to the ethical choices depicted in the introductory sequence to the time they had completed the quest, personal accountability played a major role in either the successful completion or failure of the game. For the first time, ethics had become a significant part of a computer game, and non-player characters reacted to players on the basis of their reputation rather than merely responding to their immediate actions.

Ultima VI

Origin Systems, Inc., 1990
Amiga, IBM

With this release, Lord British brought defined objects and realistic world models into the realm of the CRPG. The moral lesson in the story was related to the idea of avoiding racial prejudice, and the game regularly placed the player's character into situations where he/she would have to grapple with the forces which lend themselves to reinforcing prejudice. Along with the new look and the six-button interface, *Ultima VI* showed that Lord British was nowhere near finished with the world of Britannia.

Top Adventure Games

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Day of the Tentacle	LucasArts	10 07
2	Monkey Island 2: Le Chuck's	LucasArts	9 91
3	Indiana Jones: Fate of Atlantis	LucasArts	9 79
4	Dracula Unleashed	Viacom	9 71
5	Quest for Glory III	Sierra	9.56
6	Sherlock Holmes CD I	Viacom	9.55
7	Star Control II	Accolade	9.33
8	The Seventh Guest	Virgin	9 32
9	Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes	Electronic Arts	9.20
10	King's Quest VI: Heir Today...	Sierra	9.17

Top Role Playing Games

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Ultima Underworld	Origin	10.29
2	Betrayal at Krondor	Dynamix	9 87
3	Lands of Lore	Virgin	9.55
4	Ultima Underworld II	Origin	9.42
5	Might & Magic III	New World Computing	9.41
6	Might & Magic: Darkside of Xeen	New World Computing	9 37
7	Ultima VII	Origin	9.34
8	Eye of the Beholder II	SSI	9.34
9	Might & Magic: Clouds of Xeen	New World Computing	9.34
10	Wizardry VII: Crusaders of Savant	Sir-Tech	9.10

Top Simulation Games

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	X-Wing	LucasArts	9.76
2	Falcon 3.0	Spectrum HoloByte	9 59
3	World Circuit	MicroProse	9.57
4	Aces of the Pacific	Dynamix	9.38
5	Comanche. Maximum Overkill	NovaLogic	9 27
6	Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe	LucasArts	9 19
7	Gunship 2000	MicroProse	9 02
8	Stunt Island	Disney	9.00
9	F-117A	MicroProse	8.92
10	F-15 Strike Eagle III	MicroProse	8.88

Top Strategy Games

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Master of Onon	MicroProse	10 32
2	Solitaire's Journey	QQP	9.97
3	Dune II	Virgin	9 86
4	Chessmaster 3000	Software Toolworks	9.32
5	Syndicate	Electronic Arts	9 32
6	Kasparov's Gambit	Electronic Arts	9.28
7	Hong Kong Mahjong Pro	Electronic Arts	9.15
8	The Lost Admiral	QQP	9 05
9	The Incredible Machine	Dynamix	8 92
10	The Island of Dr. Brain	Sierra	8.91

Reader Poll #114

Top 100 Games

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD
The #1 Computer Game Magazine

	Game	Company	Type	Score
1	Links 386 Pro	Access	SP	10.41
2	Master of Orion	MicroProse	ST	10.32
3	Ultima Underworld	Origin	RP	10.29
4	Front Page Sports Football Pro	Dynamix	SP	10.26
5	Warlords II	SSG	WG	10.11
6	Day of the Tentacle	LucasArts	AD	10.07
7	Wing Commander II	Origin	AC	10.00
8	Solitaire's Journey	QQP	ST	9.97
9	V for Victory: Velikiye Luki	Three-Sixty Pacific	WG	9.93
10	Monkey Island 2: Le Chuck's Revenge	LucasArts	AD	9.91
11	Betrayal at Krondor	Dynamix	RP	9.87
12	Dune II	Virgin	ST	9.86
13	Indiana Jones: Fate of Atlantis	LucasArts	AD	9.79
14	X-Wing	LucasArts	SI	9.76
15	The Perfect General	QQP	WG	9.75
16	Dracula Unleashed	Viacom	AD	9.71
17	Carriers at War Construction Kit	SSG	WG	9.68
18	V for Victory: Utah Beach	Three-Sixty Pacific	WG	9.63
19	Falcon 3.0	Spectrum HoloByte	SI	9.59
20	V for Victory: Market Garden	Three-Sixty Pacific	WG	9.58
21	World Circuit	MicroProse	SI	9.57
22	Quest for Glory III	Sierra	AD,RP	9.56
23	Sherlock Holmes CD I	Viacom	AD	9.55
	Lands of Lore	Virgin	RP	9.55
	Wolfenstein 3-D	Id Software	AC	9.55
26	Conquered Kingdoms	QQP	WG,ST	9.53
27	Privateer	Origin	AC	9.52
28	NHLPA Hockey	Electronic Arts	SP	9.48
29	War in Russia	SSI	WG	9.47
30	Ultima Underworld II	Origin	RP	9.42
31	Might & Magic III	New World Computing	RP	9.41
32	Aces of the Pacific	Dynamix	SI	9.38
33	Might & Magic: Darkside of Xeen	New World Computing	RP	9.37
	Hardball III	Accolade	SP	9.37
35	Pacific War	SSI	WG	9.34
	Might & Magic: Clouds of Xeen	New World Computing	RP	9.34
	Eye of the Beholder II	SSI	RP	9.34
	Ultima VII	Origin	RP	9.34
39	Star Control II	Accolade	AD,AC	9.33
40	Syndicate	Electronic Arts	ST,AC	9.32
	The Seventh Guest	Virgin	AD	9.32
	Chessmaster 3000	Software Toolworks	ST	9.32
43	Kasparov's Gambit	Electronic Arts	ST	9.28
44	Comanche: Maximum Overkill	NovaLogic	SI	9.27
	Jack Nicklaus Signature Golf	Accolade	SP	9.27
46	V for Victory: Gold Juno Sword	Three-Sixty Pacific	WG	9.24
47	Lemmings	Psygnosis	AC,ST	9.21
48	Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes	Electronic Arts	AD	9.20
	Clash of Steel	SSI	WG	9.20
50	Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe	LucasArts	SI	9.19

The Computer Gaming World Poll

A monthly survey of the readers of Computer Gaming World Magazine.

Top Wargames

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Warlords II	SSG	10.11
2	V for Victory: Velikye Luki	Three-Sixty Pacific	9.93
3	The Perfect General	QQP	9.75
4	Carriers at War Construction Kit	SSG	9.68
5	V for Victory: Utah Beach	Three-Sixty Pacific	9.63
6	V for Victory: Market Garden	Three-Sixty Pacific	9.58
7	Conquered Kingdoms	QQP	9.53
8	War in Russia	SSI	9.47
9	Pacific War	SSI	9.34
10	V for Victory: Gold Juno Sword	Three-Sixty Pacific	9.24

Top Action Games

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Wing Commander II	Origin	10.00
2	Wolfenstein 3-D	Id Software	9.55
3	Privateer	Origin	9.52
4	Lemmings	Psygnosis	9.21
5	Tetris Classic	Spectrum HoloByte	9.14
6	Oh, No! More Lemmings	Psygnosis	8.92
7	Prince of Persia 2	Broderbund	8.60
8	Out of this World	Interplay	8.57
9	The Lost Vikings	Interplay	8.46
10	Flashback	SSI	8.38

Top Sports Games

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Links 386 Pro	Access	10.41
2	Front Page Sports Football Pro	Dynamix	10.26
3	NHLPA Hockey	Electronic Arts	9.48
4	Hardball III	Accolade	9.37
5	Jack Nicklaus Signature Golf	Accolade	9.27
6	Tony La Russa Baseball II	SSI	8.78
7	NFL Pro League Football	Micro Sports	8.54
8	The Games: Winter Challenge	Accolade	8.50
9	4-D Boxing	Electronic Arts	8.37
10	Wayne Gretzky Hockey III	Bethesda	8.30

Poll is based on reader survey cards in each issue of *CGW* and published two issues subsequent. Data on more than 100 games is archived and top ten lists may contain games which scored below the Top 100 cutoff.

51	King's Quest VI: Heir Today...	Sierra	AD	9.17
52	Hong Kong Mahjong Pro	Electronic Arts	ST	9.15
53	Tetris Classic	Spectrum HoloByte	AC	9.14
54	The Castle of Dr. Brain	Sierra	AD	9.11
55	Eye of the Beholder	SSI	RP	9.10
	Wizardry VII: Crusaders of Savant	Sir-Tech	RP	9.10
57	The Dagger of Amon Ra	Sierra	AD	9.09
58	Ultima VII: Part Two Serpent Isle	Origin	RP	9.08
59	Empire Deluxe	New World Computing	WG	9.07
60	Les Manly in: Lost in L.A.	Accolade	AD	9.06
61	Bane of the Cosmic Forge	Sir-Tech	RP	9.05
	Quest for Glory I (VGA)	Sierra	AD,RP	9.05
	The Lost Admiral	QQP	ST	9.05
64	Eric the Unready	Legend	AD	9.04
	Conquests of the Longbow	Sierra	AD	9.04
66	Gunship 2000	MicroProse	SI	9.02
67	Police Quest 3	Sierra	AD	9.01
68	Stunt Island	Disney	SI	9.00
	Battles of Destiny	QQP	WG,ST	9.00
70	Space Quest IV	Sierra	AD	8.98
	Western Front	SSI	WG	8.98
72	Carriers At War	SSG	WG	8.97
73	The Adventures of Willy Beamish	Dynamix	AD	8.96
	Freddy Pharkas Frontier Pharmacist	Sierra	AD	8.96
75	Alone in the Dark	I-Motion	AD	8.95
76	The Incredible Machine	Dynamix	ST	8.92
	F-117A	MicroProse	SI	8.92
	Oh, No! More Lemmings	Psygnosis	AC,ST	8.92
79	The Island of Dr. Brain	Sierra	ST	8.91
80	F-15 Strike Eagle III	MicroProse	SI	8.88
81	Chuck Yeager's Air Combat	Electronic Arts	SI	8.87
82	Indianapolis 500	Electronic Arts	SI	8.83
83	Spellcasting 301: Spring Break	Legend	AD	8.81
84	Rex Nebular	MicroProse	AD	8.80
85	Gateway to the Savage Frontier	SSI	RP	8.79
86	Tony La Russa Baseball II	SSI	SP	8.78
	Populous II	Electronic Arts	ST	8.78
	Hoyle Book of Games, Vol. 3	Sierra	ST	8.78
	High Command	Three-Sixty Pacific	WG	8.78
90	Heart of China	Dynamix	AD	8.75
91	Veil of Darkness	SSI	RP	8.74
92	Gateway	Legend	AD	8.72
93	Starflight II	Electronic Arts	RP	8.71
94	Pools of Darkness	SSI	RP	8.68
95	MiG-29	Spectrum HoloByte	SI	8.64
	Great Naval Battles	SSI	WG,ST	8.64
97	Armada 2525	Interstel	ST	8.63
98	Amazon	Access	AD	8.62
99	Space Quest V: Mutation	Sierra	AD	8.60
	Prince of Persia 2	Broderbund	AC	8.60

Games on unnumbered lines have scores equal to the line above = Top game of type Megenta=New Game
AD=Adventure, RP=Role Playing, SI=Simulation, ST=Strategy, WG=Wargame, AC=Action, SP=Sports

PC Research Hits List Of Top-Selling Software

November, 1993

PC Games (MS-DOS/Windows)

Rank	Title and Source
1.	Microsoft Flight Simulator 5.0 (Microsoft Corporation)
2.	X-Wing: B-Wing (LucasArts Entertainment)
3.	Aces Over Europe (Sierra On-Line, Inc.)
4.	Star Wars Rebel Assault (LucasArts Entertainment)
5.	Links: Pebble Beach (Access Software, Inc.)
6.	Leisure Suit Larry VI (Sierra On-Line, Inc.)
7.	The 7th Guest (Virgin Interactive Entertainment)
8.	Privateer (Origin Systems, Inc.)
9.	Front Page Sports Football Pro (Sierra On-Line, Inc.)
10.	X-Wing (LucasArts Entertainment)
11.	Microsoft Arcade (Microsoft Corporation)
12.	SimCity (Maxis Software)
13.	Street Fighter II (Hi Tech Expressions)
14.	Master of Orion (MicroProse, Inc.)
15.	Wolfenstein 3D/Spear of Destiny (Formgen)
16.	Terminator: Rampage (Bethesda Softwarks)
17.	Indy Car Racing (Virgin Interactive Entertainment)
18.	Links 386 Pro (Access Software, Inc.)
19.	The Blue & The Gray (Impressions)
20.	Chessmaster 4000 (The Software Toolworks)

Amiga Games

Rank	Title and Source
1.	Overlord (Virgin Interactive Entertainment)
2.	Hoyle's Book of Games (Sierra On-Line, Inc.)
3.	John Madden Football (Electronic Arts)
4.	Operation Combat (Merit Software)
5.	Populous II (Electronic Arts)

Macintosh Games

Rank	Title and Source
1.	SimCity 2000 (Maxis Software)
2.	Chessmaster 3000 (The Software Toolworks)
3.	Myst (Broderbund Software, Inc.)
4.	SimCity (Maxis Software)
5.	Star Trek: 25th Anniversary (Interplay Productions, Inc.)

CD-ROM Products

Rank	Title and Source
1.	Star Wars Rebel Assault (LucasArts Entertainment)
2.	The 7th Guest (Virgin Interactive Entertainment)
3.	Microsoft Encarta (Microsoft Corporation)
4.	Iron Helix (Spectrum HoloByte, Inc.)
5.	King's Quest VI (Sierra On-Line, Inc.)
6.	Return to Zork (Activision)
7.	Dracula Unleashed (Viacom New Media)
8.	ROMaterial (Moon Valley)
9.	MPC Wizard (Aris Entertainment)
10.	Mad Dog McCree (American Laser Games)

What You've Been Playing Lately

Every month our mailbox bulges with hundreds of Reader Input Cards from our most loyal and outspoken readers. Over the years we've found these cards to be an invaluable source of feedback. Within 10 days of releasing our latest issue we can expect to see cards pouring in with suggestions, encouragements, tirades and many good laughs, in addition to the data for our Top 100 poll. Through your efforts, we know *exactly* where we stand with our readers (you don't mince words!), and we are treated to well-articulated opinions on anything and everything related to gaming. This column is a forum for these responses and for the results of our "Playing Lately?" query on the Reader Input Card. Thanks for taking the time to fill them out...keep 'em coming!

Playing Lately? Results For CGW #114, January 1994

1. Master of Orion (MicroProse, Inc.)
2. Doom (id Software)
3. Privateer (Origin Systems, Inc.)
4. X-Wing (LucasArts Entertainment)
5. Front Page Sports Football Pro (Dynamix, Inc.)
6. Aces Over Europe (Dynamix, Inc.)
7. Warlords II (Strategic Studies Group)
8. Betrayal at Krondor (Dynamix, Inc.)
9. Civilization (MicroProse, Inc.)
10. Dungeon Hack (Strategic Simulation, Inc.)

Christmas The Whole Year Round

Though we've published the results of our Computer Gaming Carol contest in the previous issue, many more entries have poured in since. Here are a few of the late comers that deserve honorary mention.

(sung to the tune of Here Comes Santa Claus)

Here comes Pentium, Here comes Pentium,
Right down Intel lane,
I just bought a 486
and man I'm feeling lame.
VL-Bus, CD-ROM
Oh what confusing terms.
I don't know what I'm to do 'cuz
My Mastercard's maxed tonight.

— Bill Schounmaker, Salisbury, NC

(sung to the tune of Jingle Bells)

Dashing through the air,
In Falcon 3.0
Over the targets I go,
Strafing all the way.
(Bam, Bam, Bam!)

On my tail are SAMs,
Making my flares bright
Oh!, What fun it is to shoot down Mig's
Nearly every night.

— Christopher Laws, Tulsa, OK

(sung to the tune of Jingle Bells)

Whistles & Bells, Whistles & Bells
Graphics rule the day.
Computer games take 30 megs
But gameplay's gone away.

Whistles & Bells, Whistles & Bells
Can be such a strain.
I can't play my favorite game
I fear I must upgrade.

— Tim Mosbarger, Sacramento, CA

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 ro 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 plarform configuration is agreed upon). So, until the golden age of standardized plarforms 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 most major networks (e.g., 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)

Blue And The Gray Update V1.01 Update: With this patch, poor quality units will now rout at 15% rather than 10%, rransporting troops will not "pop" back into a train or ship, and the AI will now be tougher and quicker in battle. 10/23/93

Clash of Steel V1.1 Update: Fixes a number of small bugs. 11/18/93

** **Companions of Xanth V1.1.0 Upgrade:** Corrects graphic corruption problems associated with Microsoft (V8.2+) and Logitech (V6.13) mouse drivers. 12/23/93

** **Conquered Kingdoms Update:** Fixes some save game problems that have been reported. 12/22/93

** **CyberRace CD-ROM V1.1 Upgrade:** Lowers the base memory requirements and fixes the save game problems with the CD version. 1/06/94

Darksun V1.1Update: Fixes problems with Wave Blaster and Sound Blaster + LAPC/SCC1. Eliminates the crash that may occur after the final battle, and random crashes when changing regions. 10/26/93

Empire Deluxe V3.11a Upgrade: Updates Version 3.11 to Version 3.11a. Corrects a number of minor bugs and extends the sound card support. 12/02/93

Even More Incredible Machine Windows Patch: Corrects several problems including these specific errors: "You cannot run more than one copy of this program" error message when in 256-color mode, and "RunTime Error: Stack Overflow" error message when Windows MIDI Mapper is not configured correctly. 10/19/93

Fantasy Empires V1.1 Update: Fixes the Multiplying Siege Engine Bug, the Disappearing Hero Bug, and eliminates most random crashes. 11/25/93

** **Gabriel Knight Floppy V1.0A Patch:** Corrects various memory allocation and "fatal -" errors that some players have encountered. 12/16/93

IndyCar Racing V1.02 Update: Fixes random crashes/hangs and low memory problems. 11/25/93

Kasparov's Gambit Version 1.1: In addition to restoring the chess engine to the full strength of the original 32-bit Socrates II program, this patch also improves driver setups, low-memory detection, time controls, ratings and much more. 12/3/93

Leisure Suit Larry 6 Updare: Fixes the "Oops errors" that occur while playing. Also contains the bonus sound effects for 8-bit sound cards. 11/24/93

** **Lucky's Casino Adventure Update:** Enables the program to recognize most VESA drivers, and allows the users to set the IRQ and Base address for any sound card. 12/30/93

** **Master of Orion V1.3 Upgrade:** This patch features rougher opponents, adjusted play balance, and legions of minor combat tweaks. 1/06/94

** **Merchant Prince Update:** Corrects some minor bugs in QQP's latesr. 12/29/93

** **NFL Coaches Club Foorball V2.0 Update:** Corrects some rare problems, improves the AI, and adds some new features. 12/14/93

Omar Sharif on Bridge Upgrade (IBM/Windows): The latest version of Interplay's bridge game for Windows. 9/03/93

** **Police Quest 4 Patch:** Corrects various memory allocation errors and lockups that some players are encountering. 12/16/93

** **Quest For Glory 4 Patch:** Corrects various memory allocation errors and lockups that some player have been encounrering. 12/16/93

Railroad Tycoon Deluxe Version 2: Fixes a few problems and adds some features. 11/23/93

** **Rebel Assault V1.4 Upgrade:** Fixes joystick control and calibration problems, as well as some random lock-ups. 12/16/93

Rules of Engagement 2 V1.05 to 1.06 Update: Parch for those baving problems running the game with a Viper graphies cards. 10/09/93

Rules of Engagemenr 2 V1.07 Update (Amiga): Update to the Amiga version of Impression's game. 12/02/93

Solitaire's Journey For Windows Patch: Corrects minor bugs in the Windows version of SJ. 11/11/93

Tornado 1.0 to 1.0c Upgrade: An update for the US version of the game. 10/29/93

War In Russia 1.1 Upgrade: Fixes three bugs and adds an enbancement. 10/04/93

Warlords Version 1.1.5 Update (Macintosh): Updates any version of Warlords Mac to V1.1.5. 10/09/93

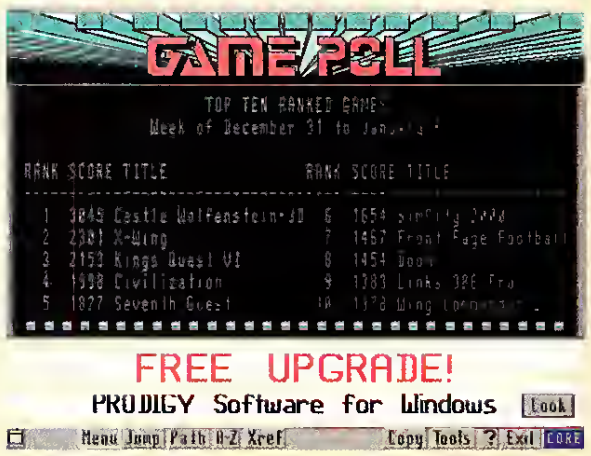
Warlords II c1.02 to v1.02a Update: Fixes a bug with cerrain VGA cards (Diamond) and updares a few sound drivers, including PAS 16. 10/26/93

** **World of Xeen CD-ROM Parch:** Fixes the problems with switching CDs and with the boat ride into Rivercity. 1/03/94

WW2: Battles of the South Pacific: Corrects a problem with the ranking system. 9/21/93

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 posred online by *CGW* and exchange messages on the bulletin boards (we can be reached there at EXPT40B). The Prodigy Game Poll is run by Prodigy based on a list of games provided by *CGW* and is updared weekly. Note thar ir 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 wirh gamers rating their favorires on a 1 - 10 scale. The highest total point earners make their Top 10. We provide this dara to our readers as another barometer of "whar's hot" in compurer gaming.



A Portrait Of The Journalist As A

DIRTY OLD MAN

by Liam Thomas O'Riley

On that night, there was literally thunder in paradise. I know that's the name of an upcoming Software Toolworks game, *Hulk Hogan's Thunder In Paradise*, named after the television series, but the wind was at gale force and the rain was pouring as I reached the harbor. Indeed, the weather was so tough that the ship missed its mooring twice before we could finally dock safely.

I reached the telephone at the end of the pier and called for a taxi. I waited and waited, expecting that the hack would be there in a moment or two. None came. The crowd of passengers began to dissipate as private cars picked up the other passengers, until only a beautiful blonde and I were left.

The blonde suggested that we huddle together for warmth and I had no objection whatsoever to that. I adjusted my trench coat around both of us and breathed deeply, intoxicated by the floral scent of her hair. Then, for a moment, I was excited as I felt her icy fingers exploring the buttons of my shirt. Unfortunately, it turned out that she was more interested in sliding some papers into my shirt than in removing my shirt from my body. Strains of "As Time Goes By" began to play in my head and I began to feel more like a character in Activision's recently signed *William Colby's Covert Action* than the dirty old journalist most knew me to be.

It turned out that those papers were pretty interesting, too. When I reached my hotel room, I pulled them out (sniffing the remainder of my informant's perfume) and looked at them. They were specifications for the two game machines to be published by Sega and Sony. One paper said that the Sega *Saturn* was going to feature Hitachi's SH7032 32-bit RISC chip running at 27Mhz, along with special chips to handle sprites, polygons, and texture-mapping. The Saturn is supposed to have 3 MB of RAM, as well as a 4 MB cache on the quadruple-speed CD-ROM drive. It will also display more than 16,000 colors, handle 24 million pixels per frame of animation, and offer MPEG video as an option. The machine will release in Japan before the end of the year and is expected to retail for somewhere between $250-300.

The second paper said that the Sony *PS-X* will feature an R3000A 32-bit RISC chip running at 33Mhz, along with custom chips to handle sprites, polygons, and texture-mapping. The custom chips will reputedly handle 1.5 million ordinary polygons per second and 500,000 texture-mapped and light-sourced polygons per second. Like the Sega machine, the PS-X will display more than 16,000 colors, but it will offer 5 MB of RAM and built-in JPEG and MPEG digital compression schemes. It should be released in Japan before the end of this year and will retail for less than $400. There was even a scribbled rumor that the CD for the PlayStation may be compatible with Philips' CD-I system.

It turned out that my lovely informant wasn't willing to give me all of that information for nothing, however. She had scribbled a note at the bottom of one sheet of paper to meet her at Davy Byrne's Pub. There, where James Joyce had spent many a drunken night, this woman who looked every bit as beautiful as Bloom thought Molly to be, asked for the information she wanted. "Ooh, Liam, tell me about *Battles in Time*."

Well, I knew it wasn't a military secret, but *Battles in Time* is still in the pre-programming playtest stage at QQP. It is a game of move, bluff and counterbluff that makes armchair generals perspire more than British undercover agents at a *Sinn Fein* rally. QQP's goal is to create a playable campaign game where everything, including small tactical battles, can be played within an hour. The fiction behind the game is that the action is initiated in a poverty-stricken future earth which has been conquered by aliens. The gamer has to go back into different eras via a time machine in order to learn the various tactics/strategies of battles. The first set of games will feature tactics from World War II, the prehistoric era, World War I, and the Roman Empire. QQP has been playtesting the concept in a paper game format for over a year and a half.

She was thrilled with the concept, even to the point of hoping that the game would be successful enough for a second set of games covering medieval tactics from Europe and Japan, modern tactics, and those from the American Civil War. Then, her mood turned serious. "I suppose you've heard about *The Trial*." I was concerned. Which friend in the Sinn Fein movement had been arrested? Seeing my worry, she grasped my hand and said, "It's a game, silly, from Broderbund. The player can take on the role of judge, prosecutor or defender as they experience a multimedia courtroom experience in the United States."

So much for the luck of the Irish, though. No sooner had she calmed my fears than a huge specimen of a man entered the pub, grabbed a mug of stout and began to approach our table. He hardened his jaw like one of those oversized faces in a Terry Gilliam animation and began to mouth indecipherable platitudes and axioms. Then, before I could ask for clarification, he poured the stout directly into my lap. I felt like the victim in a John Cleese sketch and watched in disappointment as he escorted my lovely source to the door. "All right," I said, mingling my natural brogue with my best Cleese impression, "I guess we won't be talking about 7th Level's game based on *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. And I won't tell you Terry Gilliam is working on it, either!"

At least, the folks in the pub were amused by my impression. Then, again, maybe it was the condition of my pants. CGW

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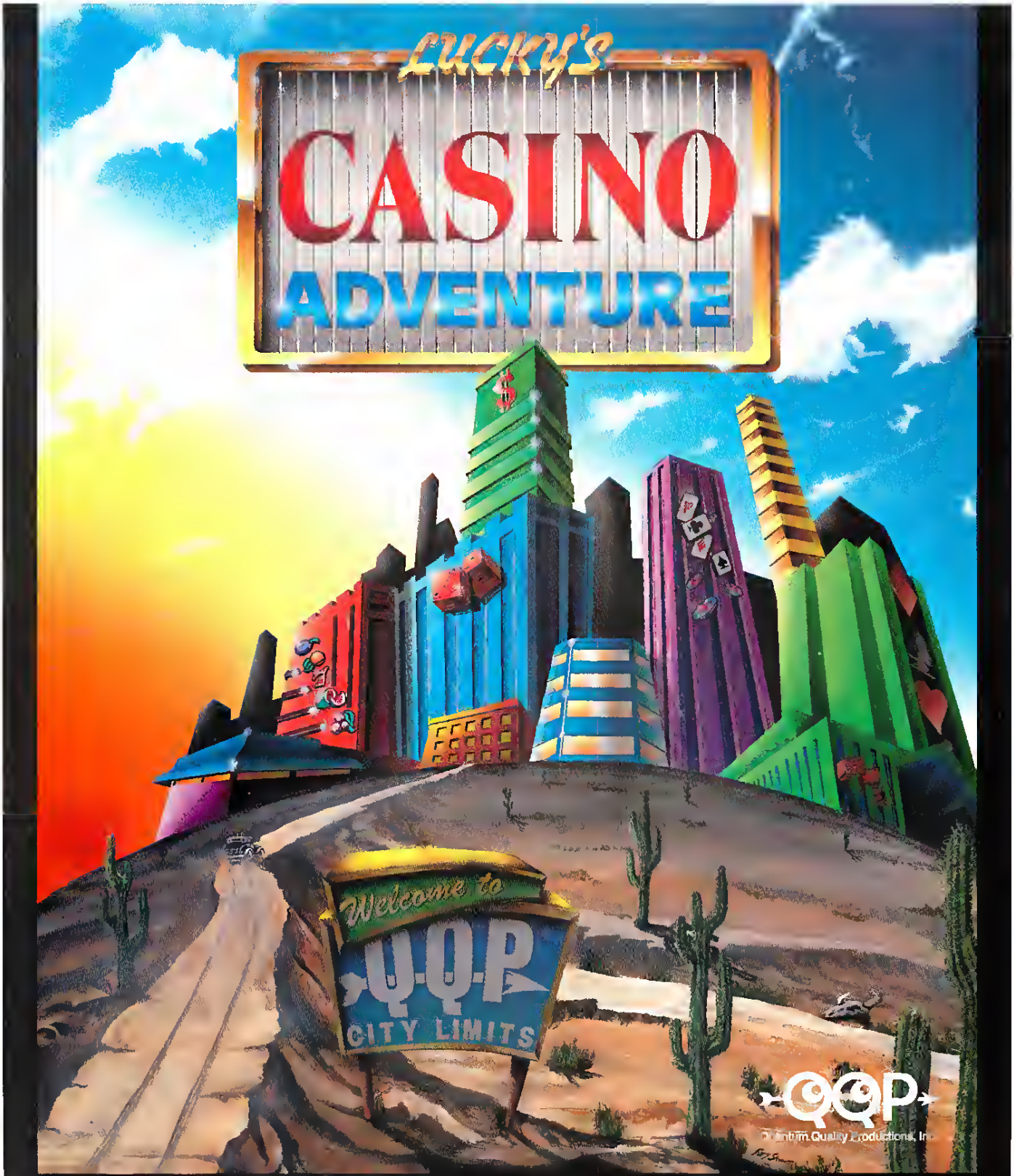

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