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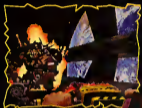
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Ocean's EF 2000 Kicks in the Afterburners

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JANUARY 1996

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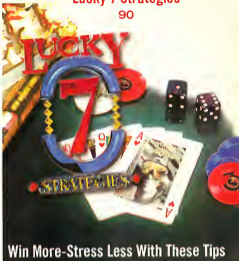
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When The Gaming Gets Easy

We Get In. We Get Out. Who Gets Hurt?

by Johnny L. Wilson

Remember that line in the film, *Stripes*? It went something like, "It's Czechoslovakia. We get in. We get out. Nobody gets hurt." For better or worse, that seems to be the attitude most software publishers have in the post-Windows 95 era of computer gaming. The marketing departments believe that Win 95 is creating a great new buying public that is game illiterate when it comes to standard gaming conventions; doesn't have any patience with deep gaming experiences; and simply wants to get in and get out with nobody getting hurt.

As a result, game developers and publishers are assuming that they can flush gaming conventions, make easy games with pretty graphics and impressive sounds, and start collecting the most impressive royalties they've ever amassed. There is just one problem. It doesn't always work, and fads never last. At Microsoft's Judgment Day event, the official launch celebration for the Games SDK (Software Developers Kit for Windows 95), the bulk of excitement was around games where you get in, you get out and only digitized aliens get hurt. I literally thought I was at a cartridge game convention as I looked at 3-D space vehicle shoot-'em-up after 3-D space vehicle shoot-'em-up. Maybe I'm just cynical, but I have this feeling that when you've blown up one polygon-constructed, texture-mapped spaceship using pixelized laser blasts and sub-woofer-intensive synthesized percussion, you've blown up them all.

Okay, okay. I know that some of these

games are going to capture people's imaginations. Still, the success of these games is going to depend more upon distinctive design features within the gaming experience than merely on how many polygons are being moved how fast across the monitor screen at whatever enhanced frame rate. Some will succeed because of narrative which enhances/reinforces game play (*WING COMMANDER*), while others will benefit from variety in mission design (*MECHWARRIOR II*), and others will profit from ties to proven commercial successes (*REBEL ASSAULT II*). Yet, there will be plenty of games which are just as technologically proficient and will use similar production values that will still fail.

Why? To paraphrase Gertrude Stein's infamous remark about the City of Oakland, "Because there's no there, there." It can be very cool to move your targeting reticule around the screen and blast every enemy ship into space debris, but it's even better to do it when you have a logical, compelling reason to do so. Some of the background stories of the current crop of shooters are so ludicrous that few gamers could possibly care. So, games pale after a few battles and the likelihood of keeping that gamer as a regular customer significantly lessens.

It may offer temporary excitement to blast alien ships into the cosmic equivalent of Win 95's Recycle Bin, but if there aren't some new weapons with new special effects coming along, new abilities or powers opening up to the gamer's on-screen persona, or new discoveries to be made, you are likely to see the game hit the Recycle Bin before the aliens do.

So, here's Johnny's Patented Polygon-unsaturated Green and Purple Prophecy of Doom (*Legal Disclaimer: Johnny Wilson's Prophecies of Doom are not in any way associated with id Software or DOOM, the licensed trademark marketed by that company. So there!*) with regard to the near future of the interactive entertainment industry. I predict that lots of 3-D lookalike games with no depth of story, mission structure or weapon/effect variety will be given green lights by marketing types who believe that they will reach a "whole new market" of people who "don't care about the stories or campaigns, but just want to get to the action." One or two may even succeed for all the wrong reasons (graphic glitz, bundling deals or licensing tie-in), but eventually, the new burst of buying enthusiasm from consumers will wane and the entire industry will be asking, "What's wrong?"

Here's Johnny's Patented Panacea to avoid that scenario. First, publishers shouldn't leapfrog the existing game market. Sure, games can become more interface friendly and include better tutorials and documentation to get new gamers into the market, but they don't have to be stripped of depth and complexity in order to reach that new market. Gamers can be rewarded for early success, but challenged as the game progresses. Games need to be challenging enough to keep the current crop of gamers entertained (their word of mouth is the industry's best advertising), but friendly enough that new gamers don't feel like college freshmen undergoing hazing whenever they boot a game.

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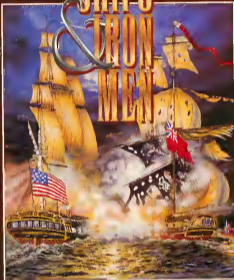
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COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

The #1 Computer Game Magazine

DECEMBER 1995, NUMBER 137

Second, it's the game, stupid! The bottom line must be to make games that offer enough challenge, surprise, story and variety that gamers want to return to your game world. Too much of current game design is being spent on what we can do technologically and how to package the game (the box on the shelf and the on-screen presentation) rather than what the gamer wants. This is a dead-end street.

Finally, gamers can help the process by avoiding bad games. Check out reviews, interactive demos, on-line comments and anything else that can give you information before you buy. Your purchase is a vote of confidence for a product, so don't settle—buy intelligently! Also, use the feedback mechanisms of registration cards, on-line support bulletin boards and web pages to let the publishers know how you feel and the kinds of games you really want.

Without some effort on behalf of both publishers and purchasers, my prophecy of a crash where *everybody* gets hurt seems inevitable. With some effort and communication, we may end up in a new, perhaps even golden, era of gaming.

TRUTH IN ADVERTISING DEPARTMENT

For those of you newsstand buyers who are alert enough to realize that this issue does not have an actual 400 pages (as advertised), we apologize. The polybag is printed far in advance of the actual issue and the mistake was precipitated by a Pythonesque miscommunication between myself and another member of the staff. I won't bore you with details, except to suggest that 215 sounds a lot like 250. My optimistic nature misheard the higher number and I sent a higher total number to the printer of the polybag as a result. I assure you that it was not my intent to mislead anyone and I promise it won't happen again. ☹

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The Guide to CGW's Review Rating System

- ★★★★★ Outstanding: That rare game that gets it all right. The graphics, sound, interface, and, of course, the game play come together to form a Transcendent Gaming Experience.
- ★★★★ Very Good: A quality game that succeeds in many areas. May have minor problems, but is still worth your time and money, especially if you're interested in the subject matter/genre.
- ★★★ Average: A mixed bag. Can often be a game that reaches for the stars, but falls short in significant areas. Can also just be a game that does what it does well, but lacks flair or originality.
- ★★ Weak: A game with serious problems. May be buggy, may not have much play value, may be ill-conceived—and you may want think twice about buying it.
- ★ Abysmal: That rare game that gets it all wrong. Usually a buggy, incomplete, and/or valueless product.

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LETTERS FROM CGW READERS

FUSS IN THE DUST

I must take issue with Arinn Dembo's review of *DUST* in your December issue. I found her characterization of the product to be mean-spirited and way off base. Having played *DUST* over the past two weeks, I am amazed at the depth and intricacies of the story, and I was amazed at the amount of game play that came from only one disc. No mention was made of the multiple plot lines, the other environments you can explore, the interesting puzzles, or the fact that the characters have some sort of artificial intelligence that allows them to remember what you have said to them in past encounters.

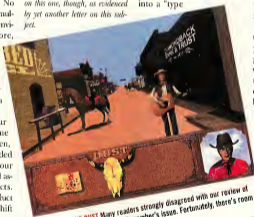
I can only assume your reviewer played the game for only a short time then, for whatever reason, decided to trash the product. Your readers deserve a balanced assessment of new products. *DUST* is a landmark product because of its ability to shift the plot and characters according to your actions, and the way you and the characters interact. The graphics and acting were, contrary to your reviewer's comments, well done and added to a well written plot.

Having been an avid gamer for the past eight years, I've played alot of products on my PC. I feel *DUST* really delivers the goods. I would urge your readers to pick up a copy and

find out just how wrong your review was.

S. Breyfau
via the Internet

We regret your assumption since Ms. Dembo assures us that she "enjoyed all five days of this title, despite the fact that each one felt like a year." We welcome your opinion, however. Differing takes on various products are inevitable. We evidently hit a nerve on this one, though, as evidenced by yet another letter on this subject.



CRUSHED IN THE DUST Many readers strongly disagreed with our review of *Dust: A Tale of the Wired West* in December's issue. Fortunately, there's room enough on this page for both opinions.

Arinn Dembo's review of Cyberflix' *DUST: A TALE OF THE WIRED WEST* caught me by surprise. I would expect any review of *DUST*, at the very least, to lean slightly to the positive—simply because the game is fun. But such a totally negative review had me

shaking my head.

Actually, I had to agree with many of Dembo's objective observations. Yup, the game mixed a lot of different dramatic elements; and perhaps those elements weren't "deserved" or related as one might learn in a post-graduate literature or dramatic arts class. But this is an interactive computer game where working out related puzzles built into a "type

"played" *DUST*, they just might have a good time. And I imagine that most CD adventure gamers are more interested in the challenge or "coolness" of the puzzles, or the beauty of the graphics, or whatever other physical aspects enhance the "being there" experience. Depth of character and adherence to dramatic rules are not the main point and I'm not sure if they really even apply in this form.

And yes, *DUST*'s designers used "jerky, stop-motion puppeteering based on photographic stills" for encounters with the characters; and I thought they did a great job of it. David Hockney would have been proud! I've sat through many boring video character interactions, which of course displayed perfectly represented facial and body movements. *DUST*'s characters were all the more "fun" (remember now, that's the point here) with their collection of moving-collage expressions.

Had the strolling cowboy troubadour been presented in video, he wouldn't have been nearly as funny.

Oh, yeah, the voice-acting in *DUST* was not the best, but certainly not the worst. I think maybe 7TH GUEST wins that one! But even in 7TH GUEST, the atrocious acting did not ruin the main point of being there—the fun brain-teasers and experience of full-motion navigation

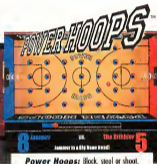
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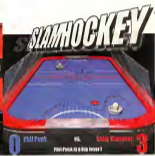
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through a well-drawn cyberworld. Like THE GUNST, DUST has added something to the overall development and history of CD computer gaming, despite the acting. Again, this is a new industry and not all developers can provide top-notch actors or readers. We need many different developers throwing their creativity into the mix that's helping to shape the evolution of this amazing new entertainment form. Ten years from now, poor acting/reading may not be excusable, but for now, for me, it is.

David Swearington
Selena Busch, CA

While we welcome your dissenting opinion on DUST, we must disagree on your perspective about the appropriateness of reviewing the performances in interactive movies as performances. One reason that more people seem to be willing to try computer games these days is because the graphics offer so much more versatility than the wire-framed, pure polygon-filled in cartoonish graphics of the early era. If the "look" of a game enhances enjoyment, we can't help but believe that really good acting in a game enhances enjoyment. That's why, from the first time game companies started positioning their products as interactive movies (can you spell, DAVID WOLF: SECRET AGENT?) we have critiqued performance as well as gameplay.

Like you, many company spokespersons have cried "Foul!" over the years and protested that, "It's just a game!" Yet, I wonder where this industry would be if we

had kept blocky-looking cartoon graphics because these were just games or 8-bit beeps and beeps from an IBM internal speaker because these were just games. After all, the point is just to have fun. Where would we be if flight sim designers gave every plane the flight model of a jet? (Unfortunately, it's been done.) If that were the standard, we wouldn't have great flight sims like RED BARON and FIGHTER DUEL. They're just games, though, why does the flight model matter?

Critics constantly have to weigh the balance between a game's fun factor and it's versatility. Many gamers are not as forgiving toward clunky animation and sub-par performances as you are. Our reviewer felt that the atrocious acting in DUST took away from the fun factor. We've said the same thing about the acting in UNDER A KILLING MOON, CRUCIAL PATH and even WING COMMANDER II whenever we felt it took away from the game experience. As for the snarky argument—the idea that small developers can't afford big name talent—we would remind you that, as we have given our multi-media acting awards as part of our Premier Awards issue, the award-winning performances have not come from the ranks of the highest paid or most famous stars. Great performances in games, as in film, are not necessarily predicated on dollar signs.

THE PERFECT GENRE

I'm a new subscriber to Computer Gaming World and also a new computer gamer. About a year ago, I began to

get interested in action games such as: DOOM II and QUANTUM. They might be old games, but as I became interested in action games, I began to wonder about something. I was wondering if the ranking on The Score, was actually right, because under Chips & Bits, Inc., the action games were not similar, like WING COMMANDER III, which was under the simulation rank of the list. I once played WING COMMANDER III and it didn't look as though it was an action type of game, but more likely an adventure game. The same goes for TIE FIGHTER, which is also like a simulation or an adventure game. Could you define the difference between action, adventure and simulation games so there would be an agreeable way to call some of the games that are under different types of topics?

Mark McDonald
Yokohama, JAPAN

There is no such thing as a perfect genre definition. Here is the way we currently categorize games. Starting next month, we're going to group space combat games in with the simulation games—even though they are not based on real-world environments. Other than that, we hope you find these definitions to be helpful.

ACTION/ARCADE (AC):

Computer games that emphasize hand-eye coordination and reflexes, usually emphasizing action over story or strategy, are classified in this category.

ADVENTURE (AO):

These are computer games that allow the gamer to control an alter ego as he/she moves through a storyline or sequence of events, usually emphasizing puzzle-solving over conversation and combat.

ROLE-PLAYING (RP):

Often abbreviated as CRPG, computer role-playing games are a subset of adventure games that are based heavily on character development. Emphasis is placed upon attribute improvement, conversations with non-player characters (NPCs) and tactical combat.

SIMULATION (SI):

These are computer games which are based on first-person perspectives of real-world environments. They usually use polygon-filled (often, texture-mapped) technology to build the simulated world on the fly and are usually vehicle-oriented.

SPORTS (SP):

The sports game category is a mixed genre which includes action, simulation and strategy games based on sports.

STRATEGY (ST):

Such games emphasize strategic planning and problem-solving. They almost always emphasize resource and risk management.

WARGAMES (WG):

These games are a subset of strategy games. As categorized by Computer Gaming World, these are simulations of historical or futuristic conflict from a conventional perspective. ☺

Tyrian



No amount of marketing hype could do this game justice. If you enjoy awesome arcade action then you owe it to yourself to download the shareware version of Tyrian and see it for yourself. Bring along a friend, because Tyrian features a two-player mode as well as network and modem support. We're sure you'll be hooked.

Here are just a few places you can find Tyrian:

Epic's web site: <http://www.epicgames.com>

Epic's official ftp site: <ftp.umli.edu> in
the `msdos/games/epic` directory

Exec-PC BBS (414) 789-4360

CompuServe: GO EPIC and
download Tyrian from the Epic Forum

ADL: keyword PCGAMES, in the software libraries

Epic's shareware games can also be found on many
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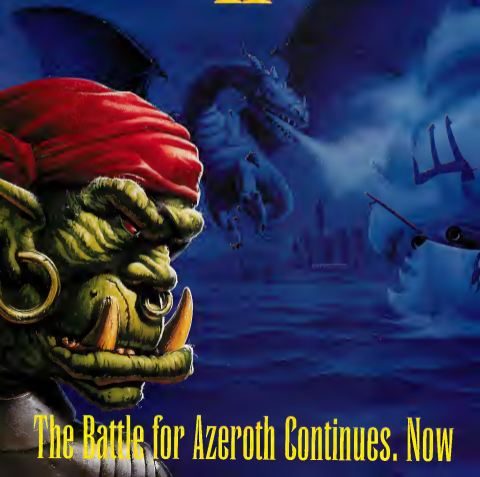
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WARCRAFT

TIDES OF II DARKNESS

The logo for Warcraft Tides of Darkness II is presented on a weathered, wooden sign with a torn edge. The word "WARCRAFT" is written in a large, stylized, golden font with a red-to-orange gradient. Below it, the words "TIDES OF" and "DARKNESS" are written in a blue, serif font on a parchment-like banner. A large, golden Roman numeral "II" is positioned between the two banners. A small "TM" trademark symbol is visible in the top right corner of the wooden sign.

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THE LATEST NEWS FROM THE GAMING WORLD

WHERE THE CHIPS FALL

Exploring The 3-D Graphics Accelerator Lineup At COMDEX

It's been said that, in the future, we'll remember two distinct periods in the evolution of computer gaming—before 3-D graphic accelerators and after. From some of the COMDEX demos that we've seen, this may be an understatement. Hardware vendors are stumbling over themselves to come up with the 3-D hardware solution and they realize that hot 3-D games are the vehicles with which to penetrate the consumer market.

Here's a condensed look at the chips and products we saw at COMDEX that you'll be hearing about over the next few months.

Rendition's Vérité chip was seen in several locations—specifically, at the CREATIVE Labs booth. CGW editors were treated to an amazing playable version of NASCAR RACING. This blazingly fast, hi-resolution version of the popular auto racing simulation included extra features like dust (when cars hit the grass) and a detailed rear-view mirror that shows all of the action taking place behind you. Look for the Rendition Vérité on a PCI version of Creative Lab's 3D BLASTER sometime second quarter '96.

Also at the Creative Labs

booth was the VLB version of 3D BLASTER, a card which uses a low cost version of the 3D Labs 300SX GLENT chip. Also coming from 3D Labs is a newer, more robust line of 3D chips called PERMEDIA which are expected to run 3D



BLASTER compatible games. The 3D BLASTER should be available by the time you read this.

Diamond's EDGE 3-D "Multimedia Accelerator," uses Nvidia's NV1 chip. The chip was fairly impressive running full versions of games like VIRTUA FIGHTER. The NV1 also does wavetable synthesis and digital audio, giving you more functionality as opposed to chips which only offer 2-D GUI and 3-D acceleration. The Diamond EDGE 3D should also be available by the time you read this (see this month's Under The Hood for more info

on the EDGE 3D). Nvidia also announced that there will be a future hardware product based on the NV1 from Jazz Multimedia.

Not to be left out of the race, S3 announced the Virge 3D accelerator chip. A spokesperson at S3 explained that several peripheral manufacturers, leading motherboard and systems manufacturers, and major game companies have endorsed the product. CGW editors saw the S3 Virge chip running on the new Hercules GRAPHITE TERMINATOR PRO 3D running the Intel 3DR demo (which spun a 3D model of a Teapot rendered on the fly), but no games.

Not to be missed was the Lockheed-Martin R3D-100. As we go to press, no one has announced a consumer 3D graphics accelerator based on the R3D-100 optimized for computer games. Hardware vendors have explained to us that the cost of this part seems to be a factor in keeping its retail price high and out of consumer range. We haven't seen any games running on the R3D-100, but the demos of space fighter combat inside a Deathstar-like environment were amazing—almost too good to be true.

In summary, by the time you



read this, the VLB 3D BLASTER and PCI Diamond EDGE 3D should be out with value added game bundles. Additionally, the Matrox Millennium and Paradise TASMANIA (an add-on PCI module with the Yamaha RPA2 3D chip) should be available, albeit with smaller game bundles. (The Millennium happens to be one of the fastest DOS graphics cards on the planet).

Since 3-D graphics in the consumer market is a current buzzword, you should expect to hear more info from ATI, Matrox, 3DFX (which showed technology demonstrations in the Orchid booth), and VideoLogic in the near future.

This first round of 3D graphics accelerators will rely heavily on the bundling of hot "killer app" games specifically written to each chipset. However, with the widespread use of more powerful 3D APIs (like the forthcoming Direct3D component of the Microsoft Game SDK), we expect to see the day in the near future where any given 3-D game will run on any of the available 3-D accelerators—much like a Windows word processor runs on any Windows 2D GUI accelerator, today.

—Mike Weckler

Land Of The Cyber Sun

Japanese

Electronics Firms
Build Virtual

Worlds

On the heels of Fujitsu's introduction of WORLDS AWAY, a social virtual reality which has just made its debut on the Compuserve on-line network, Mitsubishi Electric Research Labs unveiled its DIAMOND PARK prototype at COMDEX. Whereas WORLDS AWAY currently focuses upon creating an avatar character and having that character converse and explore that on-line universe on foot, DIAMOND PARK



BYE BICYCLES Visitors to Mitsubishi's Diamond Park virtual environment will be able to compete in a virtual velodrome or on-line obstacle course.

offers a bicycle metaphor—allowing its cyber-citizens to explore its universe by a bicycle analog input/output device or by virtual bus. The Mitsubishi prototype even allows its virtual velocipedics to compete in races within an on-line velodrome or on a user-defined obstacle course. Any gamer can rearrange the pylons and ramps of the obstacle course in order to create a custom course and invite others to compete on it. More subdued

PLAYING LATELY?

Here are the games that your fellow players are blowing the most time with. Let us know which game you've been playing the most by writing the name of your current addiction in the "Playing Lately?" blank of the CGW Top 100 ballot.

Readers'
TOP 100

Results for CGW #136, NOVEMBER 1995

1. Steel Panthers (SSI)
2. Command & Conquer (Virgin/Westwood)
3. Mechwarrior 2 (Activision)
4. Crusader (Origin)
5. Panzer General (SSI)
6. Heroes of Might and Magic (New World Computing)
7. Ascendancy (The Logic Factory)
8. Phantasmagoria (Sierra)
9. NHL '96 (Electronic Arts)
10. Caesar II (Sierra)

"I've been playing wargames for 34 years. There cannot be anything more realistic than STEEL PANTHERS inside or outside the military war college."

Greg McCarty, Woodbury, MN

"KING'S BOUNTY was a great game and HEROES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC has improved it tenfold. I've had many sleepless nights."

Neil McDonald, Wharton, TX

"X-Huh? Hellooo! COMAND & CONQUER."

Berry Anderson, Colorado Springs, CO

Notable Quotes

Wit, wisdom and crustic quips
from gaming's harshest critics

"NHL '96 =
Heaven!"

Shawn Grubaugh,
San Antonio, TX

"MECHWARRIOR 2
must have been secretly

co-designed by Intel to boost their overdrive sales! Even I upgraded!!"

Michael Flores, San Antonio, TX
Former 486SX 50 owner

"The sound (in STEEL PANTHERS) of a 2 pound shell bouncing off my turret gave me chills! BTW, I'm a retired tank PLTSGT."

M. Bianco, Belmat, NJ

visitors can simply visit the outside cafe/chat interface for a little pleasant conversation (a built-in French language lesson module is currently in place).

WORLDS AWAY is intended to be the gateway for new gam-

ing environments that are expected to be added incrementally to the service. DIAMOND PARK is a prototype environment to show what can be done with Mitsubishi's authoring tool, SPLINE (Scalable Platform for Interactive Envi-

ronment). Gamers interested in WORLDS AWAY should call Compuserve at 1-800-336-6823, while gamers interested in DIAMOND PARK should check out the Mitsubishi web page (<http://www.merl.com>).

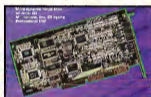
Yamaha's WaveForce XG Wavetable Sound Cards Catch The Right Wave



XG General Midi Extension Could Afford Wild Acoustical Ride For Gamers

While most games ship with General MIDI scores, there is a huge disparity in the quality of General MIDI wavetable synthesizers. The difference can make even the best General MIDI scores sound like they're being played back on an FM synthesis card (like standard SOUND BLASTER music). At COMDEX, Yamaha showed CGW editors the WAVEFORCE SW60XG stand-alone (i.e., you still need a SOUND BLASTER compatible sound card for digital audio) MIDI card. Like the Roland SCC-1 and the Turtle Beach Multisound, the XG is a com-

petent stand-alone General MIDI wavetable synthesizer; however, it has features more similar to a pro-audio synthesizer (like Yamaha's MU-80 module) than a consumer multimedia sound card. To wit, there are 676 voices stored in 4MB of ROM, 21 drum kits, and maximum of 32 note polyphony. Where the WAVEFORCE SW60XG really shines is in its onboard 18 bit DAC (the component which takes digital audio and converts it to an analog signal), a component which affords better dynamic range than the 16 bit DAC on other soundcards (in-



ACOUSTICALLY ASTONISHING We didn't know how good this chip sound'd until we compared the same Neil Hendrix MIDI file on the XG chip and others.

related hardware however, it's only going to benefit gamers when the game developers adopt the XG General MIDI extension—which Yamaha asserts is an open standard—and ship games with XG scores. Other

General MIDI extensions include GS—an open standard introduced by Roland and just now appearing on multimedia sound cards such as the Ensoniq SOUNDSCAPE ELITE. Additionally, you should be aware of the various General MIDI compatible "downloadable RAM" schemes which will let you edit individual instruments like the Creative Labs AWE-32 or the Gravis ULTRASOUND, and store them on your harddrive.

Other versions of the WAVEFORCE include the DB50XG daughtercard (a 16 bit DAC version reviewed in the October 95 issue of CGW). Yamaha has also announced the SW70XG which is similar to the SW60XG but includes 512K of downloadable RAM.

From the FM synthesis AdLib card, to XG MIDI wavetable synthesis—what a wonderful and strange trip it's been.

—Mike Weisker

cluding the Roland line of multimedia sound cards), and the built-in full-blown DSP (digital signal processor) for sound effects, a design which boasts features commonly found on rack-mounted effects processors, including 11 different types of both reverb and chorus.

The real test of the WAVEFORCE SW60XG was when a representative of Yamaha played the Jimi Hendrix song, "Voodoo Chile"—a piece heavily saturated with "wahhed" electric guitar solos—for CGW editors. We thought they were trying to fool us with a digitized sample from a Hendrix CD—until the Yamaha rep let us examine the XG MIDI file. Considering that most other consumer wavetable sound cards have electric guitars that sound like kazooos, Yamaha's WAVEFORCE XG synthesizers are acoustically astonishing.

Like all new computer game

Out of The Gray

Germany's Blue Byte Software Comes To U.S.

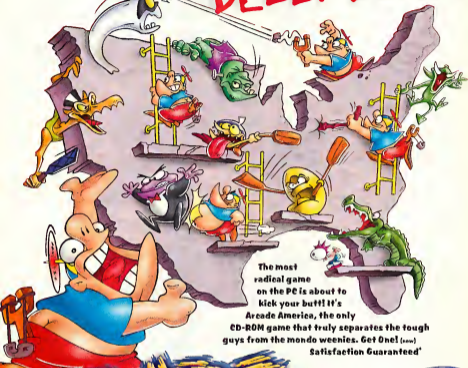
The original European publisher of THE SETTLERS (SSI's SEAF CITY) and BATTLE ISLE 2200 (published in the U.S. by Accolade) is coming to America. Prior to establishing its independent sales office in Illinois, gamers who wished to purchase Blue Byte products (such as the aforementioned products and the upcoming ALBION, the role-playing game mentioned in last month's Holiday Hot 100) would either have to wait for a U.S. publisher to pick up a given title and distribute it over here or purchase it by

mail order. Given the vagaries of international mail delivery, it should be welcome news to Blue Byte fans that there is now a U.S. phone number (1-708-539-7950) that they can call for information and ordering.



THE SHADOW KNOWS Gamers waiting for Shadow of the Raven, the latest Blue Byte game, know about this U.S. Software.

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OLEG KALUGIN

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KGB

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ACTIVISION

Circle Reader Service #37

UNNECESSARY ROUGHNESS

The sports-game designers at *Accolade* must be from the country. That's the only reason we could think of to explain the presence of *UNNECESSARY ROUGHNESS '96*. *Accolade* fell off the proverbial horse in a big way last year with the original *UNNECESSARY*



NOT NECESSARILY ROUGH *UNNECESSARY ROUGHNESS '96* might be a contender for Comeback Player of the year.

ROUGHNESS. But valiantly, they've climbed back into the saddle, and this time around it looks like they're taking things more seriously. Just like before, *UR96*, sports high-res graphics. But some big improvements have been made such as, 10 different camera angles, a football field that looks appropriately huge, and some much-improved gameplay.

The players look a little smoother this year than last, although their movements are still on the rough side (this being a beta, things might get better). High-resolution graphics look better, but they also make more obvious any flaws in the animation process. Numbers are on the backs of

each player.

On the field, the gameplay is significantly more balanced. Play-calling remains easy, with plays clearly drawn out. And the

computer AI is also more intelligent (although in one game, the Dallas Cowboys shunned Emmett Smith and threw the ball three times from their opponents 2-yard line). Air warriors will be happy (or sad) to know that passing for 12,000 yards in a season will, hopefully, not be possible.

Players can play through an entire season (all the rosters are up to date as of the 1995-1996 season), complete with injuries, roster moves *et al.*

CIVNET

I have faced them all: Elizabeth, haughty yet regal in the way only the English-bred can

be; Frederick, whose militaristic beat hides a sly and sparkling wit; Alexander—handsome, arrogant, shame-

lessly self-confident, the very definition of a Greek god come to earth; Gandhi, the little man so smug and irritatingly, aggressively peaceful; and of course, Genghis, whose lack of subtlety in diplomatic affairs was more than made up for by the excellence of his nomadic army.

Time and again have I bested them in conflicts both military and economic. I have graciously traded the secret of steel to them, so that they might build railroads to link their scattered empire, or create mighty battleships to rule the seas. But *always* I was just one step ahead of my adversaries. Now, however, they are not mere silicon constructs, but real intellects, and my victories are not so foreordained. **SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION IS A**



HOOFFIN' IT *Haves or Havesnot* lets you choose from one of five imaginary traits and gamble your way through a simulated season.

game that enjoys breaking barriers. A classic strategy game with hints of role-playing, it somehow elicits that joy of discovery, of wonder, that makes the most serious of gamers simply relax and enjoy molding history in his/her own image. Now that the game engine has finally been rehailed, CIVNET looks to entice yet another generation of gamers to spend sleepless nights exploring the world, facing off against Napoleon, splitting the atom, and perhaps even conquering the world.

But in CIVNET, your opponents are human. For the first time, you get to feel the frustration as your adversaries build the Pyramids right out from under you. Then again, you get to gloat when you discover the wheel first...

Diplomacy takes on a whole new aspect, especially in modern or network games (no guarantee on internet play yet). The internal AI for settlers, military units and advisors is vastly improved, as are the computer opponents—should no human leaders be available for that 3 AM Civfix. This should be worth the purchase just for the improved interface and SVGA graphics. With detailed city reports, multiple world maps, more unpredictable AI and a choice of either classic turn-based or parallel play, how can any strategy fan resist?

two years working on a next-generation sim engine designed to bring the ACES sims back to the technological forefront. The first fruit of these efforts is SILENT THUNDER: A-10 REVENGE. The original A-10 TANK KILLER, Dynamic's entry into the sim arena, brought with it a level of graphic detail and environmental realism unseen at the time. A relatively basic flight model and a slow-flying aircraft made it accessible to beginning sim pilots. SILENT THUNDER follows in this respect: it sports breathtaking graphics and com-



WARNING REDUX *Silent Thunder: A-10 Revenge* promises lots of thrills for sim pilots for whom getting up there and shooting things is more important than deadly realism.

plex missions, but realism is laid aside in places in the name of gameplay.

A James-Bondian bad-guy is inciting trouble in various regions of the world, and it's up to you to restore the peace. You'll fly 24 missions in three regions (Columbia, the Gulf, and North Korea); the missions promise to be long and complex enough to provide plenty of gameplay. Difficulty

settings promise to provide a challenge even for hard-core sim jocks, but they can be toned down so as not to frustrate the student combat pilot.

The SVGA environments you'll fly in (12 scenery areas, four in each theatre) pack textures so rich you almost want to reach out to your monitor to feel them; flowing rivers, waterfalls, and other incidental animation enhance the effect. The beta 1 flew still

exhibited a pretty high level of "polygonism," but Dynamic plans to smooth that out before the planned February release. Rockin'

CD audio tracks play in the background as you fly; one particularly cool feature for you *Iron Eagle* fans is the option to play an audio CD of your choice instead. This Win 95 sim definitely looks worth strapping into unless you're a stickler for 100 percent accuracy.

—Dewey Atkin

PIPELINE

RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON THE LATEST INFORMATION FROM GAME TESTING SPIES

NAME OF GAME, COMPANY RETAIL PRICE

AD&D Deathkeep SSI	1/96
Age of Rifle SSI	2/96
Alexander SSI	2/96
All-American College Football '95 Micro Sports	2/96
Chessmaster 5000 Mindscape	3/96
Conquest of the New World Interplay	2/96
Daggerfall Bethesda	01/96
Dungeon Keeper Bullfrog/EA	2/96
Invincibles Bullfrog/EA	3/96
Legion EMPIRE Mindscape	3/96
Magic the Gathering MicroProse	Spring '96
Master of Antares MicroProse	Spring '96
Metal Lords New World	3/96
Pax Imperia II Blizzard	01/96
Realms of Arkania 3 Sir Tech	3/96
Rise II: Resurrection Acclaim	2/96
Sid Meier's Civilization 2000 MicroProse	Spring '96
Spycraft Activision	2/96
Super Heroes MicroProse	Spring '96
Terra Nova Virgin	2/96
The Last Blitzkrieg SSD	01/96
Theme Hospital Bullfrog/EA	4/96
Warhammer Mindscape	12/95
Wizardry Gold Sir Tech	3/96
Wooden Ships and Iron Men Avalon Hill	1/96

SILENT THUNDER: A-10 REVENGE

Dynamic has spent the past

Feist Returns To Krondor With Candor

Bestselling Author Hints Of On-Line Version

At Comdex, CGW was able to corner Raymond E. Feist and talk with him about his and 7th Level's plans for the sequel to his and Dynamix' award-winning *BETRAYAL AT KRONDOR*. In the interview, Feist expressed his pleasure with the progress to date on *RETURN TO KRONDOR*, the new game. "We learned quite a bit about writing computer games in *BETRAYAL*," Jerry Luitrell (former Dynamix writer/marketer who is now an executive



at *Interplay*) taught me that there is a diminishing return to sidequests. They become irritating after a while. In the new game, there will be fewer sidequests and they will be more germane to the story."

In addition, Feist promises higher production values (no fake beards), true FMV rather than the stop-action of the earlier game, and sea battles.

Feist also hinted that there may be a *Midkemia On-Line* in the near future, though he indicated that no firm deal has yet been struck. He reminded us that *Midkemia* was originally a gaming universe and, though he feels he is the best voice

concerning what ultimately happens in *Midkemia*, he recognizes that other people invest time, money, characters and creativity into making the universe come alive in gaming. "In novels, I write what I want and they don't get a vote. In the games, they do." Feist has great expectations for *Midkemia On-Line*, too. He'd love to see 80,000 players per hour in *Midkemia*. We'd like to see that, too—technologically and creatively.

The 64 Gigabyte QUESTION

Digital Image Design's Martin Kenwright is Managing Director and Producer for Ocean's EF2000 flight simulator. He's responsible for the original concept and the creative direction of the game, not to mention the top-notch 286-page manual. EF2000 has arguably already ushered in a new generation of flight simulators, but what would Kenwright do if he was really burned loose? That's the 64 Gigabyte Question: if you had no limitation in budget or computing power, what kind of game would you like to design?

Geez, what a question! Can't we just take the money and run? All games are constricted not only by budget and the speed of the available hardware, but also by time. There can't be a programming team on this planet that hasn't wished they had just another couple of days to add that "really neat routine." If we used the "money-is-no-object" argument we'd never get a

game finished—coders would always be adding stuff. Digital Image Design specializes in 3D games, and our ultimate game would take place in some kind of 3D virtual world. In order to make our dream title we would

environment would have to be the ultimate goal. A world in which the player would perform pretty much as he does on his own. However, it would be a world in which everyone could play out his alter-ego's life—a world in which anything goes.

I guess it would be an environment where players could meet and decide what they wanted to do. For instance, if they wanted to dogfight in *EUROGATERS* (unshamed plug), they would simply agree on the rules and head for the hangar. Alternatively, players may decide to play a sport, chess or even just walk around their virtual world—the ultimate possibilities are endless! The more you think of such a system, the more mind-boggling it becomes. Not only could it be used for leisure pursuits but also business, learning, the list goes on and on. Hey, with such a system we could even buy out *Microsoft!* Mr. Gates, the Brits are coming! Well—virtually!



also have to develop the necessary hardware. A multi-player, photo-realistic 3D

A Mysterious Murder.

A Doomed Planet.

An Angry Alien.

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Call 800-771-3772 for information on game rating.



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Circle Reader Service #175

3D Blaster™

The Ultimate 3D

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Five Next Generation
3D games designed
specifically for 3D Blaster.



Rebel Moon™

Defeat your fate against attacks from every angle. Rebel Moon from Future Wolf delivers stunning sci-fi game play with 3D effects that come at you from all directions. Exclusively on 3D Blaster.

Magic Carpet™ Plus
Fight to restore colors that have been annihilated by catastrophic events. With amazing 3D graphics and breakable action, your Magic Carpet, from Balling, smashes you.



Flight Unlimited™

This incredible flight simulator from Looking Glass Technologies, Inc. features 3D, texture mapped scenery and flying action so real you'll want to take your own left for taking.



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Tired of games that play in slow motion? Tired of pixels the size of boulders? Tired of 8-bit cartoon colors?

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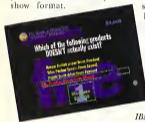


You Don't Know Jack

What other trivia game has categories like, "Poultry and X-rated films" or "Sexually Repressed Commonwealth Cultures"? **YOU DON'T KNOW JACK** tests your knowledge, wits and ability to detect colorful double entendres in a fast-paced and irreverent TV quiz show format.

up to two other contestants, via buzzers in seven and 21 question games. Players must answer multiple choice questions and decipher gibberish phrases posed at random. The last challenge, a series of word associations called Jack Attack, can either put you in the black or make you lose your shirt. A wise-cracking host with a Brooklyn accent gives you a double-helping of verbal abuse throughout the game. Although some of the humor will have you rolling your eyes, **YOU DON'T KNOW JACK** will grow on you after a few rounds.

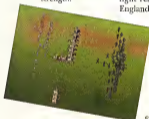
IBM, Mac CD-ROM
Berkeley Systems, \$ 29.99
Berkeley, CA (510) 540-3333



PUTTY MOUTH *You Don't Know Jack* replaces high-res graphics with streetwise and off-color humor.

The seamless interface consists entirely of quick-cut, in-your-face text and voiceovers; there are no cinematic cut scenes or fancy SVGA graphics to make your rig crash. You compete for virtual cash, solo or with

raid the homes of your fellow knights like a brigand and then usurp the King himself? Or maybe you will travel the realms, hone your battle skills at tournaments, locate the dreaded dragon which preys on England, and confront the foul beast yourself? Such an act, though extremely foolhardy, will earn you fame and power, and even the King will have to forfeit his crown to your obviously superior valor and strength.



CONQUEST OF THE OLD WORLD At its heart, *Conquest* is a wargame, with real-time combat, but it blends aspects from other genres as well.

CONQUEROR is a game that blends action, adventure, strategy and wargaming. Your goal is to control all of England by the time you reach the age of 30. However you achieve this goal, you must manage your fief and serfs in a fashion similar to *SIMCITY*. Since this is a wargame, you also have to raise armies and fight real-time battles across England. This game also has

action/adventure sequences, where you storm castles (in not quite *DOOM*-style), and amass experience in a bid to slay the Dragon of England.
IBM CD-ROM
Sierra On-Line,
\$34.95
Bellevue, WA (800) 757-7707

Conqueror A.D. 1086

You, young knight, have been bestowed a fief and a directive to become the most prominent lord in England. How you rise to prominence is entirely up to you. Will you

Star Rangers

It's like one of those *Star Trek* transporter accidents. Imagine the episode: Scotty's beaming up copies of *WING COMMANDER 3* and the old Atari 400 classic *STAR RANGERS* for the Federation science museum when a cosmic storm causes a surge and combines the two games in the pattern buffer. What appears on the pad is *Interactive Magic's STAR RANGERS*.

"Fascinating," Spock



TWO GREAT TASTES Weiding together *Star Rangers* and *Wing Commander*, *Star Rangers* may be the best combo since Reese's.

says, "the gameplay has an extremely derivative duality, yet the program deserves consideration."

"The tactical display adds a basic but intriguing level of strategy to the game that's lacking in *WC3*," notes Sulu. "Aye," says Chekov, "the SVGA space

combat scenes will please *WC3* fans, but may disappoint those looking for more. *WC3* was originally published in Leningrad, I believe..."

"Enough, gentleman," the captain interrupts. "It's not very original, but the space action scenes are fun, and the strategy is a nice addition. Load it up, Scotty, at warp speed."

IBM CD-ROM
Interactive Magic, \$59.95
Research Triangle Park, NC,
(919) 461-0722

PLAYING

Stonekeep

The games' dated graphics and tedious of early levels hack-'n-slash belies the rewarding role-playing experience **STONEKEEP** has to offer.

There are only four wall textures with a few color variations throughout the game as you single tile-step in a linear, multi-level, subterranean world.

You are given a predetermined character and cannot control any other character in your party, although you can equip them as you see fit. The game offers a refreshing levity through the non-player characters which enrich the play with their spontaneous per-

sonalities and who provide information that develops the story line.

Gamers experienced with other first-person perspective games may be disappointed with the constraints of the movement controls and inkward interface. The keyboard con-



FIERY FAERIE FUN Inquisitive raps inspire you to dance in *Stonekeep*.

trols the limited forward, back and 90-degree turn movements, while the mouse controls the weapons attack and interface manipulations.

Powerful weapons, magic, and surprising interaction with faeries and the living dead in the later levels reward those champions who persevere.

IBM CD-ROM
Interplay Productions, Inc.,
\$19.95

Irvine, CA (800) 331-2343

Wetlands

In the distant future, an unscrupulous nuclear experiment causes a world-wide meteorological disaster, completely submerging all of the Earth's land mass. Blame for the apocalypse falls squarely on the shoulders of military scientist Philip Nahj, who just recently busted out of an intergalactic prison. He was just following orders; he's been locked up in cryogenic suspension for decades; and boy is he bitter. You play Cole, a hard-boiled agent wearing a



ONE CLICK PONY: Despite constantly straggling backdrops, the point-and-click, shooting gallery gameplay in *Wetlands* gets old fast.

perma-brown who must track down Nahj. Cole doesn't have very many friends; consequently he gets shot at—a lot.

WETLANDS stages the action sequences in a variety of space, underwater, and tunnel backdrops. The gameplay offers a challenge, but is strictly limited to a point-and-click, whack-a-mole, shoot-'em-up format. Decent, but overly long animation interludes fill in the plot gaps for this comic book of an action game.

IBM CD-ROM.
New World Computing, Inc.,
\$39.95
Hollywood, CA (818) 889-5650

The Dig

And that's just what you'll have to do. **LucasArts Entertainment's** deep space adventure game will keep you digging—and guessing—at clues to solve this puzzle-driven title. Your mission: to divert the asteroid, Atila, and keep it from smashing the Earth to smithereens. The problem: Atila is not an asteroid, but a spaceship that hijacks you back to the planet of Cocytus.

While experienced puzzle enthusiasts will appreciate the

challenge of some of the more difficult and subtle puzzles which promise hours of experimentation, the uninitiated may find the game a little redundant and frustrating.

Although the planet's intricate design and artistry is, at first, fascinating, you eventually feel as though you are be-

ing held hostage. Lengthy animation sequences, punctuated with



LOST AND SPACED Randomly searching for clues can bring "Danger. Will Robinson!"

terrible and often irrelevant dialogue, stretch this game into a parody of a Saturday morning cartoon—only longer. The main difference, of course, is the minimal interaction as you point and click while searching for pieces of the puzzle and collecting "strange things" along the way.

IBM CD-ROM
LucasArts Entertainment Company, \$44.95
San Rafael, CA (800) 985-8227

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The Next Jet Age

EF2000 Locks On And Fires Into The Next Millennium

by Denny Atkin

A NEW GENERATION OF FIGHTER PLANES IS SOON TO GO INTO SERVICE, REPRESENTING THE FIRST MAJOR ADVANCES SINCE PLANES LIKE THE F-15 AND SU-27 WENT INTO SERVICE AROUND 1980. AMONG THIS NEW CROP ARE THE AMERICAN F-22 LIGHTNING II, THE FRENCH DASSAULT RAFALE, AND THE BRITISH/GERMAN/ITALIAN/SPANISH CONSORTIUM-DEVELOPED EUROFIGHTER 2000. THESE PLANES SHARE MANY ADVANCED CHARACTERISTICS, INCLUDING SUPERCruise (CRUISING AT SUPERSONIC SPEEDS WITHOUT AFTERBURNER), STEALTHY CONSTRUCTION, HIGHLY EVOLVED DIGITAL FLIGHT-CONTROL SYSTEMS THAT TAKE MUCH OF THE LOAD OFF THE PILOT AND PROVIDE AMAZING MANEUVERABILITY, OFF-BORESIGHT MISSILE CAPABILITIES, AND ADVANCED OFFENSIVE AND DEFENSIVE AVIONICS.

IT'S FITTING, THEN, THAT ONE OF THESE ADVANCED PLANES IS BRINGING IN THE NEXT GENERATION OF PC FLIGHT SIMS. EF2000, DEVELOPED BY DIGITAL IMAGE DESIGN AND RELEASED BY OCEAN, BRINGS AN AMBITIOUS CAMPAIGN AS WELL AS MAJOR ADVANCES IN GRAPHICS TECHNOLOGY AND CONTROL ERGONOMICS TO THE FLIGHT SIM COMBAT ARENA. PERHAPS THE MOST SURPRISING ASPECT, THOUGH, IS THE SIM'S ACCESSIBILITY TO BEGINNER AND EXPERT PC PILOT ALIKE: THE FLIGHT MODELS, ENEMY AI, AND BATTLEFIELD COMPLEXITY SHOULD SATISFY THE ACE

SIM DRIVER; BUT THE REAL EF2000'S ADVANCED AVIONICS AND AUTOMATION GIVE IT AN EASY COCKPIT FOR THE NEW SIM PILOT TO STRAP IN TO.

EUROPEAN CRAFTSMANSHIP

EF2000 FEATURES QUICK COMBAT, A "JUMP IN AND SHOOT" MODE THAT KEEPS SCORE; SIMULATOR MODE, WHICH INCLUDES BOTH TUTORIAL AND SINGLE-MISSION FLIGHTS; AND CAMPAIGN MODE, WHICH LETS YOU FLY A SERIES OF ALGORITHMICALLY GENERATED MISSIONS IN A REGIONAL WAR AGAINST THE RUSSIANS. THERE'S ALSO A MULTI-PLAYER MODE WHICH LETS UP TO EIGHT PLAYERS BATTLE OVER AN IPX NETWORK.

WHILE THERE ARE SIMS THAT DELVE DEEPER INTO MICROMANAGING THE PLANE'S CONTROL AND WEAPONS SYSTEMS (DUE MOSTLY TO OTHER SIM FAVORITES LIKE THE SU-27 AND F-16 REQUIRING MORE PILOT MANAGEMENT THAN THE EF2000), THERE'S NO SIMULATION THIS SIDE OF AN EVANS AND SUTHERLAND MILITARY INSTALLATION THAT DOES SUCH AN AMAZING JOB OF IMMERSING YOU IN BELIEVABLE VIRTUAL COMBAT.

AS THE NAME SUGGESTS, EF2000 SIMULATES ONLY A SINGLE PLANE, THE EUROFIGHTER 2000, RATHER TRYING TO LET YOU FLY JUST ABOUT EVERYTHING IN THIS YEAR'S COPY OF JANE'S AS SOME SIMS DO. WHILE VARIETY CAN BE NICE,

EF2000

Price: \$69.95

System Requirements: 486DX2-66 or better, 8 MB RAM, DOS 5 or higher, CD-ROM drive, 12 MB hard drive space, VESA-compliant SVGA graphics, all major sound cards supported, mouse; joystick and network card optional

Protection: None

Designers: Digital Image Design

Publisher: Ocean

San Jose, California

(800) 289-

1411





LAST RITES A lumbering AN-225 is about to meet its end; if you're generous, you can command your wingman to take the kill.



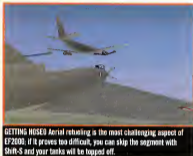
BEAT IN PANAVISION The innovative wide-angle tracking view helps you keep your target locked.



SMOKIN' IVAN Russian ground installations not only burn nicely, but also emit aromatic, semi-transparent smoke.



concentrating on one aircraft lets developers spend more time emulating precisely the plane's handling and cockpit systems. There's lots of variety in the skies, though, with a full complement of allied and Russian aircraft battling it out around you.



GETTING NOSED Aerial refueling is the most challenging aspect of EF2000; if it proves too difficult, you can skip the segment with Shift-S and your tanks will be topped off.

A VIEW TO A KILL

The EF2000 aircraft brings lighter control systems to a new level of sophistication and ease-of-use (see the sidebar "The Real Eurofighter" for details), and DID's simulation captures that and combines it with an innovative instrument panel access method to create a system that's accessible and unobtrusive in combat. Instead of trying to compress the entire instrument panel on one screen, EF2000 breaks it into six sections easily accessible using the numeric keypad. Pressing 1, 2 and 3 accesses each of the MFD (multi-function display) screens, while 4, 5 and 6 access the warning lights,IRST display, and backup instrument cluster. You can also pull up a virtual cockpit view that lets you see the entire panel at once (the MFDs are fuzzy but readable in SVGA) and scroll around the cockpit.

When I got a chance to try in the back seat of a real F-15D, I realized that the biggest differences between the best sims and the real things were the effects of G forces and the incredible situational awareness afforded by the large bubble canopy. There's no way to simulate the G torques a back screen can't compare to the confusion you feel when the blood flow to your brain is nearly cut off, but EF2000 does the best job yet of compensating for the limited situational awareness afforded by a computer monitor. Windscreen, wide-angle, and full-screen front views are there; keypresses let you

glance left, right, and back, but there's no "up" view. The joystick hat can be used to scroll left and right and toggle inside/outside views. But the real advantage comes from a perfectly implemented padlock view, which automatically turns your head to track the current target. Because the helmet worn by EF2000 pilots is used to target the AS-RAAM missile, it includes its own HUD-like display which is always visible when using padlock tracking. But the real piece de resistance is the addition of a series of faint, transparent arrows to the top of the canopy glass, which point toward the front of the plane. These make it easy to figure out which direction you need to move the stick to put the padlocked enemy into your sights. If all this isn't enough, EF2000 also supports the Forte VFX-1 virtual reality helmet. (The resolution tradeoff with the current generation of VR helmets, while okay for games like *Descent*, makes EF2000 play difficult.)

A variety of outside views lets you check out your own plane from a number of angles, your wingman, your target, and other aircraft in the vicinity.

Your plane is rendered in texture-mapped, light-source shaded splendor with nary a polygon in sight. Control surfaces constantly flutter to keep the fundamentally unstable aircraft on path. External stores are rendered with meticulous detail. Particularly impressive is the rearview of the plane when afterburners are lit—you actually see a shimmering effect from the heat of the engines. Wingmen and most allied and enemy planes are similarly detailed.

NORWEGIAN HOLIDAY

The views outside your cockpit are dazzling as well. Imagine graphics nearly as crisp as those found in *Fuoco Hammer*, but covering all of Norway, Sweden, and Finland (as well as parts of Estonia and Russia) instead of a few square miles. The setting is a Russian invasion of Scandinavia, which allows combat missions over beautifully rendered coastlines, marshes, icebergs, mountains, glaciers, and—of course—fjords. A network of roadways, replete with bridges and tunnels, connects the various cities. You can cruise behind mountains and in valleys to use terrain masking to your advantage as you come in for attacks. The

ground looks great in clear weather, but when you're flying in less than ideal conditions it's amazing—watching a mountain wrapped in glorious high-res textures coming into view out of the haze is awe inspiring.

Ground targets aren't quite as dazzling; cities are rendered as flat gray patterns with 3-D target buildings and factories laid on top. (The transparent smoke emitted by the factories is impressive.) Vehicles are simple as well, resembling more those in *Fuoco 3.0* than those in *Su-27 Fwwee*. Airfields do look great, though. They have authentic layouts (unlike those in, say, *U.S. Navy Fighters*), complete with hangers, towers, and support buildings.

What the ground targets lack in detail they make up for in their ability to blow up real well. Bright, fiery explosions accompany weapons detonation, and targets emit authentic, thick black smoke and small fires after the explosions subside. Take out a dam and not only does it blast rubble in every direction, but it also emits a huge puddle.

Sound is superb, with stereo effects (weapons fire comes from the speaker that corresponds with the appropriate wing) and digitized voices for wingmen, AWACS, ground control, and the "Bitchin' Betty" warning system. If you have a wavetable soundcard, you'll enjoy the background MIDI music soundtrack. If you're still stuck with a synthesized-music card, you'll want to choose the CD-audio backdrop music instead.

NOT JUST GOOD LOOKS


Sure, it looks good, but how does it fly? Very well. At first it may seem a little arcade-ish, but that's due to the nature of the control systems in ad-



MAGIC MAP The moving map display gives you a full tactical picture of nearby air and ground activity, using data from nearby J-STARS and AWACS planes.

vanced aircraft like the EF2000; the computerized control systems will automatically compensate in an effort to keep you from losing control, preventing spins and allowing limited maneuverability in stall situations. (An early test version of EA's *Avionics Tactical Fighters* exhibits similar tight characteris-

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cause mutations in cars, too.





tics.) The flight model in general seems quite thorough; performance is affected by speed, altitude, and aircraft weight.

DID consulted with British Aerospace and RAF pilots in an effort to ensure authenticity, and it seems to have paid off, with one notable exception: the plane seems to have too much available thrust with one engine shut down. Other aircraft perform with realistic limitations—you won't see a giant

Antonov AN-225 transport pulling an Inmeltman to evade your missiles. If you have trouble mastering a task such as landing, or you just find taking to the runway a bore, you can press Shift-S to skip to the next major flight event.

Combat is a real kick in the pants. Pilot AI is quite good for enemy and ally alike; planes use the vertical when necessary, and they'll extend to use long-range missiles when necessary. (Strangely, though, planes from neutral countries have a habit of flying into the ground. Lack of combat practice?)

The other weapons at your disposal are your wingmen. You can give them a variety of orders when attacking, such as telling them to cover you or perform a bracket attack. Unlike some sims, your wingmen fly very intelligently and serve as more than target drones for the bad guys.

You have a full range of offensive and defensive systems at your beck and call. The ECR-90 radar isn't "God's-eye" like the radars in so many British sims; it not only has realistic coverage, but is affected by terrain masking and target altitude. For a stealthy approach, you can leave the radar (which screams "I'm coming to shoot at you!" to the enemy) turned off and use the downlinked data from AWACS and J-STARS aircraft on your JTIDS (Joint Tactical Information Display System) display to locate air and ground targets. When you get close, you can use your passive IRST (Infra-Red Search and Track) detector to move in. BVR and long-range combat is handled with a standard HUD; when you get close in, you can switch to the padlock view and track enemies over-the-shoulder. And you can even shoot at them over-the-shoulder using the amazing ASRAAM missile, which can pull up to 30 G's as it turns to hit targets to your side or even slightly behind you.

Ground weapons systems are aimed using a HUD peeper (for dumb bombs and rockets), a TIALD (Thermal Imaging And Laser Designation) display on the center MFD for smart bombs and a similar display for Mavericks,

and a special radar mode for anti-shipping missiles.

When you're on the receiving end of fire, your plane doesn't just blow up. Various systems will be damaged (there's a fantastic scrambled-video effect if your MFDs get knocked out), and you can even have part of your wing blown off by a close missile hit. If you don't want this to happen, make sure to power on your Offensive Aids SubSystem (OASS), which not only identifies threats, but also automatically dispenses chaff and flares when needed. If that doesn't work, there's at least a very pretty ejection sequence (including a bloody mess if you eject too low at a bad altitude).

MISSION CRITICAL

There are three combat modes. Quick Combat features 12 missions at three difficulty levels designed to get you right into the heat of the action. For the competitive soul, this mode keeps high scores, giving you points for each kill. Simulator mode offers the richest missions. Even on missions where you're just learning an attack method, your EF2000 is generally part of a larger operation. You might, for instance, take out an enemy SAM site while F-15s providing cover engage in combat above; after you take out the SAMs and head toward the refueler, you can flip the view back and watch a group of A-10s move in for an attack on the SAM-free site.

Campaign mode is where you'll probably spend most of your time. Instead of providing a canned series of missions like USNF, EF2000 uses an engine called WARGEN to algorithmically compute combat results for the entire war theatre—according to the manual, over 4,000,000 square kilometers holding over 1,000 planes, 2,000 ground units, and 500 ships (although I've never been given an Anti-Ship mission except in Simulator mode). You're presented with a list of possible EF2000 missions for the current time period—anywhere from four to a couple of dozen, depending on the war situation. Sometimes you can choose any part of a multi-phase mission, choosing between flying escort, Wild Weasel, or ground strike. If you take out a location in one mission, you'll see the damage next time you fly over. You'll also encounter other aircraft on completely unrelated missions. The campaign is the most ambitious I've ever seen—when you're in close proximity to other missions, they're handled by the simulation engine and you can watch ground and air attacks taking place (and interfere at will). At a distance, the wargame engine takes care of things. While it's an amazing accomplishment (and better than anything that's come before it), the lack of anti-naval missions

THE REAL EUROFIGHTER

The first flight of the prototype Eurofighter 2000 took place on March 27, 1994, when Messerschmitt-Bölkow-Blohm (MBB) chief test pilot Peter Weger took the prototype on a test flight around Bavaria. The basic configuration is reminiscent of the British Aerospace (BAe) EAP agile combat aircraft demonstrator, which flew back in August, 1986. In fact, the EAP was used to test many Eurofighter systems before final configuration of the latter plane was decided. (The relationship is similar to the F-17 and F/A-18, where the basic platform is the same but many design changes were made.)

The EF2000 is built by a consortium made up of BAe (UK), MBB and Daimler (Germany), Aeritalia (Italy), and CASA (Spain). It was initially designed for air-superiority and air defense roles, but a changing world situation has also resulted in an emphasis on excellent air-to-surface capabilities as well.

The STOOL (Short Take-Off and Landing) aircraft has a fundamentally unstable aerodynamic design, while this requires computer assistance for stable flight, gives the EF2000 superior agility. Two Eurojet EJ200 advanced technology turbofans each provide 20,250 pounds of afterburning thrust; with a maximum take-off weight of 37,480 pounds fully loaded, this means the EF2000 has power to spare. Although it's not actually a stealth aircraft, careful shaping and



Eurofighter 2000

use of composites and low-detectability technologies (the airframe surface is only 15% metal) means the EF2000 is extremely light and has a much smaller radar profile than 1980s-era fighters.

The fly-by-wire control system ensures the pilot can't stall or overstress the plane, and there's even a button that will automatically return the plane to a wing-level, nose-up attitude if the pilot becomes disoriented after a high-G maneuver. All important switches are mounted on the throttle or stick, giving the EF2000 true HOTAS (Hands On Throttle And Stick) control. Three panel-mounted MFDs are supplemented by a HUD and a helmet-mounted sight for aiming ASRAAM missiles.

Initial deliveries to the RAF are set, appropriately enough, for the year 2000. Countries generally agree that the only fighter with a demonstrable superiority to the EF2000 is the American F-22, which costs twice as much and doesn't have the EF2000's air-to-surface capability.

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a second look too. (It might even keep some of them out of trouble.)

Digital Pictures





and the minimal ground-fire—compared to what you'll encounter in Simulation mode—gives the impression that

the folks at DID didn't have time to implement campaigns as thoroughly as they would have liked. Also, victory is terribly underwhelming—a small box that says "War is Won." (And presumably, "War

is Lost," although so far I haven't had that happen, even when I tried to lose.) Campaign status is saved when you exit the program, but you can only play one campaign at a time.

MINOR TURBULENCE

The oddities in the campaign engine aren't the only problems. There are rare graphic glitches: at one point, I encountered smoking damage floating about 1,500 feet over neutral territory; at another, bomb damage outside my plane at mission startup obscured part of my instrument panel until my plane moved.

I also encountered a situation where I could retarget the TIALD laser, which was alleviated when I exited and re-loaded the program. You can't recalibrate your joystick from within the sim; you must use the external Config program. I had some lock-ups on one of two systems running QEMM that were cured by using a boot disk; Win 95 users will have to boot in DOS mode.

FINAL APPROACH

Despite these minor problems, EF2000 is an amazing accomplish-

ment. The astonishing graphics, the best virtual cockpit around, and a target-rich environment more than make up for a perhaps overly ambitious campaign module. You'll need powerful hardware: a 486-66 is probably the minimum for getting a playable frame rate in low-res, and you'll definitely want a fast Pentium for SVGA mode. (I found it playably smooth at full detail on Pentium-100.)

Like the real plane, EF2000 is a splendid example of the future that better technology has in store for us. And a bright future it is. ☺



WELCOMING COMMITTEE These MIG-29s don't want you in their neighborhood; you'll probably get to meet them up close, as the long-range S25 missiles are fairly ineffective against fighters.

THE EDITORS SPEAK

EF2000

RATING



PROS Revolutionary graphics and sound, excellent flight modeling, and an amazingly rich combat arena; the most ergonomic cockpit yet seen in a simulation.

CONS Innovative Campaign mode doesn't seem fully implemented, as there's a lack of ground fire and naval activity. Only this and a few minor bugs keep this game away from the coveted five-star rating.

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IBM PC screens shown. Actual screens may vary.



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PUTPOS



POWERHOUSE

FRONT LINES

The Fire Between the Stars

CGW Sets its Scanners on SF Strategy Games

by Martin E. Cirulis

Theodore Sturgeon once said, "Sure, 90% of science fiction is crud. That's because 90% of everything is crud." Happily, the quality-to-crud ratio isn't nearly as depressing when you're talking about science fiction strategy games—in fact, it's a lot better

than, say, science fiction television. Although it seems a number of designers missed their marks with recent releases, there's still a respectable pack of games twisting traditional strategic- and tactical-warfare concepts with strange technologies and battlefields from the dark between stars.

THE YEAR IN SPACE

Good or crud, these titles at the very least represent a direction for wargames away from the endless re-interpretation of historical battles.

Sierra almost succeeded in bringing us a hard SF struggle for survival in the now infamous **OUTPOST**, but shot itself in the foot at the last second by releasing it too soon. Impressions continued to show more enthusiasm than skill in the field of SF wargaming by giving us the dull **FRONT LINES**, the disappointing **POWERHOUSE** and the very late, but still lamentable, **BREACH 3**. **Take 2** tried something very different in the god-game category

and let players tinker with entire alien civilizations by giving them the ability to hop back and forth through time and space in **MILLENNIUM**.

MicroProse captured the gaming world by storm with the low-tech SF strategy imports from England, **X-COM 1 & 2**, and showed us how much fun UFO paranoia can be. **Spectrum HoloByte** greeted 1995 with a cute, four-player space trading game aptly named **GAZILLIONAIRE**. The new kids at **The Logic Factory** ended the long "spaceploitation" drought with the promising but seemingly unfinished **ASCENDANCY**, while **Accolade** made us fight frustrating battles with great weapon systems in another Euro-import, **BATTLE ISLE 2200**.

Giving us the first sign that the fall of 1995 was going to be good to us SF types, **Virgin** worked hard and delivered **COMMAND AND CONQUER**, a clever look at a next millennium world war, built upon its successful **DUNE 2** engine. While all these games are small steps, we are going to have to look a little more deeply to see if a giant leap has been made since 1993, the last time we visited deep space in these pages.

FTL SHIPS, IRON ALIENS

These past two years have been dry ones for those who love the four X's of space warfare: eXploring, eXpanding, eXploiting and eXterminat-

firmly in place. The **Logic Factory** came up with a stunning SVGA spaceploitation game called **ASCENDANCY** that seemed, at first glance, to hold enough cards to depose the venerable **MASTER OF ORION** as king of the genre. It was all there: a multitude of fascinating alien races to play; a large starfield to explore, with multiple worlds to explore around each star; cool technologies to be researched, and dozens of devices to be installed into player-designed starships. Unfortunately, the initial release includes a couple of serious play bugs and a computer player that makes the one in **MASTER OF ORION** look like

NAPOLEON, making this title a mere pretender to the throne. Though multi-player capability could have alleviated many of the game's problems, **ASCENDANCY** still needlessly sticks to the strange philosophy of single-player space war games. Hopefully, this is the last title to make this mistake, and future designers will include hot-seat capa-



COSMIC FAILURE Accolade tries to expand the spaceploitation field, but with so many bugs and poor documentation, looks half-finished.

ing. Dreams of a new **SPACEWARD HO!** and deluxe, multiplayer editions of **MASTER OF ORION**, not to mention **Mech-oriented** strategy games and **VGA PLANETS 4.0**, came and went without anything materializing out of the vapor. Meanwhile, the traditional realm of SF wargaming, spaceploitation, saw only one real game worthy of the title, as well as one flop and an oddity that used the




ANYTIME MILLENNIUM injects a new dimension into the empire-building genre: time-travel. Now you can influence the evolution of your subjects throughout time.

familiar form of hopping from one star to another to wrap a whole new ball of string.

This past fall saw a new company bring out a game with all its X's

ability at the very least. Nothing can out-compete you for a chunk of the galaxy like another smart monkey at a keyboard.

Even the clumsy **STAR REACH** from



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Interplay tries to serve up a second human player, but since the action in this game occurs in real-time and nobody seems willing to spend the effort on a network option, sentient competitors are forced into the dinosaur horror of split-screen technology. Initially, SR looked like a good idea, mixing spaceplottation with the arcade combat action that made *STAR CONTROL II* so popular.

Alas, poor design choices—like saddling the player with a single command ship that blows up way too easily, and a scale that leaves you out of the fight and out of fuel every time you try to turn around—spoils the fun for everyone.

The only game trying to break new ground out in this part of the Galaxy is *MILLENNIUM*, from

Take 2. Here, exploration and exploitation utilize the fourth dimension to give you a chance to move through all of space-time. It starts with the usual plot device of the innocent player kidnapped to lead an Alien war (and why these big-headed, pulsing-vein types can cart you all around the universe and provide monstrous weapons, but just can't seem to get the job done themselves, is beyond me). The twist comes when you find out the war is already lost, and your job is to go back through time and change the outcome. To do this, you must create and shepherd four alien races, from the birth of sentience to the ascent of their star-spanning empires, by meddling in their political affairs, introducing various technologies and helping them avoid the odd natural disaster. While things aren't exactly as wide open as the usual space game, and the actual combat is deep in the galactic goo of goofy arcade action, *MILLENNIUM* is a good try at something a little

different, and the only title in this batch that tries to straddle the line between adventure and strategy.

The future seems a little brighter than the present for spaceplottation. Approaching quickly is *MASTER OF ANTARES* (See Alan Emrich's preview this issue) from those hotter-than-hot kids at *SimTex*. *MOA* promises to finally replace *ORION* as the spacegamer's favorite star. Bar-

rocket-packing motorcycles?

Perhaps in an attempt to draw in more traditional wargamers, Impressions created *FRONT LINES*, a straight-up SF wargame along the lines of *THE PERFECT GENERAL*. The setting is Earth in the next century, and players can choose from a multitude of scenarios that range from surgical anti-terrorist strikes using fast recon vehicles, to all-out armored firefights. While there's certainly a large variety of weapon systems and many hours of game play in this title, it's perhaps a little too much like the *PERFECT GENERAL* with a graphic overlay; there's very little of the flash and tactical surprises that one would look for in an SF wargame. This close brush with blandness, coupled with a few bugs in the initial release meant *FRONT LINES* came and went off most hard



DUNE III? COMMAND AND CONQUER is a near-future strategy game of global warfare, but beneath its beautiful exterior lies the *DUNE II*, real-time, combat engine.

cia and company's long-delayed *METAL LORDS*, to be published by **New World**, seems to be back in production and should see the light sometime this spring. If the much-delayed *PAX IMPERIA*, the nigh-mythical Sid Meier *CIVILIZATION -In-Space* design, and *VGA PLANETS 4.0* come out in 1996, we should see a Renaissance in the realm of Spaceplottation and, if nothing else, a generation of games where multi-player capability is the standard, not the exception.

CHARGE OF THE LIGHT-SPEED BRIGADE

While the Grand Strategic front may be exhibiting some weak points, things at the tactical level have tried hard to take up the slack. Vehicle-level combat seems to have established itself as a solid sub-genre of SF gaming, and makes a good entry point for gamers who usually shun non-historical games. After all, what Panzer jockey can resist the allure of anti-grav tanks, or

drives at escape velocity.

BATTLE ISLE 2200 went to another world to spice up its warfare, and *Accolade* went all the way to Germany to get the game. Once again, you are lucky enough to be hijacked by yet another bunch of technologically-advanced, tactically-inept aliens looking for a Patton to use all their cool toys to their full capabilities. Here is a SF wargame that does a lot of things right. The weapon systems are varied and interesting enough that perfecting tactics for each one is a real joy; it observes traditional wargaming values such as terrain, weather and sighting range; the computer player is tenacious and knows how screw up a player's victory conditions; and there are even amusing animations showing combat results, for the benefit of the easily bored. The only real flaw in this game is the frustrating structure of the missions. As one scenario leads to another, players must either achieve their victory conditions for the mission or repeat

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it until they do. With each battle sometimes lasting for hours, this is no easy feat, especially when you realize that victory doesn't depend as much on tactical know-how as it does on figuring out the "trick" needed to win the scenario. While challenges are good, wargames of any genre should never make players feel like they're playing puzzle games.

Oddly enough, the most popular SF wargame of the past year makes the same mistake. But **COMMAND & CONQUER**, the successor to **DUNE 2** from Virgin, is so

slick that your frustration can barely get your attention. While C&C takes place on the Earth of the early 21st century instead of Frank Herbert's Arrakis, you're still out there harvesting stuff, building bases and kicking butt—or getting it kicked more often than not. Instead of worm poop, your job is to harvest a strange, extraterrestrial crystal that has suddenly started growing on Earth, but fear not; there's far more here than mere cloning of a successful design. There are obviously similarities, but C&C is one of the first strategy games to use multimedia and scenarios linked by a storyline to their full effect. Players can choose to play either the lovable UN special forces or their evil opposite, the terrorist Brotherhood of Nod. Sure, some of the scenarios have puzzle solutions and there is the odd long battle of attrition, but the designers at Westwood Studios improved many things from previous designs, including toughening up the AI. And when that isn't good enough, this real-time wargame networks four players in all-out mayhem. **COMMAND AND CONQUER** gives dozens of hours of challenge for those of sharp mind

and quick fingers.

Apart from the promise of a C&C sequel in 1996, things look mighty bleak for smaller-scale SF conflicts. **QQP** will soon deliver their **BATTLES IN TIME**, another "you must master

pletely abandoned by designers at this time, and a straight starship combat game is nowhere to be seen. While historical wargames are finally benefiting from the **Avalon Hill** catalogue of great boardgames, some fascinating SF designs from the likes of **SSI** and **GDW** languish in the closets of old gamers, without the merest byte dedicated to their resurrection in the computer age.

CELESTIAL COMBAT

Humanoid-to-humanoid combat has been a hit-and-miss proposition, with one design destined for the Hall of Fame and

another that's an utter dud.

The British invasion came in mid-1994 with the arrival of the epic and still much-played **X-COM**. If you're new to computer gaming and have any interest in squad-level combat of



THE MURKY DEPTHS In **X-COM**, **Yates** from the Octo, hybridizing aliens have finally awakened from their oceanic tombs to wreak havoc on a futuristic Earth.

combat to save civilization" premise. This time around you'll battle in scenarios from the past, present, and future as you play hero. **QQP** may still inject enough character into this one to put it up



ONCE MORE, INTO THE BREACH Impressions' latest **Quake** installment tries to be **X-COM**, but misses every mark.

on the shelf with their classics, but what I've seen leaves me with a less-than **PERFECT GENERAL** kind of feeling.

It seems that the rich field of planetary invasions has been com-

pletely abandoned by designers at this time, and a straight starship combat game is nowhere to be seen. While historical wargames are finally benefiting from the **Avalon Hill** catalogue of great boardgames, some fascinating SF designs from the likes of **SSI** and **GDW** languish in the closets of old gamers, without the merest byte dedicated to their resurrection in the computer age.

600MPH ZERO GRAVITY



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Back in the year 2032, maintenance workers in now defunct fuel facilities between Earth and Pluto created a game that would later take the entire solar system by storm. Today, twenty four years later, experienced MagCar racers from all over the solar system hone their skill on the MagZone circuit in hopes of making it to prestigious All System MagZone Championship. One on one or two on two, they race magnetic cars at speeds of up to 600 MPH inside vast 3D shapes (MagZones). Here they battle to gain control of a magnetic ball and fire it into the opposing team's goal. This is your invitation to join the Circuit. Get your bearings on the Free Access Shape. When you think you're good enough and fast enough, buckle up and join the pros as you battle alone or with a teammate for control of the MagZone. And, oh yeah, did we mention...there's NO GRAVITY!



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mythology, and produced a wonderfully entertaining strategic game with one of the best turn-based man-to-man combat engines yet.

It's your job to find out why saucer aliens have suddenly turned nasty. It's the UN funding this job and not the FBI, because this isn't simple investigative work. You must construct hidden bases, purchase interceptors to shoot down marauding saucers, and hire scientists and technicians to study the remains and back-engineer new technologies. But most importantly, you must command soldiers in combat to slug it out with these better-armed invaders. X-COM is a pure delight to play, and literally every UFO tidbit you ever heard in your life is tied into this puppy. I nearly split a gut when my troops busted open an Alien ship to find a poor old cow stretched out on a laser vivisection table. The combat engine is nearly perfect, modeling everything from line-of-sight and shadow to blast effects and cover terrain. Best of all, in these upgrade-frenzied days, X-COM delivers all this on a 386-33.

Of course, where genius treads, a sequel is sure to follow, and within a year we had X-COM 2: TERROR FROM THE DEEP. Yes, another insidious alien plot to conquer Earth, this time by a menace that had been sleeping under the ocean depths for millions of years. TFD isn't an upgrade or evolution of the award-winning system, it's simply another story pasted atop the identical game engine, which really means gamers have even more hours of X-COM to play. This is great, but somewhat disappointing as well. Even though the sets are different and the tactical challenge is far greater (ocean-born mutants being far less forgiving of tactical blunders than their saucer-cruising

brethren), some players will get a "more of the same" kind of feeling. It also doesn't help that the storyline, while fun and fairly interesting, lacks the urban mythology weight of the original.

Strangely, it may have been the very success of the X-COMs that stalled the release of the only other squad-level game to be seen, BREACH 3 from Omnitrend and Impressions. When I covered RULES OF ENGAGEMENT 2 in my last SF

trend's starship game, you have to wonder how many gamers are still playing ROE2 after all this time.

As with SF wargames, the future looks pretty bleak for squad-level games. There doesn't seem to be any designer interest in a solid personal-combat game, unless the clever lads responsible for JAGGED ALLIANCE decide to put an SF twist on their own inevitable sequel. This would be a real shame because, as challenging as the streets of STALIN-

GRAD are to classic wargamers, the depths of an alien city or the bowels of a crippled starship could be a real adventure. STARSHIP TROOPERS, anyone?

THIS PLANET FOR SALE

Don't want to blow up a world in order to conquer it? Why not simply buy the darned thing? In the past year, designers have turned away from 19th century



overview in late 1993, B3 was "soon to arrive," to complete the interlocking system of starship and personal combat systems that would allow players to design ship-to-ship battles where boarding could be resolved soldier-against-soldier. It seemed at the time that all ROE2 needed was a quick and dirty upgrade of the older BREACH 2 in order to be tied up into a cool little tactical package, but it was not to be. For some reason other than technical innovation, B3 was not released until this fall, and it sure wasn't worth the wait. Instead of sticking with the tried-and-true turn-based system, the designers seem to have thrown in a last-minute change to real-time, which does little but confuse things. While the game comes with a powerful scenario and campaign construction kit and does indeed link with Omni-

railroads and early airlines to see the glory to be had in the future of capitalism.

Late 1994 brought a game that promised to be the most accurate SF strategy game ever, so realistic in fact that space was the true enemy, and any thought of an armed conflict with a competing colony was stupid. Only by trade and resource-management could one rule the world. Unfortunately, this game turned out to be Outpost, a beautiful game released so much before its time by Sierra that a quarter of the strategy guide was irrelevant, because those aspects of the game hadn't been implemented when the game shipped.

The premise for Outpost was a great one: Earth, about to be destroyed by a huge asteroid, desperately sends out a single interstellar colony ship using the near future's

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ALIEN ODYSSEY



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slower-than-light engines. Once at your chosen world, you discover that your supplies have been stolen by renegade crew for their own upstart colony, and if you survive the deadly first years you will have a competitor for the world. Based on actual NASA designs, *Outpost* seemed almost afraid of its own grim reality, and many great simulation touches were ruined by unwise attempts at spicing or lightening things up.

This game wouldn't even be worth mentioning now, but Sierra is remarketing a Windows 95 version after all this time and trumpeting *OUTPOST* as "the biggest selling strategy game of all time" (even if you don't count returns, I suspect that *OUTPOST* still trails *SIO MECIER'S CIVILIZATION* by a few hundred thousand units). So, I thought I would dig up the past a bit. If this is the *OUTPOST* that was meant to be in the first place, then it is definitely worth checking out, but I'd wait until there's some confirmation of this.

Soon after the *OUTPOST* disaster, a fun little program akin to *MERCHANT PRINCE* meets *SPACEWARD HO!* was pulled from the depths of shareware and given a facelift and a soundtrack by Spectrum Holobyte. *GAZILLIONAIRE* is a surprisingly tough space-trading game where players hop around a handful of wacky planets trying to keep ahead of the Tax Alien, bill collectors, and the space-Mafia. While this game has some great bits to it and a fairly sophisticated economic system for a humorous title, it seemed like Spectrum Holobyte really wasn't thinking much of long term play when it upgraded this game. A set number of worlds that never change position or demand structure from one game to another is fine for shareware, but

when you pay big company prices, the average gamer expects a little more variety and replayability along with the yucks.

POWERHOUSE, from Impressions, rounds off the play-for-profit category with a step back towards realism...sort of. *POWERHOUSE* is another turn-of-the-millennium game where the planet's power-generating economy has fallen into chaos. To remedy this, the all-powerful UN has banished all power conglomerates

deliver a long-term strategy game filled with dynamic economic/political models and many hours of exciting play per game. Unfortunately, the reality is that, while these things do exist in the game, they were completely undermined by a lack of playtesting—and by playtesting, I mean checking the actual rules of the game instead of just the programming code. The profitability of renewable resources at their earliest tech level, ultra-conservative AI players, a pointless stock system, and an utter lack of balancing for the advantage of turn order turn this potentially cool game into an easily-won groaner by the 50th of the 1000 turns in a normal game.

While most would consider the power-through-capitalism system of conquest a little eclectic, the potential of these three games indicates a solid design concept that can trace its computer gaming roots all the way back to the immortal M.U.L.E. (a game, I



FAST BUCKS IN OUTERSPACE Adding to the growing crop of galactic, business-building games is *Space Bucks*, where you control a vast galaxy-spanning economic empire

and created four mega-corps to exclusively supply energy to the world at a tidy profit. You and up to three pals can play them, or just let the computer do the job of opposing your business wiles. The mechanism is pretty basic: the UN opens a single territory on the globe which has a set energy need; when that need is 75% filled, a new territory is opened up. How much of that need can your *Powerhouse* provide? Beating out the other three mega-corps is the name of the game. With market share comes profits, and with profits comes technology, more tech creates more profit and more profit creates corruption! When you become a big player, governments will rise and fall at your whim—or, sometimes annoyingly, your opponent's whim.

In theory, this game was going to

should mention, that many a gamer would love to see brought up to speed). There is at least one more chance at gaming glory to arrive, as yet another SF title from Impressions should be in the stores by the time you are reading this. *SPACE BUCKS*, the slightly nutty star-entrepreneur edition of the high quality Impressions line of business-building games, has a great look and feel to it. From the beta I've played, I feel pretty safe saying that *SPACE BUCKS* could easily become all that *GAZILLIONAIRE* should have been. This may very well have the first title to merge corporate simulation with real spaceexploitation sensibilities.

If *SPACE BUCKS* doesn't totally whet our appetite, perhaps some hope can be found in the Avalon Hill catalog. After all, *TITAN* and *MERCHANT OF VENUS* are beer-and-

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pretzels affairs perfectly suited for light PC fun—I can see those potato-like asteroids twirling in SVGA glory even now.

LOOKING PAST THE EVENT HORIZON

I'm hoping the SF games in the works for release over the next year will make up for some of the disappointments covered above. The folks at SimTex alone could revive my faith in the non-historical strategy game. Even if they're foolish enough to stick with the SimTex tradition of using initial buyers as late beta-testers, the 1.0 versions of both *MASTER OF ANTARES* and *METAL LORDS* should still beat the pants off anything else out there. When *FASA* finally stops throwing lawyers at people and gets down to work, I am really looking forward to a couple of great *BATTLETECH*-universe strategy games. Now if only Impressions would match its quality to its enthusiasm for SF games, life would become truly rosy.

There are also the titles we started looking forward to a year and a half ago which are still floating in a sub-space limbo of sorts. From the newest PC version of *SPACEWAR HO!* to *PAK IMPERIA*, there is very little reason to believe that disappointment still doesn't hang heavy in the air. Unfortunately, SF games of any genre tend to be high-concept, ambitious projects, and when a company starts getting strapped for resources at the end of a quarter, it's usually the high concepts and ambition that are either abandoned or chopped up nearly beyond recognition. Of course, by the time you are reading this, perhaps I will have been proven wrong and space war games will line the shelves.

Despite its difficulties, this genre continues to evolve and is in no danger of becoming the ghetto of computer game design. The universe of possibilities inherent in Science Fiction games will continue to lure designers towards the stars, and some of them are bound to get it right. ☺

Game Attributes Summary

Title	# of Players	Focus	Scale	Combat ¹	Economic model	Complexity ²
<i>OUTPOST</i>	1	Trade/survival	Buildings	none	simple	8
<i>FRONTIERS</i>	2	Tac Combat	Ind Vehicle	complex	none	6
<i>COMMAND & CONQUEST</i>	1-4	Tac Combat/Conquest	Ind Vehicle	Simple Real time	very simple	5
<i>STAR BOUCH</i>	1-2	4X (barely)	Single Ships	Arcade Real Time	simple	4
<i>X-COM 1&2</i>	1	Tac Combat/Strategic Management	Squad	Complex	simple	5
<i>BI 2200</i>	1-4	Tac Combat/Conquest	Ind Vehicle	Complex	None	6
<i>QUALIFIRE</i>	1-4	Trade	One Ship	none	good	4
<i>POWERHOUSE</i>	1-4	Corporate domination	facilities	sabotage	complex	7
<i>BREACH 3</i>	1-2	Tac Combat	squad	Complex Real time	none	7
<i>ASCENDANCE</i>	1	4X	Ind ships	simple	good	8
<i>MULTIWAR</i>	1	Marijuana of Cultures	Ind Ships	Arcade Real Time	implied	7

1) simple is point-and-shoot, complex includes suppression fire, morale, etc.

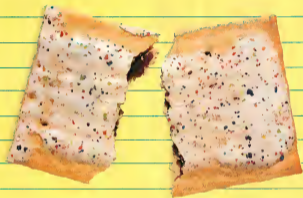
2) This rating is set at *Snakes 'n Ladders* having a complexity of 1 and something that requires a phone book-sized tutorial as 10

REPORT CARD

Title	User Friendliness	Replay Value	A.I.	Graphics	Premise / Execution	Overall
<i>OUTPOST</i>	D	C+	A	B	A/F	C-
<i>FRONTIERS</i>	B	C-	C	B	C+/D	C
<i>COMMAND & CONQUEST</i>	B	B	B+	B+	C/A+	A-
<i>X-Com 1</i>	B+	C	A	C	A/A+	A
<i>X-Com 2</i>	C	C	A	C+	C+/A	B+
<i>BI 2200</i>	C-	C-	A	C+	D/C+	C
<i>QUALIFIRE</i>	B	C	C+	B	B+/C-	C
<i>POWERHOUSE</i>	B	D	C-	B	C+/A	C-
<i>BREACH 3</i>	C-	B	A	C	B/C-	C-
<i>ASCENDANCE</i>	D	A	A	B	B/C	C+
<i>MULTIWAR</i>	C	D	C	C+	A+/C	C+

Confessions

OF A GAME ADDICT:



Day 1: I was driving down the freeway eating a chili dog, shifting into fifth, balancing a copy of WIRED® on my lap, when the cellular rang. It was Bob from Sierra. He wanted to know if I could write reviews for a bunch of new CD games they had coming out.

I had 40 days, 25 games, and a closet full of sunflower seeds, instant coffee and Pop Tarts®.

HOW COULD I SAY NO?

Day 5: I'm not sure Chapter 6 of Phantasmagoria

GABRIEL KNIGHT: THE BEAST WITHIN™



The top two computer gaming magazines both named the first *Gabriel Knight* mystery the best adventure game of the year in 1994. Creator Jane Jensen might want to start dusting off her awards shelf again, as *The Beast Within* mixes a strange, new brew of mutilation murders, a centuries-old curse, and criminal misdeeds on multiple CDs.

Gabriel Knight, a detective of the supernatural, is summoned to Munich to investigate a series of murders blamed on werewolves. The edge-of-your-seat tale unfolds to implicate the mad King Ludwig II, a lost Wagner opera, and Gabriel's own dark past.

Shrewd thinking and paying attention to details are rewarded as players unravel clues while taking on the role of Gabriel and his partner, Grace Nakimura. Shot on location in Germany and the U.S. with more than 40 surprisingly talented actors, *The Beast Within* is possibly the most visually stunning, realistic adventure game to come out on CD this year. Even the photo on the box is enough to induce a minor heart palpitation.



INTERACTIVE CINEMA The rich, realistic movie-like look of *The Beast Within* came from shooting more than 1,000 backgrounds here and in Germany



PHANTASMA HORROR



Unless you've spent the last couple of years spelunking in Zanzibar, you've already heard of *Phantasmagoria*. Now it's finally here with all the

elements of a big hit: a master story teller in the person of Kings Quest® creator Robert Williams, feature-film quality footage, and a story so rich and elaborate it took record-setting seven CDs to contain it all.

The tale of Doe and Adrienne's bizarre discoveries about their newly-acquired mansion is told in realistic live video. No, you don't watch a movie and then click on a plot option. You run this show.

But the thrill of *Phantasmagoria* isn't simply the technology, it's also the story. As Adrienne explores her new home, its dusty secrets begin to reveal themselves. The original owner, an illusionist, died in the house after the suspicious disappearances of his



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what's more frightening:
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SMAGORIA™ ON 7 CDs

many wives. An evil force still inhabits the maze of rooms, and its effect on Don is disturbing, terrifying, and deadly.

With perseverance and wit, you can discover the clues that save Adrienne from Don, and Don from himself. This is truly the kind of game you'll find yourself staying up all night to play. And, with its decidedly macabre storyline, the middle of the night may be *Phantasmagoria's* finest hour.



HORROR ON 7 CDs Players control every movement of Adrienne... and this game doesn't "show" you anything. You have to find it.

WIN '95 WIN DOS MAC



DARYL F. GATES POLICE QUEST®: SWAT™



When he headed the L.A.P.D., Chief Daryl F. Gates founded SWAT, the first Special Weapons And Tactics team. Now these highly trained forces are the elite of law enforcement, while Gates' *Police Quest: SWAT* stands as the elite in tactical simulation games.

In this, the fifth installment of the successful *PQ* series, you join a SWAT team, take intensive training, and learn to handle advanced class 3 weaponry, like an MP5, Benelli tactical shotgun, M16 and LASH rifle. After a few hours on the shooting range comes the "fun" part. That is, if you consider getting nearly blown away in a real-life crisis fun. Work with your team, make the right split-second decisions, fire accurately and you could advance through the ranks to become an Element Leader. Mess up, and it could cost you your on-screen life.

The video action was shot using actual SWAT officers at their training facilities and in the streets of L.A. to lend an unmistakable air of realism. At least some of the country's major police departments think so—they now use *Police Quest* to train their officers.



DEAD-ON AUTHENTICITY *Police Quest: SWAT* doesn't let around blow a detritus, fail to communicate or suddenly your weapons and you're best

WIN '95 WIN DOS MAC



Day 24: My family keeps bugging

I told them, "can't

TORIN'S PASSAGE™



Leave it to Al Lowe—creator of some of the most entertaining and enduring computer games—to unleash *Torin's Passage* on the world.

In coming up with this remarkable new game, he has delivered to our CD drives an adventure game with as much intrigue and brain-twisting challenge as any hard-core gamer has ever tackled AND a funny, musically-rich, visual treat that takes gaming to a new level.

Torin's Passage is the story of a young man's encounters in the nested worlds beneath the surface of the planet, Strata. Those bizarre lands, replete with flowing hot lava, unworldly creatures, and a host of other cunning obstacles, must be traversed if Torin is to reach his goal.

Making matters worse (for Torin, more exciting for you) is a formidable line-up of

brain-teasing puzzles at the end of each chapter—all of them, double black diamond challenges.

There is one word to describe the artistry in *Torin's*: "whoa!" Multi-plane scrolling, spectacular backgrounds, and hand-drawn cel animation add a depth and realism you've never seen in a game before. The sheer talent and imagination of the artists is, by itself, worth the price of admission.

But your eyes aren't the only things that get to dip into the candy box. *Torin's* also features an original digital music score composed by three-time Oscar® winner, Michel Legrand.

There's a pop-up TelePrompTer™ that lets you replay dialogue to listen for crucial clues, plus a 3-D interface with on-line hints for the less-experienced players. There was, however, one hint missing: How do you avoid work, eating, chores and sleep so you can play *Torin's Passage* endlessly?



THE WONDER DOWN UNDER The subterranean world of *Torin's Passage* provides the setting for a challenging quest with brain-teasing puzzles and humor.

WIN '95 WIN DOS MAC



SIERRA® BUY TWO SIERRA GAMES AND GET A THIRD FREE.

me to let them play Torin's Passage.

you see
orking?"

SHIVERS™



It's amazing to think that the same computer used to balance the family checkbook can produce an even bigger scare. What's required is the addition of a terror-filled, nail-biting, spine-tlingling CD like *Shivers*.

In this new game aimed at teens and adults, players must rely on their wits and raw nerve to survive a nightmarish trip through a surreal, abandoned museum. The goal is to vanquish the ghosts and phantoms that haunt the museum before they steal your life's essence.

Along the way, a series of beads-of-sweat-producing puzzles await, along with chilling moments of live-action video that delivers twists and turns in the plot.

Shivers sets a haunting stage through an eerie original music score and "as seen through your own eyes" graphics. The first-person views are handsomely rendered, you might even say "mystical." But the real draw remains the story.

It tantalizes, draws you in, and-fittingly-gives you the shivers. This is definitely one game that will keep you glued to your seat. Or, at least, the very edge of it.



NOT BOME, NOT ALONE Players have to spend the night on guard in search of the evil spirits that have a sinister, diabolical mission.



HOYLE® CLASSIC GAMES



"According to Hoyle"™ means "by the rules; done the right way." This remarkably sophisticated collection of 10 favorite games lives up to its name, giving families great variety, totally accurate play action, and an interesting twist on the old idea of playing against the computer.

Sit down at the *Hoyle*® Classic Games poker table, for instance, and you play against a rogue's gallery of computerized competitors. Take on a crusty, old prospector, an over-the-hill movie star, or a number of other players, each sporting an accent and an attitude.

The more you play, the more sides you'll see to their weird, witty personalities. Add in their different card-playing styles, and you end up with a much more fun (and realistic) way to challenge the microchips to a game.

Along with five card draw, you can also play bridge, solitaire, old maid, hearts, crazy 8's, gin rummy, checkers, backgammon, and hearts. With its cast of characters and jam-packed variety, you'll definitely want to ante up for this card game.



TEN GAMES IN ONE! Hoyle® Classic Games give you ten card and board games and 10 award-winning competitors to rate it. The "Hoyle" trademark is available in our Java Pages & Rights. An



Day 29: Today I defeated a horde of [unclear] commanded a U-boat and [unclear]

TROPHY BASS™



Surely you've seen them. Those guys on cable TV, sitting in a boat, reeling in a big one, saying stuff to each other like, "Oh, he's got a lot of fight in him there, Jim."

At last count, there were 50 million people in this country like Jim who love to feel the tug on a rod. And now they've got their own

computer game: *Trophy Bass*.

There are three sides to *Trophy Bass*. You can choose tackle, pick your bait, read the water, set the weather conditions, and then finesse your casting technique on one of five virtual lakes. Option two is to play in Tournament Mode and try your luck against conditions and competitors dished out by the computer.

Or you can get even more serious and watch the full motion video "how-to" section and pick up more than 100 nuggets of solid advice from America's top tournament bass fishermen.

Now, obviously, the Jims of the world are going to love this game, because playing can bring you more success out on the water. But, surprisingly, you don't have to know what a lunker bucketmouth is to get a charge out of *Trophy Bass*. As Jim would say, "It's a keeper."



CAST OF THOUSANDS The sport-captain franchise and detailed how-to advice are carried Trophy Bass the endorsement of B.A.S.S., America's largest fishing organization

WIN'95 WIN



CAESAR™ II



A city simulation? Hmm, haven't I seen something like this before? Yes and no. Yes, you've seen amazingly-detailed 3D renderings before. And, yes, you've played sims that put you in the municipal driver's seat.

But, no, you've never played anything quite like *Caesar II*. For starters, if you do a good job quelling riots, dowsing fires, recruiting soldiers and building great cities, you earn approval ratings that grant you the right to take on another province.

Then it really heats up. Along with wearing your city planner hat, you get to don the general's helmet and fight off hordes of barbarians in battle sequences (check out the Carthaginians on armored elephants). With each additional province you control, the closer you get to the best hat of all: the emperor's snappy laurel wreath.

By combining great graphics, intricate strategizing and battle action, *Caesar II* isn't merely simulation. It's simulation for those who banker for action and power.



BUILT IN A DAY? The historical accuracy and detail in *Caesar II*'s cityscapes are astounding, while battle sequences—a treat for six years-old another hour of challenge and fun

WIN'95 DOS



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fished for bass,
barbarians, won the playoffs,
ate six Cup Noodles.

COMMAND: ACES OF THE DEEP®



Now hear this. All personnel who want to see how the Simulation Game of the Year has been improved, report to your software dealer. **COMMAND: Aces of the Deep**, with its incredible realism and historical accuracy, has taken a giant leap forward with the addition of phenomenal texture-mapped graphics and voice activation.

With Windows® 95 and IBM VoiceType®, you bark commands at your U-boat crew and watch them respond to your orders to dive, surface, fire torpedoes, and more. While you don't need the voice command option to play the game, it adds yet another dimension to the realism.

Your strategic skills get a sweat-producing workout in the cat-and-mouse pursuit sequences, while a new two-mode deck gun lets you play a more arcade-style game. Here, you get to do to other ships what **COMMAND** has done to other simulation games: Blow them out of the water.



DIVE! DIVE! Blast out the orders, and your crew reacts on the double in the first race-to-the-surf CD-ROM simulation game ever.

WIN95
NATIVE

IBM VoiceType is a registered trademark of IBM Corporation.

FRONT PAGE SPORTS®: FOOTBALL PRO '96™



When *Football Pro '95* was hailed as "the best football game on the planet," you'd think Sierra would send in the third string and retire to the locker room for a tall, frosty one. But, no. They put the pads back on, threw out the old playbook, and came back with *Football Pro '96*.

It keeps all the things that earned its forefathers the Best Sports Simulation award three years running: **Slam** attention to real NFL player and team stats, a play book with over 10,000 combinations of X's and O's, and league play over CompuServe.

Ah, but that's the old stuff. For 1996, you can suit up as a player for an arcade game or appoint yourself coach for the football sim. What's more, 3D animations were created using films of actual players shot from dozens of angles simultaneously, so tailbacks juke, wide receivers sprint, and linemen grunt just like their real-life counterparts. The awesome realism of this new version is sure to earn some accolades. "Best football game in the solar system?" Could be.



THIS IS NOT TV The "motion capture" based 3D animation will have you think you've hopped in to the NFL game of the week. But this is better. No commercials.

WIN95
DOS



Day 27: It took 3
but I finally reached Level
Not even

3-D ULTRA PINBALL™



The pinball wizards at Sierra have just come up with a better idea on how to stick five vertical feet of pinball machine onto seven inches of computer screen. While most other pinball games show you the table as if it were shot pointing straight up, Sierra's *3-D Ultra Pinball* slants the table so you can see the whole thing easily without scrolling. This bit of cleverness was then totally exploited with the most amazing space-age graphics to appear this side of Alpha Centauri.

Another innovation: *3-D Ultra Pinball* uses advanced physics formulas to give you an uncannily accurate feel of a real table. Thanks to genius programming from some people who weren't sleeping during Physics class, flipper responsiveness, table bumping, ball rolling and ricochets look and react just like an authentic tavern machine. It even tilts like classic pinball. Damn!

The game's three tables can be interconnected so you can keep going until the sun comes up. And action on all versions is super fast; an amazing feat especially for a Windows® game. If there's one downside to this addictive game, it may be that the garbage isn't going to get taken out for a while, and the dog may have to start walking himself.



FAST AND FURIOUS The full dimensional graphics of *3-D Ultra Pinball* haven't slowed things down. Action is fast, frenzied, and richly animated.



T H E



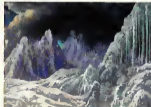
Now that the Windows® 95 frenzy is going full tilt, you may wonder, "is there a game specifically designed for this amazingly cool new operating system that takes full advantage of its multi-threading capabilities?" Or perhaps you'd like to know, "is there a game so incredibly wicked that it will actually increase my supply of testosterone?"



The answer to both questions: Yes. And you're looking at it.

The X-Files flies, runs, jumps, morphs into tank or plane, and blazes his way through five worlds, each with ten different levels of increasing hair-pulling difficulty.

Your job in all this is to help *The X-Files* work his way through mind-numbing maze while steering clear of energy fields, sheer drop offs, and other assorted game-enders. Then, in addition to robots, aliens, cyborgs and other



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solid days,
10 of Thexder.
member of the family jumped for joy.



THEXDER

enemies, *Thexder* also has to contend with burning lava, crushing ceilings, and unpredictable explosives.

Thanks to your droid-fast reflexes, and *Thexder's* ability to morph, you can struggle your way to the 500th level to face Primus Tech, the numero uno enemy. Actually, there are other enemies you can take on: the bad dudes you play against on your network or your modem.

All this battling is supercharged courtesy of Windows® 95. Along with the main horizontally-scrolling action window, there are five additional screens to keep you filled in on your position, available equipment, enemies and weapons. Due to that multi-threading business,



every screen is constantly updated without slowing down the main action one hair.

Thexder—sure to be one of the season's best sellers—has arrived, pumped on Windows® 95 steroids, and ready to do some serious damage.



LIKE A MALL MOVIE THEATRE The five screens of *Thexder* show not loads of info and a ton of ambience. It's all made possible by the only game to take advantage of the multi-threading abilities of Windows® 95.



LAST DYNASTY™



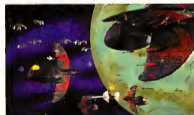
Last Dynasty isn't the best new game to come along in a while. It's more like two of the best.

Start by parking yourself in its first-person, full-view, real-time combat simulator. The completely customizable cockpit, with continuous on-line help, locks on and destroys typical space fight games. The information overload as you plan an attack, while your radar and windshield fills with enemy ships, is truly stomach-churning. Then comes an even cooler part: You can grab a momentary breath during all this chaos by switching into strategy mode, where you can map out and execute your next attack from a mega-choice of battle strategies.

Carrying the action game forward are spectacular interactive cinema clips, haunting original music, and enough mind-racking tension to have you sweating an arsenal worth of bullets.

While the action side of this equation beats most pure space arcade CDs at their own game, *Last Dynasty* shines again in the fully-rendered, high res scenes in the adventure portion of the game. This mind-puzzler takes place aboard a multi-level space station. From a first-person angle you explore, look for clues, remove a few ruthless strangers, and keep your nerve endings on alert-mode in wait for a surprise attack.

Consider *Last Dynasty* as an excellent, addictive, warp speed, mysterious, challenging, over-stim' d value.



DOUBLE YOUR PLEASURE If you can't make up your mind between the action overload of a space fight, or the brain bane of an adventure game, *Last Dynasty* gives you both.





Day 39: Help! My reviews
are due tomorrow and I'm stuck
in Mary, Mary Quite Contrary's garden.
Where's my 4-year old?

THE LOST MIND OF DR. BRAIN™



You have to love something that makes your kids smarter, keeps them happily occupied for hours, and isn't TV. In this case, that something is *The Lost Mind of Dr. Brain*.

This third installment in the immensely popular *Dr. Brain* series gives kids 10 different wildly entertaining puzzles to solve—each chal-

lenging the 10 learning centers in real live kid brains. Some involve mazes, others memory games, and there's plenty of fun with words and music. Since you can set the degree of difficulty, both ten-year olds and teens can have their brains put to the test.

But here's the real truth. These puzzles are also a blast for those of us who, ahem, haven't doodled on a Pee Chee for many moons. (My favorite: sending the right colored bulls down the railroad track maze to the station.)

So don't get the idea this is some stuffy, bookish "learning aid." The puzzles are pure fun, surprisingly funny, and always a challenge. If you've got kids, buying *The Lost Mind of Dr. Brain* is clearly a no brainer.



BRAIN CENTRAL. There's an object to this game: Help restore Dr. Brain's brain which he accidentally transferred to his rodent assistant, Rabbles.

WIN '95 WIN '98



MIXED-UP MOTHER GOOSE® DELUXE



The list of the awards *Mixed-Up Mother Goose* has won from magazines, parents' groups and the software industry could fill up the rest of this page. And no wonder. Here is a game that has introduced more than 500,000 little ones to the

computer, while helping build their problem-solving and learning skills.

Sounds like a textbook? It's not. In the new deluxe version of *Mixed-Up Mother Goose* kids search through Mother Goose Land to find missing objects from classic rhymes. A successful recovery is rewarded with a song—but not like you've ever heard before. Imagine "Little Jack Horner" done in reggae and you'll get the idea.

The game can be played in English or Spanish, and there's a free bonus audio CD of the 18 songs in the game so kids can sing along after you've commandeered the computer so you can play your games.



TAKE A GANDER *Mother Goose Land* is laid out in beautiful, hand-painted graphics, with dozens of places for kids to explore.

WIN '95 WIN '98



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Day 42: Fried my computer. Entered Sierra Sweepstakes to win IBM® Aptiva "Ultimate Gamer."

We're giving away five IBM Aptiva "Ultimate Gamer" systems with Pentium® 133 Mhz processor, 16 MB RAM, 3.4 GB HF, Six Speed CD-ROM, 16-Bit Wavetable sound, 3-D graphics card, 2 stereo speakers with sub-woofer, and a 17" SVGA monitor (15.7" viewable image size). You want? Option A: Scour all 10 pages of the Sierra ad, answer the questions below, send the card back to us by February 14, 1996 and pray mightily to the game gods. Option B: Buy your own by calling IBM PC Direct at 1-800-IBM-2-YOU.



Which Sierra game comes with 7 CD-ROMs? _____

Which Sierra game takes place in an abandoned museum? _____

Which Sierra game visits subterranean worlds? _____

Which Sierra game features voice activation? _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

No purchase necessary. Offer good in USA only. Sweepstakes is open to residents of the US over 18 years of age. You may use this card or enter on a phone 3x5-inch card. All federal, state and local laws apply. Taxes, if any, are the sole responsibility of the prize winners. Decisions of the judges are final and binding. Offer void where prohibited by law. Siblings and family members of Sierra On-Line or IBM Corporation are not eligible. Odds of winning depend upon number of entries received. Only one answer per

question, one entry per household.

Entries will be randomly selected and winners notified by correspondence to identify and select winners. Winners will be selected February 15, 1996. Grand Prizes will be shipped to winners at address shown on entry form. Total approximate value of Grand Prize is \$5,000 each. Winner cannot transfer prize. Prize is not redeemable for cash. Check winner will be required to sign a release allowing Sierra to use his or her name and likeness in advertising.

Winners will be announced on Sierra forums on-line and in Spring issue of InterAction. For a list of winners, available 90 days after Sweepstakes drawing, send a stamped self-addressed envelope to: Winners List c/o Sierra On-Line, PO Box 53216, Bellevue, WA, 98015-3216.

IBM Aptiva.

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Day 48: Bought two Sierra games, got a third free*. Free game was actually not junk.

Hard to believe, but there are even more Sierra games than we could squeeze into this ad. So check them all out by going to the place where you like to buy games or call 1-800-757-7707 and order directly from Sierra. Then, when you buy any two games from the list below between November 1, 1995 and January 31, 1996, you can select one more from the other side of this card and we'll send it to you for free.

Adl's Comprehensive Learning System

Caesar II

COMMAND: Aces of the Deep

Front Page Sports: Football Pro '96

Gabriel Knight: The Beast Within

Hoyle® Classic Games

Kings Quest VII, 2.0

Last Dynasty

Lode Runner On-Line

Lost Mind of Dr. Bwin

Mixed-Up Mother Goose Deluxe

Outpost 1.5

Phantasmagoria

Police Quest: SWAT

Print Artist 3.0

Shivers

Space Quest 6

Thezder

3-D Ultra Pinball

The Incredible Machine 3.0

Toria's Passage

Trophy Bass

*

Well, OK, free plus \$5.95 for postage and handling.

Sierra Sweepstakes
 P.O. Box 485
 Coursegold, CA 93614

PLACE
 STAMP
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Please don't cut here

Please keep closed the upper

cover

Buy two Sierra games, get a third game free.*

Check the box in front of your free game from the list below and mail this card with your check or money order made out to Sierra On-Line for \$5.95 for postage and handling, dated receipts and proofs of purchase from both games (the UPC bar code from the cartons) to:

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You can also take advantage of this offer by ordering directly from Sierra at 1-800-757-7707 24 hours a day.

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Casino Deluxe | <input type="checkbox"/> Leisure Suit Larry 6 | <input type="checkbox"/> Talking Tutor: Alphabet Blocks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Castle of Dr. Brain | <input type="checkbox"/> Leisure Suit Larry Collection | <input type="checkbox"/> Talking Tutor: Beginning Reading |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Front Page Sports: Baseball '94 | <input type="checkbox"/> Lode Runner: The Legend Returns | <input type="checkbox"/> Talking Tutor: Early Math |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gabriel Knight: Sins of the Fathers | <input type="checkbox"/> MetalTech: EarthSiege | <input type="checkbox"/> Talking Tutor: Kid's Typing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hoyle's® Classic Card Games | <input type="checkbox"/> PowerHouse | <input type="checkbox"/> Talking Tutor: Spelling Blizzard |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Incredible Toon Machine | <input type="checkbox"/> Red Baron w/ Mission Builder | <input type="checkbox"/> Woodruff and the Schnibble |

SHIP MY FREE GAME TO:

Name _____
 Address _____
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Please allow 4 to 6 weeks for delivery. Offer valid in the U.S. and Canada only. Not valid with any other offer. Requests must be postmarked by February 15, 1996. This offer may be discontinued without notice. Sierra reserves the right to limit quantities. No dealers, please.

CSA003

THE BRADBURY CHRONICLES

by Shane Mooney

There are those who write science fiction and there are those who *are* science fiction. Ever since Ray Bradbury sold his first short story in 1941, he has grown to become what many feel to be the greatest science fiction writer alive today. He's seen many of his books and short stories, such as *Fahrenheit 451* and *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, turned into movies. He has even written screenplays based on other authors' books, such as *Moby Dick*. Yet, his most famous work is probably *The Martian Chronicles*, a collection of short stories chronicling man's attempts at conquering our red neighbor. With over nine million copies in print, this book has seen life not only on paper but also as a television movie, several stage productions and now, finally, as a CD-ROM adventure game (reviewed in this issue).

Like his stories, the adventure game is designed to immerse you in the Bradbury vision as you attempt to unlock the archives to the supposedly extinct Martian civilization. Along with having written the original book upon which the game was based, Bradbury has overseen the production of the game, making sure it held true to his vision as well as telling a good story. Recently, we were able to catch up with the legend and ask him his thoughts on this game, as well as the future of electronic entertainment.

An Exclusive Interview With SF Master Ray
Bradbury On Media And Meaning, Interactive
Entertainment, And His New Computer Game,
The Martian Chronicles



Computer Gaming World: You've done computer games before...

RB: Yeah, *FAHRENHEIT 451*.

CGW: Yes, and you and other science fiction writers, like Isaac Asimov and Harry Harrison, weren't particularly pleased with those early text games.

RB: Well I'm not a game player, and a lot of men are. It's a macho thing, isn't it? I don't know many women who play these things.

CGW: So, you don't play a lot of computer games?

RB: No I never have. I didn't even play that many pinball games when they were popular.

CGW: You've worked with such different media, even *The Martian Chronicles* has seen life as a book, a movie and several plays. What is it like to see your vision come to life as a computer game?

RB: Well it's great fun, just as it is to see something put on the screen or on television. I think a lot of times, my things adapt better to radio where you can hear them and visualize in your mind what you're listening to. When you do the actual thing, it doesn't work out quite as well as it should. Like *The Illustrated Man*, with Rod Steiger was a complete failure.



CGW: Why?

Well, they didn't read the stories, the director didn't have a good screenplay, and they never showed me the screenplay. But in the case of the CD-ROM of *THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES*, it has a very handsome, very beautiful look. Very imaginative. They've actually read the book, done some research, talked to me, even came out to the coast about a year ago to show me some of the visual things and the architecture and what have you. And it looks awfully good.

CGW: Makes you almost willing to try different media.

RB: I do it all the time. I just closed seven of my one act plays. Beautiful production with a wonderful cast. Working the small theater is absolute perfection, because you can get everything you want. Now, luckily, I'm in a position this year to do a screenplay of *Fahrenheit 451* for Mel Gibson. This time through, I think we have a chance of making a better film than the first one done over 30 years ago.

CGW: Speaking of *Fahrenheit 451*, there's a scene in the Truffaut film where the protagonist's wife is watching a soap opera and the actors stop what they're doing and turn and face her, because

"I hope that the CD-ROMs that I have something to do with have a little something to say without being tons of intellectual garbage."

it's her day to decide what was going to happen. Nowadays, that technology is available. What do you think about the possibilities of interactive television?

RB: It's absolutely possible. It's just a matter of someone doing it. It's like everything else going on in film. When I made *Fahrenheit 30* years ago, there was a lot of technical stuff that couldn't be done. Today, with all the new techniques, all the new computerized and digitized techniques, you can get

incredible virtual reality effects. But the problem is that it's brainless. So, what you've got to do is put together the technical people who can do fabulous stunts and a concept to go with it. A good film which embodies this is *Close Encounters Of The Third Kind*. It's not only technically brilliant, but it's philosophically exciting too. The idea of two halves of the universe joining is very much like Michelangelo's ceiling of God and Adam. So, you've got an idea worth talking about philosophically and religiously, and you have the ability to produce astonishing miracles on the screen worth looking at. But so many films are like Schwarzenegger's science fiction miracles—the reanimated corpses where every time you blow apart an individual the parts go back together. Well, that's all very interesting, but it's meaningless.

CGW: I take it you didn't enjoy *Terminator 2*?

RB: Oh, I enjoyed it, but it's mindless. I can enjoy the effects, but I'd like an idea to go with it. I spoke to a bunch of virtual realists here in L.A., and I looked at all their effects before I got up to speak and I said: "You people are brilliant and you have all the fireworks here, but when the fireworks have ended and



"...so many films are like Schwarzenegger's

science fiction miracles—the reanimated

corpses where every time you blow apart an

individual the parts go back together. Well,

that's all interesting, but it's meaningless."



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THE LOGIC FACTORY

the smoke clears, the sky is empty. Or to use another metaphor, you are cooking up a Chinese dinner, but an hour later, we're hungry." You have to combine this technical brilliance with concepts. Bring in some writers, some creative people who have a metaphor worth illustrating. The Schwarzenegger films don't have a metaphor, it's a disconnected metaphor. You come out stunned by what you've seen, but you haven't been fed. There's no use having CD-ROMs or any virtual reality concepts unless there's something worth telling. And I'd like to believe that *THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES* is not only an adventure game but locked inside there are kernels of philosophical thinking. Maybe nothing big, but something worth talking about.

CGW: *Do you think that this is the beginning of a new entertainment form, worth pursuing or do you think that it will be an extremely imperfect form such as that portrayed in Fahrenheit 451?*

RB: Well, it's going to be mindless with most of the stuff being put out, so I've got to protect my part of the game. Like I've got another group in France who wants to buy a new mythological Arabian Nights fairy tale from me. It's about flight and time and dreaming and doing. And the theme of my story is that thousands of people dreamt of flying over a period of ten thousand years, but very few did anything about it. The point of my story being that there were the dreamers and then, a few doers. And it was the doers who changed the world. I hope these French CD-RDM people will buy my fantasy, because it's an examination of flight over a 10,000 year period, with all the dreams of flying and all the shapes in the air and all the machines that lived inside people's minds. It's visually full of wonderful metaphors. So, visually it'd be an astonishing CD-ROM



"Whenever I do a CD-ROM,

I hope that it will not just be fireworks,

but when the smoke blows away,

the image remains in the clouds

and in your minds and you

act upon that image."

to look at, plus it'd make the philosophical point of "Don't talk about being an actor. Act! Don't talk about writing, write. Don't talk about living, live." These are things worth saying. Whenever I do a CD-ROM, I hope that it will not just be fireworks, but when the smoke blows away, the image remains in the clouds and in your minds and you act upon that image.

CGW: *So, do you feel that interactive entertainment is conceptually different than traditional storytelling?*

RB: It depends on how you define traditional storytelling. There's a lot of realistic storytelling that's boring to me. I'm a romantic sap, I suppose. My stories are so vivid, they're not linear. They're pure metaphor. They're balloons that fly. There are advantages in every form. If I were teaching school, I would use everything. Start them with books, making sure they know how to

read. Then, you could have them play with the computers. Then, you could play with the CD-ROMS, use audio cassettes, video cassettes and the stage. I love them all and I use them all. As long as people don't fall into more *DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS* or one more excursion into the *Star Wars* films. As brilliant as they are, they really don't say much. I prefer to do films where a point is made without being heavy-handed. I hope that the CD-ROMs that I have something to do with have a little something to say without being ten tons of intellectual garbage.

CGW: *You mentioned that you don't use computers. Why does there seem to be a near-Luddite streak in many masters of speculative fiction?*

RB: Well, I don't use computers because I out-type anyone on my IBM Selectric. All you need is a machine to type on. I don't make that many changes; I've been writing for 60 years. So, let these other people who make mistakes use computers. It's what works for you. Arthur Clarke is simply a lunatic about computers. He's got every four dozen of them. He's got every new one that comes out. He likes them, they work for him. He's more of a technician and a scientist than I am. He does research and you make more corrections when you're doing research. I don't do that, I just write short stories.

CGW: *What other works of yours would you like to see come out on computer?*

RB: Oh, gosh. I think it'd be fun to do *The Illustrated Man*, because you have a lot of metaphors to work with there. Various stories from *Golden Apples Of The Sun*, including "A Sound Of Thunder." That'd be fun to play with. There are a lot of my things that would adapt beautifully, but I just wait for people to show up and ask me. ☺

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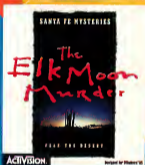


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Kombat 3, going into the game with a set strategy and an understanding of the best ways to approach the obstacles the computer will drop in your way can make all the difference between digital defeat and virtual victory.

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The Clash Of Clans

Battle-Tested Combat Strategies For MECHWARRIOR II

by Paul C. Schuytema

CONFLICT IS, BY ITS VERY NATURE, A CONTEST OF WILLS. But combat is all the more potent, all the more *Avian* when it is also a contest of honor. We, as Clans, bear the onerous weight of tradition upon our shoulders. Even now, as we seek to test each other in the contest of war, our greatest warriors, of both Clan Jade Falcon and Clan Wolf, strive to uphold our honorable past.

This war is costing us both dearly, and each passing day sees us relying more heavily upon the untested in our ranks. We may be asking them to honor the name of Kerensky too soon. This is our legacy—we cannot deny that—but we must give them all that we can, teach them all that we know of our honor and our vision so that combat will continue to reach beyond just rapid reactions and jump jets and into the hearts and minds of our warriors.

It is for this end, honored Keshik, that we present to you this document. It offers the combat observations and suggestions pertaining to both Clan Jade Falcon and Clan Wolf. It is our hope that young warriors on both sides of the struggle can use this information to learn about their own challenges, as well as those of their combat brethren. And since we offer observations from both sides of this conflict, it is our hope that our young clan members can learn from us that it is not an immediate tactical advantage that is paramount, but something deeper. If war we must, then let us ensure that this war be honorable.

—Star Colonel Walter Kerensky

CLAN WOLF MISSIONS

MISSION: PYRE LIGHT

Planet: Colmar

Terrain: Rolling hills

Primary goals: Destroy the Jade Falcon chemical plant, and inspect partially destroyed firebase.

Recommended Mech: Mad Dog—primary configuration

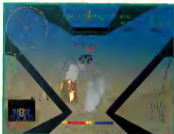
Colmar is a planet of dust, haze and large dunes, but the visibility is usually clear. Immediately after touchdown, remember to perform your battle configurations: set up your weapons, lock onto the first nav point (by tapping N), and get your Mech moving.

In this mission, like many others, you will encounter several Mechs at a distance. Long-range missiles (LRMs) are your best offensive choice. Cycle through your active weapons to select an LRM bank. When Mechs first appear on your radar, target the closest one (tap the E key). With LRMs, you want to hold the reticule near the target box until you have a lock (this can occur even through a hill or other obstruction). Once the reticule turns red, be prepared to fire, but wait until you have a clear view of the Mech (distance doesn't really matter). Just because you have a lock doesn't always mean a clean hit over a hill.

In Pyre Light, you'll probably catch your first view of a Jenner as it jumps over a hill toward you. Once in clear view, let your missiles fly. You should

be able to scrap the Mech in one shot without risking a scratch.

The second Mech will be a Firemoth. They're fast, so be prepared to



LIFT OFF! A slightly damaged Jade Falcon Nov goes airborne, but your missiles are ready! Time for a little plasma burst.

immediately target him. Use your LRMs if you can gain enough distance to get a clean lock and a clean shot. Chances are, if you fired when frantic, you'll only have damaged the Mech. That's the time to go in with energy weapons blazing, trying to take out the already damaged components. Remember, you can never do wrong by shooting for a Mech's legs.

With the two Mechs dispatched, it's time to lock on the nav point again and head for the chemical plant. All the structures need to be destroyed to count as a successful kill. Simply get a structure in your sight and tap Q to lock on. All you need are energy weapons to take out the structures.

Once you fireball the chem plant, switch to your next nav point and head for the firebase. Along the way, you'll encounter a sentry Firemoth.

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With evasive maneuvers, you can avoid him, but in the name of Clan Wolf honor, it is your duty to confront the Mech. You should have plenty of LRMs left. Target early, wait for a lock and a clear shot and you won't have any problems.

The best tactical approach to the firebase is directly over the last hill. Lock your LRMs onto the sentry Nova Mech and creep forward until you get a clear shot. If you've been conserving your missiles wisely, you should have three or four strikes left. Keep to the perimeter and attempt to finish the Mech off.

If you can't, then move in close, near the wreckage of the firebase. Keeping close to the buildings will lessen the Nova's jump jet advantage. Shoot for the arms first, but watch out for the missiles.

Once you destroy the Nova, target the main firebase structure and initiate an inspection procedure (tap the I key). Once inspection is complete, return to the dustoff point.

MISSION: FLAME TONGUE

Planet: Sudetan

Terrain: Prairie

Primary goals: Destroy pumping facility and hardened headquarters.

Recommended Mechs: Nova—pri-

star barely gives enough light for the scrub brush to cling to life in the dusty soil. Light amplification immediately upon landing (tap the L key).

Your first nav point will take you to a deep-well pumping facility. At approximately 500 meters, you'll encounter the first Jade Falcon powerups: a Mad Dog, Kitfox and Firemoth, all patrolling the perimeter of the facility. These are MechWarriors in training, and a target lock or any offensive action on your part will send them fleeing to your left.

If you can get off some clear shots, do as much damage as possible, but don't waste too much time—remember, your primary goal is the pumping facility. To disable the facility, you will have to target and destroy each of the component buildings and storage tanks. Don't waste your missiles here—use medium lasers to strafe the structures, since there are no immediate threats.

Once you receive confirmation that the pumping facility has been taken off line, select the next nav point to make your way to the Jade Falcon's training headquarters facility. This structure has several buildings which connect to a central, hardened HQ. That central structure is your target.

As you approach, you'll pick up a Falcon Stormcrow. This is not a trainer, but an experienced pilot, most likely a combat instructor due to his sophisticated open field maneuverings. The HQ is protected by four laser turrets. Do not let the Stormcrow lead you into their fire. If possible, take out one or two turrets from a distance (LRMs or medium lasers should work), and then confine your battle with the Stormcrow to that dead-zone.

A Stormcrow can be a tough target, but its primary weakness is the cockpit area in the center of its torso. If you are using the recommended Nova, go toe-to-toe with the Stormcrow and fire several grouped medi-



um laser bursts into the cockpit, then use your jump jets to escape. One or two of these maneuvers should take out the Mech with minimal damage to you.

Once you dispatch the Stormcrow, turn your attention to the HQ. Stay in the dead-zone you created when you took out the two turrets. The remaining turrets will still try to hit you, but will damage their own HQ instead as they attempt to fire through the structure. Remember, you only need to destroy the hardened HQ building in the center to complete your primary objective.

Tune your nav computer to your dustoff point and work your way back to the drop ship. Just as you pass the final hill with the drop ship in the distance, you'll discover a Jade Falcon field loading station. The trainers who escaped before will be here, either in Attack mode or powered down. If a Mech is powered down, shoot out one of its legs before taking on the other Mechs. You can make a run to the drop ship, but these Mechs are easy targets, and if you're not too damaged, earn some additional honor by taking them down.

MISSION: BLADE SPLINT

Planet: Zoetermeer

Terrain: Sparse urban

Primary goals: Inspect Falcon power converter to conform conversion to cryo-plasma. If conversion is confirmed, destroy converter.

Recommended Mechs: (2) Timber



mary configuration.

While this mission is a daylight strike, Sudetan isn't a planet known for its bright vistas. An old G-class

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Wolf—primary configuration.

This is mostly likely the first mission that you'll attempt with an additional Mech. You will need to go to the Star Configuration screen to Add Starmate.

Once you land on Zoetermeer, you'll discover that dusk will quickly turn to night. Switch on your light amplification and prepare for a tough battle—this city is fully occupied by Chan Falcon, and they won't take too kindly to your little visit.

First off, you must remember your primary objective—get to that power converter. To do this most effectively, ignore your nav computer and turn to a heading of 40 degrees. You'll plod through about a klick of arid tundra, but soon you'll see the city center up ahead. Three Kitfoxes will appear off to your left, but don't worry about them—they were waiting for you to take the expected route (their intelligence might have been dead-on, but they can't predict your own initiative).

Soon you'll see a flaming building. You're getting close—move onto the road and you'll discover that you're actually heading for nav Beta. Soon, your radar will blip red: a helicopter, Stormcrow and Jenner are all in the vicinity. Ignore the chopper, and take out at least one of the Mechs (remember to use your LRMs if you can). After taking out one Mech, lock onto the other and commend your starmate (tap the B key to initiate communications) to "Attack My Target." Now you're free to find the power converter.

Once you reach nav Beta, the converter is off to your left, at about 120 degrees. Lock onto the converter and inspect it first (tap the I key to initiate automatic inspection). Once you've confirmed its conversion into a mili-

tary grade cryoplasma station, destroy. It's not a heavily armored structure—machine guns work very well.

Once your primary goals are complete, select your dustoff point, nav Delta, and make your move. Don't forget to radio your starmate to "Join Formation." The dustoff point is over 2.5 klicks away, so it's a long haul through enemy territory.

You'll pass the Kitfoxes again, but don't engage unless absolutely necessary. You'll soon stumble into a wasp's nest of four Summoners. Even



if you're at maximum tonnage, you'll still be out-gunned by 130 tons. Radio your starmate to "Attack At Will." This encounter will be at the edge of the city, but you might want to sprint for some cover to increase your tactical advantage.

Use long-range attacks first if possible, but do not waste ammunition until you have a target lock. Remember to use your turret, especially when sprinting between the cover of two buildings. When you are firing in chain mode, a quick snap of the trigger will fire once and bring you to the next weapon in line. Holding your trigger will repeatedly fire a single weapon. When attacking the Summoners, try to get behind them and target their arms, holding down the trigger on your medium laser until you blast that arm off. Summoners

with no arms are still a threat, but far less so.

Once you eliminate the Falcon Summoners, radio your starmate to join formation and head for the dustoff point. Hopefully you'll both be in one piece.

MISSION: TEMPER EDGE

Planet: Baker 9

Terrain: Snowy pass

Primary goals: Defend repair vehicle and T5 Tarantula Mech until repairs are made, then escort them to

the dustoff point at nav Sigma.

Recommended Mech: Mad Dog—primary configuration.

The T5 Tarantula is a recon Mech containing sophisticated sensing equipment. This T5 in particular has gathered important information, but has been discovered by the Falcons. It managed to limp back through Donner Rift to a blasted-out, abandoned encampment. Your task is to escort a repair vehicle to the T5 and guard

it until the repairs are complete.

Baker 9 is a cold, harsh world, pocked with ice and dark, iron-rich igneous rock formations. Fortunately, your landing site is very close to the T5. Simply follow the repair vehicle into the ruins and take up sentry position.

Almost immediately, two Kitfoxes and a Jenner will approach from the hills behind the site. Target and let loose an LRM barrage as soon as you can. Remember to keep your primary objective in mind at all times: *guard the T5 unit*. Keep your Mech between the T5 and the Falcon Mechs at all times. When you seriously damage a Mech, it will be far less apt to make a run for the T5, so try to damage all Mechs as soon as possible. Then begin to wear them down one by one.

Once you take out the first wave,

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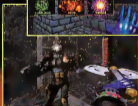
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two more Jenners will attack. Again, damage them early, but watch out, one will attempt to draw you away from the T5. Keep close, always targeting the closest Mech. The Jenners will also use the ruined structures to hide behind, forcing you to move away from the T5 to get a clear shot—don't be tempted. Hold your ground and they'll eventually give you a clean shot.

This struggle with the Jenners will probably deplete your LRM stores, so keep your medium pulse lasers ready—hold down the trigger to fire in pulses, but watch your heat buildup (override the thermal shutdown by tapping O to avoid automatic shutdown, but make sure you remember to give yourself some cooldown time).

The final raid comes in the form of three Kitfoxes, who will sprint in from the frozen tundra. Get off as many long range hits with your lasers as possible, and keep aware. Soon, you'll hear the radio call for the drop ship. Immediately after repairs are complete, the T5 will make its way to the dustoff point—don't let it wander into the Kitfoxes unprotected. Move up close, firing just enough to keep the Mechs at bay as you wait those tense 30 seconds until the drop ship appears.

CLAN JADE FALCON MISSIONS

MISSION: SILENT THUNDER

Planet: Colmar

Terrain: Rocky plains

Primary goals: Destroy the HPG Uplink at nav Alpha and destroy the Wolf communications array at nav Beta.

Recommended Mech: Mad Dog—primary configuration.

Colmar is not noted for its crystal clear days—even though this is a day-

light strike, visibility is limited, so you might want to consider Light Amplification immediately after touchdown. Your drop ship was picked up by Wolf sensors, and immediately after landing, a Wolf recon helicopter will fly in to investigate. You can take out the chopper with LRMs, but there's no real need just yet.

As you begin your assault on nav Alpha, your radar will show an approaching Kitfox just on the other side of a hill. Select your LRMs, get a full lock and wait for the Mech to ap-



pear over the ridge before you let the missiles fly. You should be able to take the Mech out with a single strike; if not, select your medium laser and move in to finish the kill.

As you move over the hill, you'll see the silhouette of the Uplink. You'll also find, if you let the chopper go earlier, that it has landed. Now an LRM strike is effortless. Another Kitfox will also approach—watch for it so that you can get an LRM lock on it before it moves close enough to become a threat. Once the sentries have been destroyed, taking out the Uplink with medium lasers is an easy affair.

Moving to nav Beta, you will discover a mining complex nestled in the low rocks. You may destroy this structure if you wish, but it will not

count as a target of opportunity when your honor is calculated by the Keshik at mission's end.

As you approach the communications array, you'll pick up a Wolf Kitfox near the structure. More important, though, are the two turrets guarding the facilities. They'll begin blasting at 400 meters, but you'll have to be a dead shot to return useful fire at that distance. Approach in a zigzag pattern to 200 meters, where your medium lasers can take out the turrets, then set your sights on the Kitfox.

Once the Wolf sentry has been dispatched, it's easy work to take out the communications array and return to the dustoff point.

MISSION:

ARKHAM BRIDGE

Planet: Sudetan

Terrain: Pasture land

Primary goals: Combat patrol; destroy all Mechs encountered in area and protect industrial plant at nav Kappa.

Recommended

Mech: Timber Wolf—alternate configuration C (Large lasers and LRMs).

The heavy purple of night still hangs in the valley as you select nav Theta. Look carefully, since this nav point is in a narrow mountain pass that is the only way to get to your other nav points.

Once you reach nav Theta, target nav Kappa immediately, even though it isn't the next point in the sequence. As you emerge from the mountains, you'll discover a blasted-out village under attack by a Wolf Kitfox and Stormcrow. This is nav Iota, but ignore it for now. You need to make your way to the industrial plant before the morning sun rises too high.

As you approach the industrial plant, two Kitfoxes will approach from the left. Damage each immedi-

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ately with your LRMs. Initiating an attack will turn their attention towards you and away from the fragile production facility. Once you destroy all four Mechs, make your way back to nav Iota to fulfill your orders.

Then, you can begin moving towards your dustoff site, but keep on the lookout (and have your LRMs selected), just in case another lone Kitfox approaches from the flank.

MISSION: MIRROR CAGE

Planet: Zoetermeer

Terrain: Low hills

Primary goals: Destroy the Wolf dropship at nav Zeta as it undergoes repairs to its fusion core.

Recommended

Mech: Rifleman
—primary configuration.

If the thought of going after a Wolf dropship with only a single Mech makes you shiver, that shows you've got some sense left.

Immediately after touchdown, check your radar. A Jenner, Kitfox and Firemoth

will all appear in the first moments of your mission as you head for the low ridge hiding the dropship.

After dispatching the first wave of Mechs, make your way to the dropship. A Stormcrow, Kitfox and Jenner are all patrolling close by, but forget about them for the moment; target the dropship and blast your jump jets. While in the air, you are a hard target for the Wolf Mechs, but you can still hit the dropship, which is "broadside of the barn" huge.

It will take quite a few blasts to destroy the dropship, so watch your heat. Once the ship blows, make your way to the dustoff point. You'll have several stars of Mechs on your tail, but if you can get your dropship's attention (by fighting close by), it will assist as best it can, firing its turrets at

the Mechs surrounding you. With your primary mission complete, you can focus on destroying the other Mechs. If things are getting hairy and your Rifleman is damaged, move to the dustoff nav point to signal for pickup.

MISSION: BONE MACHINE

Planet: Baker 3

Terrain: rocky highland

Primary goals: Defend the Jade Falcon firebase from the Wolf Mech offensive.

Recommended Mechs: (2) Mad



Dog—primary configuration.

The icy firebase was once in the possession of Clan Wolf, but the Jade Falcons have made inroads into the icy northern reaches of Baker 3. The firebase has now been refitted for the Falcons. Recon reports indicate an incoming assault of Wolf Mechs, and you and your starmate must protect the base at all costs. In addition to your star, the base has four operational turrets offering defensive fire protection.

Immediately, a Hellbringer spearheads the assault from out of the icy tundra. Lock and attack with LRMs. In the beginning of the battle, it might be the most prudent to order your starmate to Attack at Will.

Just as the Hellbringer moves within laser range, two Wolf Mechs, a

Summoner and a Jenner powerup only a hundred yards out—they had been hiding in the snow and fog. Soon, a Kitfox, Firemoth, Nova and Stormcrow will join the all-out attack.

The battle will soon erupt into chaos, but you will have to keep your head clear. This battle requires tactic and cool thinking. Don't chain fire your lasers without thought, or you'll find yourself sending LRMs into the buildings of your own base. Use the buildings and always seek to keep the Wolf Mechs on the periphery of the base, allowing you to use the structures for cover. Target legs first with your medium lasers, and if you blast out one leg, turn your attention to a more threatening Mech. You might want to target the Nova or Summoner and order your starmate to attack your target if those Mechs are still about since they are the most dangerous ones in the assault wave.

You'll probably discover that your starmate, while a great help in drawing enemy fire, isn't that proficient in close combat. The lion's share of the kills will belong to you.

With a cool head, you can survive this furball and return to the center of the base for shutdown and much needed repairs.

A FINAL WORD FROM THE KESHIK

Combat skill and honor are intertwined and can never be separated, but we must always seek to educate our young warriors in the best manner possible, since they will indeed carry on our legacy once we find our beloved Terra.

Remember, in all battles, honor before bravado, missiles before lasers. May the name of Kerensky once again grace the canyons of Arcadia. End transmission... ☾

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Surround & Slaughter

Lead The NOD Brotherhood To Victory In *COMMAND AND CONQUER*

by Martin E. Cirulis

So you say you've seen the light—the way the world truly is. Not the pretty lie of a helpful UN carrying all of mankind into the light, but the stifling reality underneath, where a mindless bureaucracy maintains the status quo and keeps the have-nots in their place. You say you want to change the world into a place where the smart and strong reign supreme, regardless of nationality. You want a world where there is one plan for humanity and a single man of power to lead us all.

Good.

But to believe the words of Kane is not enough to fight for the Brotherhood of Nod. You must be wise in the ways of battle. You must know your enemy, the Western Enforcers known euphemistically as the Global Defense Initiative; but more importantly, you must know yourself. Knowledge is the ultimate power of The Sha'Veer. Use what we give you and remember, the reality of Failure is Death.

GENERAL TACTICS

While the bloated capitalistic powers can afford to waste billions in huge and unwieldy weapons and the infrastructure to support them, we are not so dubiously blessed. Our weapons are those of the peo-



CANNON-FOODER Scout ahead with expendable troops in Angola to increase your visibility sphere and find the correct path for your commands.

ple. Anything that can be bought from the Black Market is another dagger at the throat of the privileged. And so we have speed and numbers, while the GDI has pomp and expensive toys. Our job is not to engage in ridiculous arranged battles for the television, but to strike hard and fast from a dozen directions and then melt back into the blowing sands.

Understanding this means understanding that NOD vehicles almost never can go head-to-head against their GDI counterparts in single-vehicle confrontations. NOD vehicles should always act at least in doubles, preferably in triads, and should concentrate all their fire on

one enemy vehicle at a time. While our lazy GDI opposites have enough armor on most of their units to let local commanders allocate much of their fire themselves, the Brotherhood commander must excel at micro-management of his forces and never take his eyes off the remote display.

INTELLIGENCE REPORTS

Heed the above advice well, for our strength is in numbers and guerilla tactics. Should you follow Kane's advice, the objectives laid before you should be easy enough to accomplish. Of course, for those of you having trouble pursuing our cause against the GDI in certain,

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harder missions, perhaps some detailed briefings on specific objectives might be in order. Pay close attention and eat this readout after you have memorized it; Kane does not wish the others to know that

you are being favored with this information.

Angola (Mission 10): Your job here is to sanction a sadly misguided scientist, and you are given a fairly large assault force to accom-

plish this goal. Remember: all this firepower is merely meant as the protective shell for a single Commando. If he survives to the GDI Research Facility with health intact, your job will be infinitely easier. Of

TO VICTORY OR DEATH—WEAPONS BRIEFING



Turret: This is one of the rare NOD weapons with a higher hitting power than its GDI counterpart. The major thing to remember with the deployment of this defense is to arrange an overlapping kill zone. If every turret has another to support it, GDI armor will be ravaged before penetrating very far. If you keep an eye on your repair capability, and run turrets far from your base on chains of sandbags, you will buy yourself more than enough time for a hard counter-attack.



The Obelisk of Light: The shining avastar of Kane's vengeance. This is the ultimate in defensive weapons, but do not think it can survive on point by itself. Always place one or two turrets at its sides.



Sam Sites: Useless against GDI A-10 airstrikes unless employed in large numbers. If you have enough resources, calculate attack vectors of incoming aircraft and place at least three SAMs at the outermost point of contact with your base. Then, add at least two more within your base to protect important structures. If your only concern is helicopters, then employ bikes and rocket troops instead, as they are nearly as effective and far more versatile.



Flame-thrower Troops: Use them sparingly and spread them out along those areas where you expect an enemy troop assault. Without tight targeting control, these units are as dangerous to your own forces as they are to the enemy's.



Recon Bike: Pound for pound, the best NOD weapon system, if employed in "wolf packs" of at least three. They are especially effective Harvester killers, and make brilliant quick-response, anti-air platforms. Employ them precisely and pull them back to base for safety and repair whenever a multiple-enemy situation occurs.



NOD Buggy: Use the long-range machine guns of these dune buggies to lay down fire ahead of your troops, while remaining behind them. This creates a nearly complete, overlapping kill zone and will bring down those annoying GDI grenadiers before they can kill your troops. Though the units appear similar, do not be tempted to go up against a HUM-VEE in single combat; this is a very common rookie mistake and it leads to more wasted NOD material. The best offensive use of this fast unit is to attract enemy attention and then lure them into an ambush by stronger units.



Light Tank: While this is the heaviest standard armor we can fly into combat, it is still no match for GDI tanks. It should never be employed offensively without additional units, preferably cheaper rocket troops. A NOD Buggy should be deployed with a light tank group to protect them against their deadly Achilles heel: foot soldiers. Light Tanks are best at taking down GDI Rocket Towers; a triad of light armor can usually destroy a tower before any tank is lost.



Mobile Artillery: Though these units are described as mobile, do not count on any maneuvering to save them. They must be employed as nearly static siege or defense engines. Against enemy bases, make sure that the square the artillery unit is planning to fire from is safe from enemy fire. Place a more expendable unit there first to see if that square is vulnerable to enemy fire.



Flame Tank: This lightly armored napalm thrower is the ultimate in anti-personnel and building-demolition work. The Flame Tank can devastate large waves of attacking troops and is also excellent in protecting artillery from grenadiers during siege operations. Unfortunately, they are even less discriminating than flamer troops, and should be positioned well ahead of friendlies.



Stealth Tank: The highest technology our scientists have yet produced, and more advanced than anything the west has made with all their pompous universities. The Stealth Tank is the ultimate recon vehicle and, if used properly in a triad, can gut any enemy base from within. While invisibility is a powerful defense, it has yet to be perfected. Large concentrations of enemy units will detect you despite being cloaked. Should you be discovered, destruction will soon follow. If possible, try to get a light tank to knock a hole in a wall on some lightly-defended side of a GDI base, and then send in a triad of cloaked tanks. A mass attack on a heavy weapons bay or refinery can be successfully accomplished this way.

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course, knowing where the base is will help quite a bit, as well.

Initially, arrange your units into a standard defensive firebase and use



PLAN B If your Commando fails to assassinate the professor in Angola, then use artillery to punch through the enemy base and take him out with a tank.

your Commando very carefully to scout a region around your LZ, picking off ground troops and running back into the firebase formation before he can fall prey to GDI vehicles. After repelling initial GDI probes and inflicting heavy losses on their field personnel (while losing nothing of your own), take your Commando and your foot soldiers north, cleaning out enemy infantry as you go.

At the upper part of the map, you will find a village, and your path should veer east. Use the Commando to destroy the GDI grenadiers before they can get around the ridge, and then position your rocketeers to destroy the medium tank that will attack as you turn due east. After sniping away at the GDI rocketeers hidden in the rocks along your eastern path, stop at the first junction that turns south and summon forth your vehicles to join your surviving troops. Position your buggies to guard against any assault from further east and prepare to assault due south. Be very careful here, as the GDI main base is nearby, beside the native village, and guard towers will terminate your Commando instantly, should he leave the protection of the village. Spot and snipe away at any

GDI troops hiding in the village, and just as you near the edge of the tiberium patch just south of town, a NOD transport chopper will arrive to fly your boy and any troopers still with him to the Doctor's island, which will now be illuminated with a smoke flare. Once there, unload quick-

ly before the guards can blow up your chopper. Once positioned, kill them first or, if you see a little gray figure waving his arms, snipe him immediately and your job is done.

If your Commando should die before fulfilling Kane's will, do not despair. You will just have to achieve the same result in a less elegant way. Punch a tank and artillery piece down through the tiberium field until you reach the western corner formed by the rivers; from here it's a simple matter to terminate the running target with large-bore weapons. While this is being done, remember that all other units

are expendable and that they only exist to stop GDI units from interfering with your execution team. Set them up to cover your back and west flank with over-lapping fire; the Flame tanks will serve you best here, as long as you do not venture in range of the base's towers.

Namibia (One of two possible Mission 11s): Here, the most important thing to keep in mind is that your southern force of artillery must survive. Set up along the river shore at the west side of the map, in view of the abandoned GDI base and its light defenses. Your northern forces are your engineers and guard troops, and they must get into the old base intact. To make sure they survive until the time they are needed, use the Commando to eliminate GDI Grenadiers just south of your position at the bridge, and lure the tanks into the waiting arms of your rocketeers. As soon as the bridge is clear, leave one mini-gunner behind to spot aircraft. Disperse your units on the southern side of the bridge, to make them less vulnerable to airstrikes while they wait for the artillery to get into position.

The south shore path of your bombardment force is littered with dangers, specifically designed to destroy the mobile artillery of the unwary. First, run your mini-gun-



MISSION IMPROBABLE In mission 12, use your NOD buggies to lure the GDI super-tanks away, while the rest of your forces press onward.



(figure 1)

THE HARD WAY.



(figure 2)

THE EASY WAY.



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ners west and engage the Grenadier waiting in ambush; you will lose most of your gunners, but if you positioned them far enough apart you should destroy all the grenadiers without losing your crucial rocketeers. The next danger to travelers is the damnable GDI gunboat, which cruises up and down the river. Although you can avoid it with precise timing, your mobile artillery is so slow that one false click can ruin your whole day—it's better to send the do-gooder to the bottom. To do so, position your rocke-

destroyed and at least two artillery units make it into position. From there, destroy the two GDI guard towers, bring your specialist around to the entrance with the Commando on point, and then proceed to use the engineers to capture the precious Tech-Center, power plant and the refinery. A clever desert rat will wait until the GDI harvester is back in the refinery unloading before sending in the Engineer to capture them both.

From this point on, it is a standard base-vs-base battle to the

where GDI will have you on the defensive right from touchdown. Your most important objective here is to divert the destructive attentions of the two super-tanks at the bridge due west of your initial position. Using your NOD Buggy, lure them north through the canyon, so your tanks and construction unit can cross the bridge unmolested. Proceed north, letting your tanks destroy GDI patrols, but do not be tempted to set up your base at the first pathetic patch of Tiberium you see. Instead, wait until the canyon wall curves back east and set up shop just east of the northern break in the ridge. This opening will act as a natural bottleneck and allow your defenses to concentrate fire, especially when your base grows. And speaking of defense, the first structures you build after the basic power plant and Hand of Nod had better be a string of turrets covered by mini-gunners, or the campaign will end badly for you. If you can survive the first few onslaughts, then victory will eventually be yours. Since victory is still some distance away, though, a second or third harvester might not be a bad idea, and an Obelisk or artillery piece is worth its weight in Tiberium.



PULVERIZE THEM As a NOD commander, you are not a disloyal ally in firepower, so always remember to concentrate fire on each enemy unit, one at a time.

teers along the very edge of the shore line, just far enough apart from each other to avoid cumulative blast damage. For some reason, neither the gunboat nor your rocketeers will engage the other automatically. The gunboat will not fire unless provoked, but if you are speedy enough to issue commands to each rocketeer in succession, you can destroy the gunboat as it passes, before it can respond.

After this, your only other problem is the group of Mammoth tanks, waiting on the bridge leading to your bombardment position. Here is where your rocketeers must give every effort to destroy the enemy tank and keep the artillery from harm. It doesn't matter how many die, as long as the Mammoths are

death. By this point, you'll have enough experience in your campaign to liberate Africa on your own. The only tricky part calls for you not to destroy any of the remaining GDI facilities in your new base, until you have some serious defenses set up. Such a move will trigger a massive GDI response. If you need the room, it is actually more cost-effective to build an engineer and take over the powerplants, as the GDI will not react to this maneuver.

Mission 12: While your ultimate objective to capture the GDI advanced communication array seems simple enough, do not be lulled into complacency. This mission is nothing less than a knock-down, blow-them-up battle of attrition,

FINAL THOUGHTS

We were prepared to brief you on your thirteenth and final mission, but some thrice-damned GDI sniper brought down our courier bearing the file. Of course, GDI retains near-space supremacy, so it could not be transmitted safely either, without compromising our plans.

Nevertheless, Kane has favored you, and has every reason to believe you are strong and smart enough to remember these lessons. Hold your rage close to your heart and never forget your origins. Remember these tactical lessons well, and Africa shall be free of interference for the first time in 2,000 years!

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THE NOD MOBILE FIREBASE

If you have the resources, as a NOD commander, you can create the most powerful defensive/offensive, combined-arms group in the game. This formation is especially powerful if you can consistently predict the path the enemy will be approaching from.

Begin with at least two mobile artillery. Space them a couple of squares apart and place a NOD buggy between them for reserve. The NOD buggy is also a good defense against any enemy grenadiers that might sneak up on the mobile artillery. In front of this formation, bring up two or three light tanks to support your troops in case of armor attack. If the formation is acting as a siege unit, the light tank can surge ahead and destroy GDI rocket towers, the only real force that can threaten the mobile firebase.

Ahead of the light tanks comes a mixed line of NOD Buggies, for long-range suppression fire, and a half-dozen rocketeers for anti-armor/anti-aircraft duty. Leading the formation thus far should be a dispersed line of mini-gunners and two flame tanks on either flank. Place them one square ahead, but

be careful of coming under the range of your own artillery.

This formation, while fairly expensive and time-consuming to build, can defeat almost any GDI response team during an initial assault on enemy bases, and can certainly break up any assault against your own base. The only tricky part of this formation is organizing it on the offensive, as almost all the components have differing lend speeds. If they are caught in chaotic movement by a GDI force, an expensive disaster can occur. Move out only under relatively secure conditions, and if you can manage it, use a Recon Bike wolf pack to escort the components. The wolf pack will be useful breaking up

any GDI thrusts or chopper strikes, while you try to get all your units back into formation.

One last note: never create such a tightly grouped formation if there are any A-10 attack craft in the area. These armored attack planes will destroy your mobile firebase, unless you have room for a dozen rocketeer flankers for air protection.



HOT WHEELS The mobile firebase, if configured correctly, can make mincmeat out of nearly any GDI opposition.



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The Evolution Of An Empire

Sage Advice For Mastering *HEROES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC*

by Jason Kapalka

THERE YOU ARE, LOOKING DOWN AT YOUR RIVAL'S castle, an intense feeling of anger and frustration overwhelming you. Your repeated attempts to squash his empire have been futile and ineffective. Try as you might, you never seem able to beat him at production or exploration, and you barely manage to survive your many encounters with him. How does he do it? Well, in this particular fantasy, "he" is a computer, and the computer always starts out at an advantage. But with these *HEROES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC* tips under your belt, you'll no longer have to fear your electronic opponent.



YOU ARE NOW LIBERATED Conquering neutral towns is a priority, since they can provide valuable income for building structures and recruiting troops.

OPENING MOVES

In either campaign or scenario play, the first couple of weeks are crucial. You need to quickly maximize your creature production and capture as many sources of gold and materials as possible. Always build a well before the end of the first week, and try to construct as many monster dwellings as you can, even if you don't have enough money to recruit from them. Stockpiling your troops now means you will have an ample pool of creatures to draw from later in the game.

Recruit as many troops as possible for your first expeditionary force, and don't attack powerful monsters initially, since a defeat would cripple you for a crucial week. Concentrate on picking up resources and gold, and always choose to keep any treasure found, because you'll need gold more than experience during the early phase.

Another early priority is to capture a neutral town or gold mine to increase your income. Gold mines require no development, but are usually heavily guarded. Towns should be built into castles as soon as possible; the castle's quadrupled income will pay for the investment within a week, and everything after that is pure profit. Be aware, however, that new castles need to be zeal-



HEROES FOR SALE Using a hero in battle relegates him to the general "hero pool," making him available to your rivals for recruitment.

ously guarded, as enemies will home in on undefended castles like bees to honey.

After the first few weeks of a scenario, one or two enemy armies will start showing up. Until you've built up your production base, try to keep most of your powerful units in a single army assigned to guard duty, using one or two heroes with minimal troops to explore and pick up undefended resources.

MID-GAME

Here, resource management is critical. Your armies will be stretched thin defending several castles, and your stockpiles of Ore, Wood, Gems and the like can be rapidly depleted by construction.

During this stage, your production base probably has progressed far enough that you have dozens, if not

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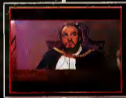
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hundreds, of low-level units, such as Peasants. While the temptation might be to recruit a hundred-man army of Sprites and the like, the far wiser move would be to go for the less numerous, but more powerful, elite troops.

Several strategies are possible during the middle game. You can elect to play defensively by staying in your castles and building your advanced structures, but don't neglect exploration. You may run across lightly-defended towns, treasures, or artifacts, and more importantly, you increase your response time to any approaching enemy. Once you've explored a section of the map, you can see any armies moving across it,

even if you have no troops in the region. With this advanced warning, you can prepare an adequate defense for your castles. When an attack is imminent, make sure you

have a hero stationed with the garrison, to increase their stats and to cast spells.

If the loss of a castle seems inevitable, retreat most of the garrison out of the invader's path. Remember to recruit all available creatures first, so that the enemy will be forced to split his army, leaving a garrison of his own behind. On the other hand, if the enemy consists mostly of ground melee troops, or you have area-effect spells like Fireball or Meteor Swarm available, a pitched defense may be a wise decision. If your defending hero has artifacts, be sure to retreat or surrender before all your troops die, or you'll lose them to the invader.

If you choose a more offensive tack, decide whether you want to try hit-and-run tactics or amass one all-powerful army. Several weaker armies can cover more ground, and you can harass foes too powerful to attack directly, by taking lightly-defended mines, towns and castles, forcing the enemy to expend time and effort recapturing them.

Sooner or later in most scenarios, you'll have to eliminate the enemy empires, and this requires planning.



MORALE BUSTERS Try to keep your troops all the same alignment. Mixing different unit types will cause the whole army to suffer a morale loss in combat.

Before invading, make sure of your own defenses: nothing is more annoying than having to send your gigantic assault force running home because ten Goblins waltzed into your undefended castle.

Concentrate as much power as possible in one or two armies. Build one high-level Mage Guild rather than many low-level ones, and load up your best spellcaster with all the Power and Knowledge-enhancing artifacts you have. Make certain that even Knights and Barbarians have spellbooks, and enough spells to negate enemy magic.

After you have amassed a strong army and loaded up on spells, it is

THE NUMBERS OF THE BEASTS

So the castle you're planning to attack has "several" Cyclops guarding it...what does that mean exactly? Consult the chart below to get a better idea of your foe's numbers.

Few	1-4
Several	5-9
Pack	10-19
Lots	20-49
Horde	50-99
Zounds!	100+

TACTICS AND CONCEPTS

Tactical battles in Heroes of Might & Magic are deceptively simple. Fast mouse-clicking might work on Peasants, but against elite troops like Dragons, it would be best to heed these subtler strategies.

1. Hit Points Are Relative to Attack and Defense Scores

Damage is always increased or decreased 10% per point of difference between the attacker's Attack value and the Defender's Defense score. So while that horde of Peasants (Att.1, Def.1) may look like a match for a Dragon (Att.12, Def.12), in a real fight, a Dragon would do more than twice its listed damage to the peons, who in turn would barely scratch the beast.

2. Heroes Make a Difference

Heroes add their Attack and Defense ratings to those creatures under their control, meaning every creature under their command

gets a significant strength boost. Always check the stats of opposing heroes—either with the Identify Hero spell or when engaged in combat. A disadvantage of five points in either Attack or Defense means you have a serious handicap; a disadvantage of five or more points in both ratings means the enemy can inflict more than three times as much damage as your own troops.

3. Timing Is Everything

Remember that fast creatures always move before the slower ones. Try to maneuver so that you strike the first blow in any exchange. During castle defenses, you can sometimes best a far superior foe just by keeping your last flying unit out of his reach while the ballista cleaves him up.

4. Use the Right Creature for the Job

Fast-flying units should initially be assigned to enemy missile troops to neutralize

their ranged attacks. Slow defensive units, like Ogres, should be assigned guard duty for missile troops. Strong attack stacks such as Wolves and Rogues, are poorly suited to castle defenses, where they will languish behind stone walls. Keep critters with a two-space attack (Dragons, Cyclops, and Phoenix) far away from friendly troops, lest they try an ally by mistake.

5. The Best Defense Is a Good Defense ... Sometimes

When fending off attacks on your towns and castles, it's sometimes better to initiate a bottle against the invading army in open country, rather than huddling in your fortress. If you have few missile units and no destructive spells, but plenty of quick-moving attack troops like Cavalry, a castle defense is suicidal, particularly if the foe has numerous ranged units available.



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time to attack the enemy castle. Bring along missile-users and flying creatures to attack first, and from a distance use fast ground troops for backup. Use sluggish heavy troops only as auxiliaries, unless you can cast haste and teleport to place them at the frontlines.

Once you've taken an enemy castle, enter to learn the spells at the Mage Guild and recruit any creatures still available. Smarter computer players will generally recruit everything before you attack, but if you time your assault late in the week, you can quickly get the benefit of the population growth that occurs on Day 1 of the follow-



LONELY SUPERHERO Give the best troops, all your artifacts, and lots of spells to one great hero, while your lesser heroes go exploring.

ing week. Keep your hero stationed at or near the enemy castle until you're sure there are no opposing stacks rushing in to reconquer it.

ENDGAME

Later on, one or two players are probably eliminated, and the remaining players are both attacking you rather than squabbling among themselves. Most of the advanced structures have been built, and many of the heroes are of high level, with multiple artifacts and potent magics.

Ideally you should have one "killer stack" and several lesser, defensive armies. Don't get overconfident—this is the stage

of the game where the enemy frequently unveils frightfully huge hosts they've been assembling for months. Keep spellcasting heroes stationed at castles subject to frequent attack, and recruit new heroes to defend any castle about to come under siege. Even a Level 1 Sorceress can inflict significant damage to an invader with a Berzerk spell. Make sure you don't run out of spells, however—return to the relevant Mage Guild and reload whenever times are peaceful.

The ideal assault force at this stage will consist primarily of elite-level creatures, supported by a horde of low-level missile units and led by a powerful hero. High Attack and Defense scores are helpful, but magic is the most crucial consideration. Beef up your war leader with all the magic-enhancing artifacts you can get. If you have to choose between Spell Power and Knowledge, go with Knowledge—Fireballs and the like will be less powerful, but Berzerk, Paralyze, and Bless are just as effective at low Power ratings, and you won't run out of magic after one or two engagements.

Be thorough. Don't leave an enemy castle or hero in unexplored back country while you rush onwards; the computer is very good at attacking your weakest points. The View Hero and View All

TIP! Dimension Door and Town Gate spells can be very effective for attack and defense. Wise use of these two spells can help you surprise enemy castles, escape large armies and can be used to patrol a wide range of territory.

THE PRICE OF THE WARLORD

To help you choose the right warlord, here are the different costs and benefits for each warlord type.

KNIGHT

Knight castles are handicapped by the need to build a Tavern and Well before the Blacksmith and Armory. However, few of their advanced structures require exotic materials, so constructing Mage Guilds is easier for Knights than for other players.

Knight troops are less spectacular than the other creatures, and Peasants are a total write-off. On the other hand, Swordsmen are excellent defensive units and Cavalry are good and cheap attackers. Paladins may be the best overall unit in the game, since they are the cheapest and quickest of all elite units.

BARBARIAN

Probably the toughest character to win with, Barbarians need a great deal of Ore to build their advanced structures. Capture and hold mines as quickly as possible.

Barbarian troops are not good standalone troops. Goblins and Orcs are weak grunts; Ogres are hard to kill, but too slow to make much difference in combat. Wolves, with their double attack, are extremely powerful offensively, but suffer a very low defense score. Trolls are strong ranged units, and their regeneration lets them shrug off weaker stacks. Cyclops are tough, especially with their two-space attack, but are overpriced compared to the other elite units.

SORCERESS

The Sorceress has a severe handicap building structures early on. A Mage Guild and Tavern are prerequisites for the advanced structures, and many sites require large quantities of rare materials, particularly Mercury.

On the plus side, Sorceress units are some of the best in the game. Sprites reproduce too slowly to be of great use, but are surprisingly effective at neutralizing enemy missile units. Dwarves are cheap and tough, if slow, and Elves are lethal missile users. Druids are also very effective, particularly since they fire before any other missile users, and the Unicorn is the best non-elite creature available. Phoenixes, while weaker than Dragons, are more cost-effective, and unlike Dragons, can be Blessed and Resurrected.

WARLOCK

With the Warlock, most of the advanced structures can be built relatively quickly, though you'll need Gems and heaps of Sulfur.

Warlock units are the most powerful, though the weak Centaurs are at a disadvantage in ranged combat. Gargoyles and Griffins are very good at bringing enemy missile users to melee, and the Griffin's unlimited retaliation makes it deadly when thrown into the enemy's midsts. Minotaurs are exciting but tough. Hydras are very slow, but effective when combined with Haste or Teleport spells. Dragons, though incredibly expensive, are magic resistant and by far the toughest and deadliest of all elite creatures.

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A man's head is shown from the back, in profile, against a dark, textured background. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the contours of the head. The text is printed in a bold, yellow, sans-serif font on the back of the head.

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spells can be helpful in keeping you aware of the overall situation as you move toward victory. In the later campaign scenarios, take time to assemble a massive force before besieging the enemy's home castle. It will always be extremely well-defended, and the hero guarding it will never leave, so don't rush into something you can't handle.

MYSTICAL MAYHEM

Getting heavy sorcery artillery into play depends on three factors: Spell Power, Spell Knowledge, and the level of your Mage Guilds. Without high development in all three areas, your magical heroes will be capable of only limited battlefield effects. However, if you satisfy all three requirements, spells can become your primary tactical weapon.

The key to duration spells, like Bless and Berzerk, is understanding that units can only have one such spell in effect at any time, good or bad. Therefore, you can cancel a nasty Berzerk spell just by casting Bless on the afflicted troops. However, the computer knows this trick too.

There are two ways to deal with this problem. Against an enemy with low Spell Knowledge, you can just keep casting spells until he runs out of suitable countering magics. Against more magically-adept heroes, you'll need to use careful timing. Wait until the opposing hero casts a spell for the turn before casting yours, and you can often get in an effective Berzerk or Paralyze.

MORALE MAJORITIES

Morale affects your troops' ability to attack; high morale occasionally gives them extra moves and attacks, while low morale causes them to miss turns. Here are the various modifiers to morale.

Army led by Knight:	+1
Visited a Statue:	+2*
Troops all of same alignment:	+1
Troops of three different alignments:	-1
Troops of four different alignments:	-2
Artifacts (e.g. Medal of Valor):	variable
*Good for one battle only	

TIP! If all of a player's units are blinded or paralyzed, then their side will be unable to move, cast spells, retreat or surrender, or fire ballistas and catapults.

Instant spells, like Fireball, Lightning, and Meteor Swarm, are your basic artillery, and require a high Power score to be effective. Magic that damages all creatures on the screen—Storm and Armageddon—initially seem useless, but can be useful if your side's defense is very high, since you will suffer less damage than the opposition. If you cast Anti-Magic on your troops, or if your entire army consists of only Dragons (which are completely immune to magic), then you can use these deadly spells with impunity.

Note that you can only cast spells when it's your turn to move a creature. To get in the first blast, make sure you have at least one high-speed unit in your army, such as Wolves, Gargoyles or Cavalry.

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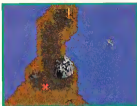
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is hidden underground in every scenario, and can be a massive help in any game.

The exact Ultimate Artifact is randomly determined each game, and can be either a Sword, Cloak, Wand or Book. Each item will add +12 to their owning hero's Attack, Defense,



X MARKS THE SPOT To find the Ultimate Artifact, you must visit each obelisk to piece together the map that reveals its true location.

Spell Power and Knowledge ratings respectively. If a hero carrying the Ultimate Artifact is defeated in battle, the device vanishes permanently, so it's best to leave it with a strong army. One thing to keep in mind is that the computer can also choose to dig up the Ultimate Artifact on its own, so speed is definitely of the essence.

There are also scores of lesser magical items to be found. Most of these are either visible on the map screen or guarded by ghosts in graveyards or shipwrecks. Be careful picking up seemingly undefended artifacts. Some are guarded by up to 50 rogues, while others require that you fork over 2,000 gold pieces.

The majority of artifacts enhance the bearer's attributes by one to three points. Swords, axes, and flails increase Attack; shields and armor augment Defense; scrolls aid Knowledge; and brooches and talismans boost Spell Power.

A few other devices have more unusual effects. Boots and compasses increase map movement. The crossbow lets your ballista or catapult fire twice per turn. Medals and banners increase troop morale, while horseshoes and four-leaf clovers boost luck. Watch out for the blue Fizzbin of Misfortune, which resembles several beneficial artifacts but is actually cursed and very hard to get rid of.

Neutral critters are usually found guarding mines and artifacts, but some are just randomly scattered about the map guarding passages and the like. Generally you'll have to fight them, but under the right circumstances they may join you. Your chances are enhanced if your army is more powerful than the monsters, and if you already have some of the same troop type in your ranks. Powerful creatures like Phoenixes and Dragons almost never join you, even if you have several like beasts already. The wisest approach is to assume that you'll have to fight anything you move next to.

THE ROAD TO VICTORY

Building your castles to their fullest potential and recruiting ever-larger armies is a continual task. As you build your powerbase, you will also be exploring the world around you,

TIP! The Ultimate Artifact is often buried in the center of the map; if you want to dig up the artifact by trial and error, you can dedicate a few low-level heroes to a systematic search of the area.

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for you cannot afford to neglect the various artifacts, crucial mines, and other towns that lie waiting for your conquest. While expanding your empire, you must deal with your rival's heroes, and your few skirmishes with them will help you gauge the strengths of the competing warlords. Your own judgement will tell you when you have achieved the proper strength to march toward each warlord's home castle. But in all scenarios, and especially in the campaign, remember to explore quickly, guard your holdings, and maintain a few powerful armies for the final showdown with each warlord. Victory lies waiting for the warlord prudent and patient enough to grasp it. ☛

SEND HELP, STAT!

Though the manual includes the basic stats for all the creatures, it only tells half the story. What the manual fails to tell you is that damage inflicted is increased or decreased 10% for every point of difference between the aggressor's Attack score and the victim's Defense rating. Here is a chart that takes that fact into account when rating each unit's worth.

Modified Damage: The average damage caused in a single attack against a unit with a Defense rating of 5.

Modified HP: The "real" number of hit points a creature has against an Attack value of 5.

Cost Per Damage Point: An index of the troop type's attack efficiency as compared to cost, measured in the number of gold pieces spent for each point of damage in an attack. Lower scores are better, of course.

Cost Per HP: A measure of the creature's defensive efficiency as compared to cost, counted by the number of gold pieces spent for each modified hit point. Lower values are better here as well.

Total Attack/Defense Per Week: Dragons are powerful, but you can recruit only a few every week, while Peasants and the like are more numerous. This value, which assumes complete recruitment and the presence of a Wall, represents the maximum output of a castle in terms of damage infliction and resistance.

Unit Type	Mod Dam	Mod hp	Cost per dmg pt	Cost per hp	Total Atk/Def per week
Peasant	6	5	33	33	9/9
Archer*	2.5	8	60	19	25/60
Pikeman	3.5	21	57	10	25/147
Swordsman	6	35	41	7	36/210
Cavalry	12	42	26	7	58/210
Paladin	25(2)	85	25(12)	7	96/340
Goblin	1.2	1.8	33	22	14/22
Gee*	2	9	70	16	22/9
Wolf	4.5(2)	14	46(22)	14	31/8
Dog	7	40	42	8	40/40
Trail*	9	40	66	15	45/200
Cyclops	31	112	25	7	122 / 448
Sprite	1.3	1.4	38	34	13/14
Dwarf	3.5	20	61	30	28/161
Elf*	2.5(2)	12	100(50)	21	15/72
Druid*	8	25	47	14	34/123
Unicorn	16	56	31	9	64/224
Pegasus	51	150	29	10	153/450
Centaur*	1.2	3	50	20	12/60
Gargoyle	2	18	89	11	18/14
Giffin	4.5	28	67	11	27/188
Minotaur	11	45	34	9	53/225
Hycra	12	105	67	8	48/420
Dragon	64	340	47	9	192/1080
Reaper	2	2.5	29	20	n/a
Nomad	4	22	48	9	n/a
Ghost	7	24	n/a	n/a	n/a
Gerie	38	70	17	9	n/a

* These units are missile-users.

Paladins, Wolves, and Elves can attack twice per turn; the figure in brackets takes this extra attack into account.



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Kombat 101

Surviving *MORTAL KOMBAT 3* Requires All The Right Moves

by George Jones

SOME FOLKS SAY IT'S BETTER TO BE lucky than good. Well, on this circuit, the only role luck will play in your life is whether your opponent simply knocks the cap out of you at the end of a fight, or if he'll take your life by, say, blowing your head up to the point that it explodes. I prefer knowing that my sweep kick-high kick-uppercut combo is going to work, rather than just flailing about on the joystick, trying

every combination of attacks from here to Kalamazoo. Better lucky than good—that's what Johnny Cage always said. Of course, you don't see Johnny Cage in *MORTAL KOMBAT 3*.

HEED THE GENERAL (TACTICS)

Before we delve into each fighter's combat profile, let's talk about some general tactics. Undoubtedly, the "pack 'em in ice" attacks are the roundhouse kick and the uppercut. Unfortunately, both are easily detected, particularly

by human opponents. The key is to set yourself up in a position to use these power attacks. One of the more popular, and some might argue essential, "table-setting" attacks is the Sweep Kick. It doesn't do a lot of damage, but it gives you the combat advantage. While your foe falls to the ground, the initiative is yours. At the lower levels of the game, a Sweep Kick followed by a reverse flying High Kick—optionally followed by an uppercut—is a great combina-

tion to perfect.

Jump kicks, while fairly powerful, are a mixed bag, primarily because whenever you're in the air, your fighter is vulnerable. To ensure that your opponent doesn't beat you to the punch (or kick in this case), execute the kick attack as soon as you're airborne.

The disadvantage to flying kicks, or any jumping for that matter (particularly in this version of *MORTAL KOMBAT*), is that a wise opponent will sprint underneath you and take advantage of your vulnerability. One great move versus an airborne opponent is to Run underneath them as they pass overhead. When you change direction, kneel down and launch an uppercut!

It's important to master in-close fighting. Sure, the big punches are great, but if you learn the way of the elbow smash and the five-punch combination, you'll be unstoppable. There're not too many more effective attacks than a sprint right into an opponents face followed by three punches, a couple of kicks and a Roundhouse. But enough yammerin'. Let's get to the action.



HIGH-LOW One effective sequence is the Sweep Kick and the reverse Jump Kick.

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THE KOMBATANTS

Herein lies the knowledge to maim, kill, destroy and rub your opponent's face in it with the major characters in the game.

Note: To perform *Mercy*, Hold *Run* while pressing *D,D,D*, and release in the *third round only*. To perform an *Animality*, you must first perform a *Mercy*. *Animalities* only work in the *third round*. For a *Babality* to work, you cannot *Block* in the *final round*. For a *Friendship* to work, you cannot *Block* in the *final round*.

- Key: **B** Backward (away from opponent)
F Forward (toward opponent)
D Down
U Up
HK High Kick
LK Low Kick
HP High Punch
LP Low Punch
BLK Block
RUN Run

Actions in parentheses means to hit the appropriate buttons while you are holding down another. For example, Hold *LK* (*B, B, HK*) means to hold down the *Low Kick* button while pressing *Back, Back* and then *High Kick*.

Locations in parentheses, like (*in close*), indicates the position you should be in to perform a certain action.

CYRAX

- Net *B,B,LK*
 Teleport *F,D,BLK*
 Close Bomb Hold *LK* (*B,B,HK*)
 Distant Bomb Hold *LK* (*FF*HK*)
 Air Throw *D,F,BLK* then *LP* to throw
 Fatality 1 *D,D,F,U,RUN* (*in close*)
 Fatality 2 *D,D,D,U,D,HP* (*anywhere*)
 Animality *U,U,D,D* (*in close*)
 Babality *F,F,B,HP*
 Friendship *RUN,RUN,RUN,U*
 Pit *RUN,BLK,RUN*
 Best Combo *HP,HP,HK,HP,HK,B+HK* (30%)

JAX

- 1 Fireball *B,F,HP*
 2 Fireballs *F,F,B,B,HP*
 Charge Punch *FF,HK*
 Grab & Smack *FF,LP*
 Back Crack *BLK* in air
 Ground Slam Hold *LK* (2 seconds), Release
 Fatality 1 *U,U,D,F,U,BLK* (*in close*)
 Fatality 2 *RUN,BLK,RUN,RUN,LK* (*opp. side of screen*)
 Animality Hold *LP* (*F,D,F*), Release (*in close*)
 Babality *D,D,D,LK*
 Friendship *LK,RUN,RUN,LK*
 Pit *D,F,D,LP*
 Best Combo *HK,HK,D+HP,HP,BLK,LP,HP,B+HP* (34%)

KABAL

- Tornado Dash *B,F,LK*
 Fireball *B,B,HP*
 Buzz Saw *B,B,B,RUN*
 Fatality 1 *RUN,BLK,BLK,BLK,HK* (*close*)
 Fatality 2 *D,D,B,F,BLK* (*in sweep range*)
 Animality Hold *HP* (*F,D,F*), Release (*close*)
 Babality *RUN,RUN,RUN,LK*
 Friendship *RUN,LK,RUN,RUN,U*
 Pit *BLK,BLK,HK*
 Best Combo *LK,LK,HP,HPD+HP* Jump kick, eye spark (45%)

KANO

- Knife Toss *D,B,HP*
 Knife Slash *D,F,HP*
 Roll Hold *LK* (2 seconds), Release
 Throw *BLK* in air
 Fatality 1 Hold *LP* (*F,D,D,F*), Release (*close*)
 Fatality 2 *LP,BLK,BLK,HK* (*in sweep range*)
 Animality Hold *HP* (*BLK,BLK,BLK*), Release (*close*)
 Babality *F,F,D,D,LK*
 Friendship *LK,RUN,RUN,HK*
 Pit *U,U,B,LK*
 Best Combo *HP,HP,D+LPD+HP* Jump Kick, Cannonball (37%)

KUNG LAO

- Hat Toss *B,FLP*
 Flying Kick *D,HK* in air
 Teleport *D,U*
 Spit *F,D,FRUN*
 Fatality 1 *RUN+BLK,RUN+BLK,D* (*anywhere*)
 Fatality 2 *F,F,B,D,HP* (*close*)
 Animality *RUN,RUN,RUN,BLK* (*close*)
 Babality *D,F,F,HP*
 Friendship *RUN,LP,RUN,LK*
 Pit *D,D,F,LK*

LIU KANG

- Low Fireball *FF,LP*
 High Fireball *FF,HP*
 Bicycle Kick Hold *LK* (2 seconds), release
 Flying Kick *FF,HK*
 Fatality 1 *U,U,D,U,LP,RUN+BLK* (*anywhere*)
 Fatality 2 *F,F,D,D,LK* (*anywhere*)
 Animality *D,D,D,U* (2 steps away)
 Babality *D,D,D,HK*
 Friendship *RUN,RUN,RUN,D+RUN*
 Pit *RUN,BLK,BLK,LK*
 Best Combo *HP,LP,HP,LP,LK,HK,B+HK* (34%)



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NIGHTWOLF

Hatchet	D,F,HP
Arrow	D,B,LP
Shoulder Slam	FFLK
Reflector	B,B,B,HK
Fatality 1	B,B,D,HP (sweep range)
Fatality 2	U,U,B,FBLK (2 steps away)
Animality	FFD,D(close)
Babality	F,B,F,B,LP
Friendship	D+RUN,D+RUN,D+RUN
Pit	RUN,RUN,BLK
Best Combo	LK,HP,HP,LP,Hatchet,Hatchet,HK (41%)

SEKTOR

Teleport	FFLK
Guided Missile	D,B,HP
Straight Missile	FFLP
Fatality 1	LP,RUN,RUN,BLK (sweep range)
Fatality 2	FFFB,BLK (half-screen away)
Animality	FFD,U (close)
Babality	B,D,D,D,HK
Friendship	D+RUN,D+RUN,D+RUN
Pit	RUN,RUN,RUN,D
Best Combo	HP,HP,HK,HK,B+HK (26%)

SHANG TSUNG

1 Fireball	B,B,HP
2 Fireballs	B,B,F,HP
3 Fireballs	B,B,FF,HP
Ground Eruption	F,B,B,LK
Fatality 1	Hold LP (D,FFD), Release (close)
Fatality 2	Hold LP (RUN,BLK,RUN,BLK) (close)
Animality	Hold HP (RUN,RUN,RUN) (sweep range)
Babality	RUN,RUN,RUN,LK
Friendship	LK,RUN,RUN,D
Pit	U,U,B,LP
Best Combo	LK,HP,HP,LP,B+HK (28%)
Morphs (Shang Tsung can morph into any of the 13 characters)	
Cyrax	BLK,BLK,BLK
Jax	FFD,LP
Kabal	LP,BLK,HK
Kano	F,B,F,BLK
Kung Lao	RUN,RUN,BLK,RUN
Liu Kang	360 Motion
Nightwolf	U,U,U
Sektor	D,F,B,RUN
Sheeva	F,D,FLK
Sindel	B,D,B,LK
Sonya	R,B,LLP
Stryker	FFF,HK
Sub-Zero	F,D,F,HP

SHEEVA

Teleport	D,U
Ground Stomp	B,D,B,HK
Fireball	D,F,HP
Fatality 1	F,D,D,F,LP (close)
Fatality 2	Hold HK (F,B,F,F), Release (close)
Animality	RUN,BLK,BLK,BLK (close)
Babality	D,D,D,B,HK
Friendship	FFD,F,HP
Pit	D,D,F,LP
Best Combo	HP,HP,LP,HK,HK,LK,B+HK (42%)

SINDEL

Fireball	FFLP
Air Fireball	D,F,LK
Fly	B,B,F,HK
Scream	FFF,HP
Fatality 1	RUN,RUN,BLK,RUN,BLK (sweep range)
Fatality 2	RUN,RUN,BLK,BLK,RUN+BLK (close)
Animality	(close)
Babality	RUN,RUN,RUN,U
Friendship	RUN,RUN,RUN,RUN,RUN,U
Pit	D,D,D,LP
Best Combo	HK,HP,HP,D+HP,Jump Kick, Air Fireball (40%)

STRYKER

Low Grenade	D,B,HP
High Grenade	D,B,LP
Baton Throw	FF,HK
Baton Trip	F,B,LP
Fatality 1	FFFLK (opp. side of screen)
Fatality 2	D,F,D,F,BLK (close)
Animality	RUN,RUN,RUN,BLK (2 steps away)
Babality	D,F,E,B,HP
Friendship	LP,RUN,RUN,LP
Pit	F,U,U,HK
Best Combo	LK,HP,HP,LP, Jump Kick, Baton Throw (36%)

SUB-ZERO

Freeze	D,F,LP
Ice Statue	D,B,LP
Ice Shower (On Top)	D,F,HP
Ice Shower (In Front)	D,F,B,HP
Ice Shower (Behind)	D,B,F,HP
Slide	B+LP+LK
Fatality 1	B,B,D,B,RUN (sweep range)
Fatality 2	BLK,BLK,RUN,BLK,RUN (close)
Animality	F,U,U (close)
Babality	D,B,B,HK
Friendship	LK,RUN,RUN,U
Pit	B,D,FFF,HK
Best Combo	HP,HP,LP,LK,HK,B+HK (30%)

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Into The Belly Of The Beast

A Short Course In Resistance Tactics For Origin's CRUSADER

by Paul C. Schuytema

It's tough being an outsider—who's going to trust a WEC Silencer who suddenly wants to "convert" to the Resistance? Especially if you won't even take off your red Kevlar helmet. ...

GROUND RULES

First off, let's establish some ground rules. Controlling your Silencer can be a tricky deal; to do so, you need to master the numeric keypad control with the NumLock engaged. In this configuration, nearly every action can be controlled with one hand. It may not be as intuitive as the mouse, and may take a little while to get used to, but once you nail down the finger dance, you'll be unstoppable.

When you're moving in an unsecured area, use "advance" (the "1"

key on the numeric keypad) instead of straight ahead movement—you'll be much slower, but your gun will be at the ready. This isn't as much about speed as it is about staying alive to complete your mission.

Also, get familiar with the sidestep ("7" and "9" keys) and the roll ("1" and "3" keys). Sidestepping allows you to carefully move into firing position against a stationary target. Rolling is a great way to introduce yourself to a room full of WEC MilOps personnel—roll to the door opening and come up firing.

Here's a tour of duty covering the first two missions; the skills and tactics you pick up here will serve you well through all 15 missions.

FIRST MISSION:

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE: DESTROY WEC REFINERY

MEANS: BLOW UP THE MAIN THERMAL COUPLER UNIT WITH RESISTANCE-SUPPLIED DET-PAC

LEVEL 1, SUBGOAL 1: GET THE ACCESS CODE

To move freely throughout the levels in CRUSADER, you're going to need clearance, which comes in two flavors: access codes and keycards. Access codes can be found from certain computer terminals. Per-

haps a worker forgot to log off, or was suddenly terminated mid-access. Whatever the reasons, get that code!

On your way to the scaffolding that leads to the room with the terminal you need, you're going to encounter a Roaming Susan droid behind a bulkhead. Roaming Susans are slow, but they still pack some serious firepower—don't make yourself an obvious target.

Along the way, you'll encounter several plant workers—other than throwing an alarm, they pose no real threat to you, but they might carry some much needed credits. ...

Also, watch out for the civilian security guards. While an easy mark on their own, when found in pairs they can be quite a threat—take at least one out at a distance to ease your close-in clean up chores.

After you blast past the scaffolding (don't shoot those barrels, or you'll destroy safe passage over the acid goo), move straight ahead to find the terminal with the access code—there's really no need to enter the door to your left unless you're interested in some carnage-filled sightseeing.

LEVEL 1, SUBGOAL 2: FIND THE BLUE KEYCARD

Enter the code in the door with the keypad to gain access to the main area of the refinery. Take the



MIL-OPS FLAMBE At times, indirect fire can be your friend—shoot a barrel to take out a guard.

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7th LEVEL

elevator platform down. Turn the valve to turn off the jet of superheated steam blocking your way.

Twin lasers will block your way in the next room, but a shootable switch will toggle them off and allow you to proceed. Before you charge into the next room, be ready to shoot out the Gatling gun mounted on the wall. Once these weapons lock onto an intruder, they will fire without mercy, but you can evade them by watching their scanning cycle and step into target range only when it is turned away.

The force field on your right will be your eventual goal, but you need the key first. Blast straight ahead, but watch out for the land mines between the yellow hazard stripes—jump to avoid them. Past the third stripe, you'll want to enter the room on your left. In this computer room, you can access the terminal to gain control of the Thermatron mech resting in its cubby-hole.

Once activated, your keypad will control the mech. Enter the door to the north and begin blasting. The mech will allow you to clear a room with no risk to yourself. Don't forget to blast the camera on the right side of the room. When you've finished your sweep, tap the Esc key to return to normal control.

Enter the room and access the terminal; this will give you the code to open the wall safe in the north corner of the room. The safe will

not open if a code red has been signaled. If this is the case, find an alarm pad and deactivate it. Open the safe and retrieve the blue keycard.

LEVEL 1, SUBGOAL 3: GET THE RED KEYCARD

Now, backtrack to the room with the blue force field. You will have to throw a junction-box switch to shut down the first force field. Your keycard will get you past the second.

Move along to the catwalks. Shut down a burning gas leak to pass—head right down the small catwalk to find the valve. Head straight ahead into the transformer room. Take the elevator platform to your left. You will find the keycard sitting near the terminal on the table.

LEVEL 1, SUBGOAL 4: GET THE ACCESS CODE

Now, make your way through the transformers. Take the second platform up to access the red keycard door.

Take the door to your left to enter the break room. The terminal on the north wall will provide you with the access code to continue. You will also find a first-aid station—step into the unit to restore your health.

LEVEL 1, SUBGOAL 5: MEET WITH INSIDE AGENT

Exit the break room and tap in the code on the keypad to the north. The long corridor ahead is a gauntlet of turreted Gatling guns and Roaming Susan mechs. There are two ways to handle this corridor: slow and methodical or a full steam sprint to the other end.

Once you pass the mech corridor, you will find yourself, once again, out on some grat-



TAKE THAT The furthest end of level one is where you'll find the terminal to open access to the teleporter in mission two.

ing, but an explosion will damage some of the fragile steelwork. Don't attempt to walk straight ahead—you'll fall right through and there is no escape from an acid bath, even for a Silencer.

Instead, find the switch and activate the force bridge to your right. You'll have to activate another force bridge to get off the red platform.

Once you get back inside, turn right as soon as you can. Through one more door you'll meet the WEC informant, who seems a little nervous—perhaps it's your red Kevlar tights.

After he leaves, you'll find yourself in a little furball with a handful of guards. Take them out, but you don't need to waste your time heading down the corridor they came from—head north instead.

After you cross another steel bridge, you'll need to throw a switch to cut the force field. Once in the room, you'll find a small electric eye in the uppermost corner of the room, blast it first before you throw the switch to enter the next room, but watch out, a Gatling gun is waiting for you on the other side.

You're almost out of this maze—just grab the keycard in the last room and head for the exit.

LEVEL 2, SUBGOAL 1: GET GREEN KEYCARD

As you enter this level, you will find yourself on a floor dancing with lighted squares—touch a



THRASHER MEAT Watch out as you enter level 4—the Thrasher carnage makes a nasty greeting party.

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square and you'll find yourself taking some electro-shock damage. Dance like Barishnikov across the floor to get past this trap.

Cross the steel platform, and enter the door to your left. Immediately blast the security cameras. As you enter the room, jets of burning gas will ignite—make your way to each of the two valves to shut off the gas and make it through.

Once in the next area, you'll find a terminal that will let you take control of another Roaming Susan droid to take out the guards who are waiting for you across the rather large acid lake. Once you've dispatched the guards, flip the switch near the edge to extend a force-bridge. You might want to save the game here; it's a bit tricky controlling your Silencer across the entire span of the bridge. Once across, head straight ahead for the elevator platform.

Take the next lift up and be sure to search the corpses of the guards that you take out up here: one of them holds the green keycard.

LEVEL 2, SUBGOAL 2: GET THE RED KEYCARD

Once you pass through the force-field door, you will need to shoot out the wall gun and head for a switch on the same wall, which will lower the two partial walls.

Watch out for the lasers hidden in the shelf unit. Blast them, grab the red keycard and make your escape.

LEVEL 3, SUBGOAL 1: ACCESS TERMINAL TO OPEN DOOR TO LEVEL 4

When you enter level three, you will immediately notice a Gatling gun with an "out of order" sign on it—apparently a WEC tech fixed the gun but forgot to yank the sign. Take that gun out!

Ride the platform up to the deck and throw the green switch. This will open a door on the lower platform. Keep alert, because the teleport pad near the switch will start beaming-in guards as fast as you can shoot them—make a run for it down to the lower level to find the open door.

The room you will enter is full of droids and a nasty Gatling gun hangs in the corner. Eliminate them, then make your way to the terminal in the far corner of the room, which will cut the force field



and allow you access to level four.

Go back out and through the newly opened doorway. A Gatling gun lurks just behind the boxes—sneak up behind the stack and blast away. You'll first destroy the box and several rounds later, the gun will blow. Head for the large door.

LEVEL 4, SUBGOAL 1: GET PAST THRESHER CANNON

Immediately, upon stepping into level four, enemies will swarm you. The most dangerous is the turreted Thresher Cannon—only a few hits will cause you to take a knee. Sprint to the far edge of the room, out of the cannon's scanning range, and blast the guards, then make your way to the force-field door.

LEVEL 4, SUBGOAL 2: GET

RED KEYCARD

The next room you enter will challenge you with a floor puzzle and a door force field. Move to the switch to turn off the floor, and move to the bottom half of the room.

Sidestep along the wall and move up close to the yellow caution tape but not too far. When you have just enough room, you should be able to roll left through the door without triggering the floor or the force field.

Take out the guards and search them: one of their corpses has the red keycard tucked away.

LEVEL 4, SUBGOAL 3: DESTROY THE THERMAL COUPLER

Open the force field and turn left (don't worry about that other force field just yet). As you step into the thermal coupler room, the alarm will trigger a code red and a force field will block your escape. No time to worry about that though—you've got a

thermal coupler to destroy.

Your main target is the big electrical beast in the middle of the room. Move close, set your charge (it's the little silver box with the red and green lights) and move away.

After the hardware blows, Wizard will video-link in and give you the coordinates of the extraction point.

LEVEL 4, SUBGOAL 4: GET TO EXTRACTION POINT

You'll find that Wizard has managed to cut all of the force fields. Make your way back and take that other doorway, blasting through the locker room and the chamber with the small droid. Take the platform up, pop a MedKit and prepare for some quick and careful running.

You'll soon move into a room with a web of force beams and a

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Thresher cannon smack in the middle of it all. Sprint straight through the room and throw the red switch, then sprint back. Now you can sprint to the left to throw a switch that will open a small room—step in and throw the switch that will open up a computer chamber in the previous room.

Backtrack to the computer terminal, retrieve the three-digit code, throw the wall switch to shut down the last of the force beams and haul ass back past the cannon; then access the keypad to type in the code. After all that (!), stroll over to the teleport pad for extraction. Mission accomplished!

wares or codes. When you reach the barrels on the left, crouch down—a Thresher cannon is waiting on the other side. If you bought a shotgun from Weasel (or found one in mission one), you might want to take

long corridor armed to the teeth with defensive instruments. The laser turret is your obvious target.

You also need to keep an eye on the floor, since mines pepper the area. Moving in Advance mode will give you the precision control you need.

Next, you'll have to contend with permanent force beams. Roll under the first and third and jump over the second.

Once you pass the force beams, enter the first door on your left. The switch here releases the force field across the hall. Enter that room and access the terminals to shut down all the other force fields. You will then



ELY'S OFFICE While the rest of the Resistance base, located in an old subway station, is rather ramshackle, commander Ely's office is quite posh.

SECOND MISSION:

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE:
FREE JO ANNE VARGAS

MEANS:
INFILTRATE PRISON COMPOUND

LEVEL 1, SUBGOAL 1: GET THE YELLOW KEYCARD

Once you teleport in, leap off the pad as soon as possible. Dispatch the guards and access both terminals—one opens the door, the other will stand down the alarm. The pedestal switch toggles off the floor grid security near the door.

Once in the corridor, shoot the pulse laser turret at the far end. Under the turret is a terminal that will deactivate the force field to your left.

Take out two more pulse lasers and head for the door straight ahead. The terminals in this cubicle are useless, but the yellow keycard is on the desk.

LEVEL 1, SUBGOAL 2: GET THE RED KEYCARD

Move down the corridor—none of these cubicles offer any vital

out the cannon, but running works just as well. When the turret turns away, sprint straight ahead to access the yellow door.

You will find yourself in a dorm complex. The red keycard is on the small round table. Don't forget to check all the guards' footlockers.

LEVEL 1, SUBGOAL 3: GET THE GREEN KEYCARD

Leaving the dorm area, turn to your right and move through the red door. Continue past the green door and turn right. You will notice a small (almost microscopic) motion detector on the left wall—one carefully aimed shot will take it out and maintain the illusion of unblemished WEC security.

As you enter the cafeteria, you'll find some strategically placed boxes—crouch down to gain the advantage in the ensuing firefight. Once you dispatch the guards, you can find the green keycard on one of the tables.

LEVEL 1, SUBGOAL 4: GET THE BLUE KEYCARD

Retrace your steps to the green door. You will find yourself in a

have to enter the corridor and head back the way you came for a few steps to trigger the release of the impassable force beams. Once down, continue straight ahead.

Entering the large courtyard, head to the right, stepping into the first door on your right (it will open automatically). The terminal in that room will trigger a door on the other side of the courtyard. Head for this newly opened door. On your way, watch out for the wall-mounted rocket launcher positioned near the yellow and black caution line—roll to avoid detection.

Once in the room, you can find the blue keycard on the table. You might also notice that the WEC suits are pretty lazy about taking care of their office plants.

LEVEL 1, SUBGOAL 5: ACCESS TELEPORTER

Head Northeast to the green and red boxes. Once again, beware the wall-mounted weaponry.

Once inside, make your way to the back of the room. A switch just outside of the far office will open the secure terminal inside. Accessing that terminal will open the



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OF COURSE, THOSE CLEVER ENOUGH TO MAKE
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room in the center of the courtyard and will allow you to fight your way to the teleport pad. Retrace your steps back to that central room and get on the pad to teleport to level two.

LEVEL 2, GOAL: ACCESS TELEPORTER

Chaos awaits as you teleport into a room chock-full of automated laser fire. Blast anything and everything on the walls, and soon you'll carve out a safe haven for yourself.

Next, release the door by walking on the raised squares. The order is Center, Southeast, Southwest, Northwest. Once you step on the last raised platform, step back—a small armada of rolling, explosive barrels will come bouncing in through the newly opened door.

Make your way to the raised square surrounded by the floor force field. Jump to avoid damage. When the platform lowers, the force

field Access the terminal to lower the force field you just passed. Retrace your steps, enter the newly open doorway and make your way to the exposed teleporter pad. Andrews will video-link with you and release the force field around the second teleporter. Step on that pad to transport to the detention level.

LEVEL 3, SUBGOAL 1: GET RED KEYCARD

The room you find yourself in is about as secure as they come, with oscillating wall lasers and an electrified floor. Try to time your moves to avoid the cycling floor squares as you move up to the force beams—you will need to wait until they oscillate to their highest position to roll underneath.

Look for the red keycard hidden on top of the red electronics console.

LEVEL 3, SUBGOAL 2: GET THE ACCESS CODE TO DR. HOFFMAN'S LAB

Continue to work your way through this room until you get to the terminal. You can't get to the elevator until you access the terminal, which will release the security field from the platform and will also provide you with the access code to Dr. Hoffman's lab.

LEVEL 3, SUBGOAL 3: SAVE VARGAS

Move up the platform and through the red door. You must deactivate any alarms before you can gain access to this door. Here you will find four of the Resistance operatives that have fallen into WEC hands. Don't even bother trying to get past those thick white cell bars.

Move past the cells and through the next two doors and you will find yourself in Dr. Gregor Hoffman's lab. It's not a pretty sight—blood and entrails litter the floor, hinting

at experiments too wicked to even contemplate.

Here you'll meet the good doctor, who chills you with his off-handed candor. After an unspeakable act of violence, Hoffman will sprint through a force field. Follow him and you will find another cell containing a slightly disoriented Jo Anne Vargas. After opening her cell, you may both teleport back to the Resistance base.

A BREAK TO RELOAD

And that's the size of things, for the first few levels at least. Needless to say, the deeper you get into the bowels of the WEC, the tougher things get. But you know what they say: "when the going gets tough..."

Get goin', son. ☺

THE CHEESE MAN

Once you rescue Vargas, you don't have to step onto the transporter and exit the mission. Make your way back to the cell block and step into the cell on the upper right-hand corner of your screen. Step into the lower corner and you will find yourself teleported to a large, sparse WEC chamber.

Follow the corridor to the end, and you will find a treasure trove of goodies, from causalless MedKits to weapons of every sort. It's Christmas time for your Silencer!

Don't, however, make the mistake of taking that other corridor and accessing the terminal. You will only find the mysterious message "The Cheese Man cometh..." As soon as you hit any key, you will find that you are no longer alone. And before you can react, the UV-9 will blow you into a streaming pile of bubbling flesh and bone. In a moment, a picture of a smiling Tony Zurovec, Crusader's project leader, appears, simply labeled: "Lord Zurovec." Ah well, curiosity always did kill the cat.

You can, however, safely enter a "toy room" such as this before any level of the game (without the threat of the Salatron, thankfully). At the command prompt, type "crusader-warp L-egg 250-skill S." Insert the level you want to play for "L" and the skill level for "S." You will find yourself in a room full of goodies, with a single telepart pad. Grab what you want, step on the pad, and you're good to go. It's just that easy.



A KID IN A CANDY STORE The secret bonus room at the end of mission two offers quite an assortment of goodies.

beans blocking your way will shut down for a few seconds—sprint past the caution stripe to safety.

Before going any further, take a long look at the floor. You might notice some darker squares in the floor tile pattern. These are electric grids, and should most definitely be avoided.

Before bolting past the colored boxes, look carefully. A rocket launcher is hidden behind the green boxes. Blast the launcher or roll underneath to avoid detection.



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PAR 5

KITE

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1

2:07
SW



PUTT-BENDING, SAND-BLASTING, SHHHHHH

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FAXON

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2

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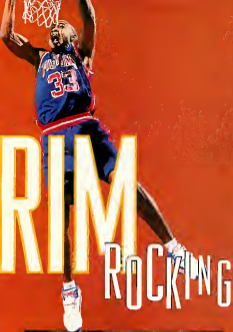
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YOU WANT SOME OF THAT?

Clausewitz 101

How To Survive First Contact With The Enemy In *EMPIRE II*

by Tim Carter

T IRED OF HEAVING TO SLOG THROUGH THE buildings of STALINGRAD yet again? Don't you just wish that some

nights you could fight some really obscure battle, without plunking down \$50 for *THE WARS OF THE AUSTRIAN SUCCESSION*? Well, *EMPIRE II* allows you to churn out any campaign from Caesar's exploits in Gaul to B-movie zapgun shootouts with flying saucers. In addition to being loads of fun, *EMPIRE II* (E2) also gives some interesting, if general, insights into planning and executing a successful military campaign.

With face-to-face and e-mail options, E2 also seems likely to be played as much against another person as against the computer. Which is more embarrassing: losing to a human or suffering defeat at the hands (er, chips) of your computer? On the one hand, computers don't laugh in your face and tell all of your friends that you are a weenie. On the other hand, most human opponents are considerably more able than their electronic brethren, giving defeat a certain dignity that is often missing when you lose to a mi-

crochip. (And no, owning a Pentium 100 is no excuse.)

My answer? Don't lose. Easier said than done, you say? Possibly, but solid strategic theory can greatly skew the odds in your favor, particularly against the computer. Pentiums, it would seem, do not often read Clausewitz.

TOWARD A UNIFIED FIELD THEORY

To win E2 on a regular basis, you

by taking and holding objectives. A few, such as *Agnicovert*, give enough points for destroying enemy units that victory is possible without holding the objectives, but, in general, you must finish the game in control of the key locations on the map to win.

The essence of planning for each scenario, then, is deciding the course of action that will provide the desired result—usually control of the objectives. Sounds simple, doesn't it?

However, how do you come up with a reasonably effective plan?

Two important components of planning are the units available to either side, and the way that each unit type interacts with the rest of the army to create a desired result. As with most military simulations, in E2 the whole is definitely greater than the sum of its parts.

A good understanding of the available forces provides the foundation for a successful plan.

Stop and think briefly about the abilities of your army. Can it move quickly? Can ranged fire units cover the entire battlefield, or will they have to relocate as the front lines shift? What are the strength differentials among your units, and what—if any—advantages do you have over the enemy on a unit-to-unit basis?



OUTFOXING ROMMEL The *Africa* Korp scenario illustrates the need for concentration of fire-power; it is crucial to ensure an enemy's defeat, so bring multiple forces to bear on enemy units.

must think and act strategically. Because of the diverse nature of the gameplay and the wide variety of scenarios and units, planning strategy is more a question of theory than of specific tips or suggestions.

In E2, winning is defined by the points structure of the scenario. In most scenarios, points are obtained



IN THE MOVE At Antietam, the Union exercises a good principle against the Confederates: keep the defense on the move and force them to detrench.

Another important planning consideration on the field of battle is evaluating how natural boundaries will play a decisive role. Is the field open? What avenues exist between your starting positions and the final objectives?

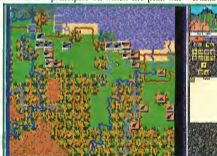
The movement abilities of your army, combined with the lay of the land, will often define the basic requirements of your plan of action. If geography only offers one or two routes to the critical objectives, and if these routes are well defended, then the first stages of the plan must be centered on destroying the enemy army. On the other hand, if the field offers more flexibility, you may want to pursue a campaign of maneuver. Maneuvering can be a particularly effective tactic if the enemy has limited ranged fire abilities, and if the "fog of war rules" are in effect. If he can't see you coming and can't respond quickly, the maneuver will be that much more effective.

Obviously, on defense the wisest strategy is to plot the likely avenues of attack and then seek to make

permits, let the enemy attack first, then counterpunch against his weakened units.

MAKE YOUR ACTIONS EFFECTIVE

Carl von Clausewitz said that no plan survives first contact with the enemy. True enough, but this doesn't mean you have to throw away the principles on which the plan was



FOCUS FIRE Japanese artillery must focus all bombardments on one defending stack at a time, to ensure a quick success for the mop-up infantry attack.

based. The German army of Clausewitz's time is a good model to follow, as it was still effective on the operational level even after its strategic plan had become hopelessly confused. A few basic fundamentals of

action can hold an army together even after the initial strategy goes out the window.

The biggest operational trap in E2 is the ineffective attack. In most scenarios there are ample opportunities for taking action that appears to be constructive, but actually wastes time and resources.

A good example of this kind of trap occurs in the *Africa Korps* scenario. Here, capturing a non-victory position without completely destroying the defending unit is generally pointless. Replacements are readily available, and the spaces involved are so large.

The central principle behind planning is that it takes a concentration of force to kill units. Both sides must bring to bear two, three, and even four or more units in a single attack to ensure that the defender dies.

As the Axis in the *Africa Korps* scenario, you face an almost infinite number of British units. Attempting to destroy the Eighth Army in detail takes so long that, even if you succeed, the game will be over and the crucial victory squares will still be in the hands of the enemy. To be effective, attacks must not only destroy enemy units, they must also move the army closer to the objective.

FIRE AND MOVEMENT

Luring half the British army into the desert will do more to ensure the fall of Tobrukh than bashing without success on dug-in infantry in the hills. On any battlefield, the ability to move is determined by the speed of the unit and the capacity of the other side to knock large holes in it from a distance. This is particularly true in E2.

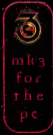
Most scenarios have many ranged-fire units. Many scenarios, particularly the U.S. Civil War and

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Napoleonic battles, include whole orders of battle with the capacity to do damage from a distance. How you use your ranged fire should be determined by how you plan to use your army as a whole. For instance, if you plan to breach the enemy line at a particular point, concentrate all ranged fire on that point as your units move up.

If you are defending a key position, pour long-range fire onto advancing enemy units as they come forward. To gain the maximum result from ranged-fire, plan ahead so you know how much damage to deal to advancing or defending troops to weaken them for your melee confrontation. Remember, use your unit types in combination. Weaken the enemy to the point where a direct attack will be effective, then switch your ranged-fire units to another target.

In the *Guadalcanal* scenario, artillery plays a very important role in preparing for effective infantry attacks. A key consideration in orchestrating the Japanese attack on the American defenses is the support requirements of each attack.

Don't think in terms of traditional divisions of power; dividing the

Japanese firepower is a sure way to lose the entire battle. Instead, pick a unit or stack each turn that will be the focus of the attack and dump everything you have on it. Then, in the same turn, launch repeated at-



COUNTERPUNCH In Waterloo, it is better to defend than attack. Wait for the enemy to launch an attack, then counterattack their weakened units.

tacks with infantry to take the defenders out while they are still weak and exhausted.

A common tactical problem in E2 occurs when advancing over open ground against an enemy with many ranged-fire units. As large parts of the British Army demonstrated in the first battle of the Somme, walking slowly toward the sound of the enemy's guns is often not a wise battle plan.

When facing entrenched or otherwise prepared defenders, the com-

mon response is to concentrate large numbers of attackers. Sure, the first few waves will be decimated, but after a while, the force of numbers will prevail.

On defense, the same principle applies. Two units may be stacked together, but can only attack one at a time, so it is easy to concentrate on defense. Just remember to keep your stacks together, and to dig in whenever possible.

BATTLE PLANS

To sum up a winning E2 strategy:

1. Decide where you have to get to in order to win.
2. Determine the assets available, and how they might best be used.

3. Concentrate your strongest assets where they will have the most effect in reaching the necessary objectives.

Don't be troubled by the need to repeat history. Also, don't bother trying to keep the battlefield neat and tidy. Straight lines are boring, and they make the screen look like a chessboard. Determine the point at which you can break the enemy, and throw everything you have at it. Happy empire-building. ☺

Clausewitz: The Perfect General

Karl von Clausewitz is perhaps the most influential military theorist from the Western world. Born in Prussia in 1780, he had a remarkable career in the military and went on to write about his experiences and doctrines, which are still discussed by military students and leaders.

At 13, Clausewitz entered the service to fight in the French Revolution. He also fought in the Napoleonic Wars before being captured and returned to Prussia in 1808. Soon afterwards, he became the chief military instructor for Prussia's crown prince. He entered into the war against Napoleon between 1812 and 1814, fighting as an officer of the Russian

army. In his later years, he was promoted to major general and served the War College in Berlin as director.

After his death in 1831, Clausewitz's theories, notes, and experiences were published posthumously in a three-volume encyclopedia titled *On War*. The work rivals Sun Tzu's *Art of War* as the definitive doctrine of successful military strategies. In it, Clausewitz presents his famous dictum: that "war is a mere continuation of policy by other means."

Clausewitz also introduced the concept of "total war," which posited that all assets of a nation are subject to attack during warfare, including the war machine, civilians and prop-

erty. Another of Clausewitz's tenets is that the likelihood of warfare is influenced by two factors: the equilibrium of forces and the intentions of the aggressor state. Both factors are interrelated, and imbalances in equilibrium, coupled with hostile intention, will lead to war; whereas an equilibrium of forces, despite hostile intent, will result in peace. Many of his points, so applicable to warfare in any time period, also hold true in wargaming. Those who wish to read his extensive volumes on war should check out *On War*, published by Princeton University Press.

—Elliott Chiv

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—SCORE

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Tread-Head Heaven

Taming SSI's STEEL PANTHERS

by Patrick C. Miller

THE GERMAN PANTHER, THE EPITOME OF WORLD WAR II MAIN BATTLE TANKS, WAS AS fast and deadly as its name implied. Shells from its long, lean 75mm gun could punch through enemy armor with ease at well over a thousand yards and, protected by thick, well-sloped frontal armor, it was more than a match for the typical U.S. tank of WWII. In fact, the Panther's primary opponent, the Sherman tank—tall, angular and nowhere near as heavily armored or armed—was mainly prized for its reliability. Easy to mass produce, the Sherman was eventually able to overwhelm the individually superior German Panthers and other tanks of the *Wehrmacht* by sheer numbers.

Given the choice between these two tanks, who wouldn't jump at the chance to command German Panthers in SSI's STEEL PANTHERS? Me, for one. Just give me a few platoons of Shermans, a company of GIs, a couple of P-47s circling overhead and the corps artillery at my back. Then, I'll be as happy as a dogface with a can of Spans and a dry pair of socks. If you want fun, take the Germans on campaign, but if you want a *real* challenge, play the

American side. Once you learn how to fight and win consistently with their limited vehicles, you'll become a better STEEL PANTHERS player no matter which nationality you command. In this article, the first of a two-part series on campaigning with the Americans, we'll examine the strategic aspects of purchasing core units, differences in mission types, construction of support units to match your mission, deployment prior to battle and force management

sault guns and, occasionally, Tiger heavy tanks. Germany's infantry, also, was as top-notch as its armor.

VICTORY THROUGH FIREPOWER

The saving grace is that U.S. armored fighting vehicles tended to be inexpensive in comparison to German AFVs. They also enjoyed plentiful artillery and air support. Naturally, this advantage pales in the opening stages of your campaign.

U.S. infantry squads are large and well-equipped with small-arms and, later in the war, anti-tank weapons. At the start of your North African campaign, your best bet is to fight the Italians early and often, to build up your force's morale and experience enough to upgrade its weapons. Sooner or later, though, you'll have to face the vaunted *Afrika Corps*. By the time you reach the European mainland, encounters with Panthers, Tigers and deadly Panzerjagers (tank destroyers) will be routine.

Your first duty before going to battle is to select the quality and type of troops under your command—the core units of your force. Veteran troops have higher morale and more experience, but offer 20 percent fewer points with which to buy units. Selecting green troops gives 20 percent more points, but they are too disorganized to warrant purchase. Selecting average troops is best: you'll still



NINE MINE MINE mines make cheap and effective "motion detectors" when placed around objective areas and likely routes of advance.

during the campaign.

In early 1943, the American commander in North Africa had inexperienced troops and relatively low morale. In game terms, they tend to be terrible shots and run away far too often. To make matters worse, the M-3 Scout light tank with its 37mm "puncher" gun was the best tank available, not much comfort when facing Rommel's Africa Corps equipped with medium panzers, as-

have a few points left over, and your troops will always grow better with experience. You also have the option of selecting either Foot, Motorized or Mechanized infantry. Foot troops have no transports, while Motorized infantry is supplied with trucks and Mechanized infantry comes with M-3 halftracks (in release 1.1 of the game, the latter two are more expensive).

The transport units are treated as if they're assigned from the motor pool before each battle, not as per-

my units better and can foil close assaults by German infantry), transports aren't necessary unless you assemble an infantry-heavy force. Also, consider that halftracks are frail, and that when your troops see them being destroyed so easily, their morale will suffer.

POWER SHOPPING TIPS

Next, you will purchase core units to represent the force you'll command throughout the campaign. Carefully consider your decisions

here because the type of units you initially pick will determine the type of units to which you can upgrade as your campaign progresses. Think about how you want your core units to evolve during the course of the war. Although Stuart light tanks might appear to be an undesirable initial choice, you should buy some if you envision commanding the best tanks and tank destroyers the American taxpayer can provide—*later*, in the war. You can't change infantry and artillery units into tanks or tank destroyers, nor can tanks be changed into infantry.

Selecting a balanced infantry and armor force is the best route to follow. A good rule of thumb is to have at least one infantry squad for each tank in your force. Engineer platoons are an excellent initial choice for your infantry. Not only can they detect and remove mines, but, with their high-explosive satchel charges, they also possess a lethal anti-tank capability, unlike other American infantry early in the war.

With the exception of having a few mortars on hand to lob an occasional smoke screen or suppress an anti-tank gun, artillery is best purchased as support units on a mission-by-mis-

sion basis. You should purchase at least one section of M-15A1 self-propelled anti-aircraft artillery (SPAA) vehicles. They make great command vehicles for your force commander, can help prevent the Luftwaffe from chewing up your units and, when there's no air threat, excel in the anti-personnel role with their 37mm anti-cannon and two .50-caliber machine guns. Later, you can upgrade the M-15A1s to the more lethal M-16s that mount quad .50-caliber machine guns. Also consider buying two sections of M-15A1s with the idea of later converting one section to M-7 Priests, a very useful self-propelled artillery vehicle armed with a 105mm howitzer capable of providing either direct or indirect fire support.

IT'S THE MISSION, STUPID

Once you've selected your core units, high command will assign your first mission and offer a selection of secondary units for support. On the Support Units Purchase screen, clicking the mission button in the lower-left corner will tell you who you're fighting (Germans or Italians), the date and location of the battle and the type of mission. Advance and assault missions mean you'll be attacking to take victory hexes. Defend and delay missions mean you'll be holding victory hexes. The number of points you're given for the purchase of support units depends on the type of mission

you're assigned. Sometimes advance missions are actually meeting engagements with

both sides on the attack, but there's no way to know that until you get a look at the map during the deployment phase. High command is simply too cheap to provide you with a map of the battlefield when you buy support units.



SNOW JOB German individual armor superiority is negated here by the dense winter forest.

manently attached units. Therefore, their level of experience never rises above the level at which they were originally purchased. If you want your transport units to be treated as if they're permanently attached to your core force, you should buy Foot infantry and then purchase trucks or halftracks from the Miscellaneous Units menu. Remember that transports purchased in this manner count against your 2-4-unit total, while the transports you receive with Mechanized or Motorized infantry do not.

The Mechanized infantry option is attractive for the Americans, because their halftracks are useful in the scout role and can take out both enemy halftracks and armored cars with their .50-caliber machine guns, as well as provide fire support to infantry and some minimal anti-aircraft capability. However, since you'll be loading the infantry onto your tanks anyway (the infantry spots ene-

TIP! If infantry units aren't organic to your core force, you'll definitely want to purchase at least two or three platoons to avoid having your armored units overrun by enemy infantry.



In general, buying artillery or air support for defensive missions and meeting engagements is a waste, not only because it's difficult to engage moving targets with these units, but also because you'll be doing most of your fighting in close proximity to the enemy and will want to avoid friendly-fire casualties. Direct-fire armored units (tanks and tank destroyers) are the best buys for defensive operations. They can move from one good defensive location to another and drive out from under an artillery barrage. Anti-tank guns are cheap, but, being susceptible to small arms and artillery fire, tend to be put out of action quickly once located.

On defensive missions, you're sometimes given the option to purchase mines. Placed on roads and around objective areas, mines are a cheap and effective way to enhance your defense. Mobile anti-tank units are far more preferable than static pillboxes that tend to make excellent artillery targets.

On offense, you have the opportunity—some would say the duty—to fight The American Way. With air power and plenty of artillery at your disposal, the ability to obliterate known and suspected enemy defensive positions can prove decisive if used properly. It is, however, no guarantee of success. Offensive operations require a combined arms approach. You'll need scouting units to spot enemy positions, infantry to keep *Panzerfaust*-wielding Germans from ambushing your tanks, engineers and engineering vehicles to clear mines and obstacles, and armored support to deliver concentrated, well-directed firepower at the point of attack.

ASSAULT AND BATTERIES

Assault missions provide the most

TIP! Advance missions allow fewer build points, and no off-map artillery support. So, purchase self-propelled artillery: Priests and M-12s with 155mm guns. Note that these are listed as armor, not artillery units.

points for support units, because enemy troops and armor will be dug in. Heavy artillery batteries (155mm or greater) are best for dealing with entrenched foes. Unfortunately, they're also expensive! Engineers and armored engineering vehicles (Sherman crab and dozer tanks) are invaluable in that they keep your attack from getting bogged down by mines, dragon's teeth, bunkers and pill boxes. They work best in tandem with cheap recon units (M-20 armored cars or M-3 halftracks) leading the attack, discovering minefields and watching for enemy tanks and anti-tank guns. Best of all, losing these vehicles won't affect your core force for the next battle.

Once you've purchased support units, it's time to deploy for battle. The first thing you should do is check out the map to make certain that you're not fighting a meeting engagement. If the map contains victory hex areas with neutral hexes (a tan hex with a V in it) or if some hexes are American-controlled and others are Axis-controlled, the mission is a meeting engagement. If all the hexes are American-controlled, you're on the defensive. If all are Axis-controlled, you're attacking and the Germans are defending.

Manual deployment, although more time-consuming, is preferable to auto-deployment since it enables you to examine troop stats for morale, experience and kills in order to determine which units might be better suited for a particular role during the mission. Whether you're on the offensive or the defensive, concentrating your force is the key to winning. Being spread all over the map merely sets you up for a big loss.

THE BEST DEFENSE

When defending, don't attempt to hold more than two objective areas and seriously consider defending only one. Your overall strategy should be aimed at smashing the enemy's offensive capability and then, counterattacking before the battle

ends in order to retake any lost victory hexes that were originally under American control. At all costs, avoid

TIP! Deploying your units on the back side of a hill crest—reverse slope tactics—with your field of fire sweeping the hilltop victory hexes is the ideal way to counter German armored superiority.

long-range shooting matches with German Panzers and Panzerjagers. Pick an objective area in good defensive terrain (forests, hills and buildings) and position your units around (not in) it, ideally with multiple fields of fire intersecting the area to create a deadly kill zone.

Position your units to allow you to double up on your shots by placing tanks and tank destroyers one behind the other. Just before enemy units arrive and the shooting starts, drive the rear vehicle into the same hex as the front vehicle to provide maximum firepower whenever a target appears. Engineers and bazooka-armed infantry can be deployed along the outside edges of objective areas to ambush enemy AFVs and infantry as they attempt to take the area. However, this exposes these units to greater risks should the enemy have a large amount of artillery and conduct a heavy bombardment prior to attacking.

COVER YOUR HINDER

Offensively, deploy in a manner that helps you advance while avoiding long-range fire from German tanks and anti-tank guns. Take your objectives one at a time, using cover and concealment to move your force to the first objective area. Avoid taking the obvious routes: mines, tanks and anti-tank guns will be covering them. In most cases, you should have time to outflank enemy positions, enabling you to attack from the side or rear where less firepower is likely to be concentrated. By clicking the Artillery Bombardment icon during deployment, you can pre-plot air strikes and barrages to hit prior to

the first orders phase. If your force must cover a large area of open ground, immediately drop a smoke screen ahead of the intended line of advance to help shield it from long-range anti-tank fire.

At this point, you've assembled a combat force for your campaign, pro-

vided it with support units tailored to its mission, devised a strategy for victory and deployed your units to maximize their effectiveness and carry out your plan. Now, all you have to worry about are the tactics, what Major General J.F.C. Fuller referred to as "the cutting edge of strategy, the

edge which chisels out the plan into action." In the second part of this series, we'll cover the fine points of firing and maneuvering your units during offensive, defensive and meeting engagements. In STEEL PANTHERS, that's where the real fun and the greatest challenges begin. ☛

THE CARE AND FEEDING OF CORE UNITS

In selecting the core American units for a long campaign, my goal was to create a balanced force of armor and infantry, providing a cadre of reliable infantry platoons and the opportunity to take advantage of improved tanks and tank destroyers as they became available.

I quickly replaced the M-3 Stuart light tanks with M-4 Shermans or M-10 Wolverines, creating hybrid armor platoons, each with three Shermans and two Wolverines. As the war progressed, these platoons were upgraded to Easy Eight Shermans with the higher velocity 76mm gun and M-36 Jacksons with the potent 90mm gun. Near the end of the war, I bought three T-26 Pershings for B Platoon, at last giving me some tanks on par with German armor.

Remember: when armor is destroyed, often some of the crew will escape, retaining their experience levels and kills when issued a re-

placement vehicle. So, make sure to protect the crews of destroyed or abandoned vehicles or allow them to retreat off the map to fight another day.

My engineer platoon remained unchanged, but I found that the longer range of my two rifle platoons often went unused. I converted them to sub-machine gun platoons for better close-in (one or two hex range) fighting. Plus, SMG squads are armed with bazookas, and end-tank capability pays off for infantry on several occasions. Unfortunately, when better weapons become available for your squads, they won't automatically receive them until you change the squads completely, which then lowers their experience rating.

I also resisted the temptation to make my overall command unit (AO) into a tank or other AFV. Instead, making it into an engineer squad provides it with some lethal self-de-

fense capability and makes it less likely to be eliminated with one shot (and more likely to retreat if the going gets too tough). Also, because the commander is one of the best units to use for calling in artillery or air support, I prefer it to be a more stealthy unit, able to occupy an ideal location for spotting while remaining undetected.

My mortar section was converted to Sherman Calllopes, the American answer to the German Nebelwerfer multiple rocket launcher. Strangely, this made them off-map artillery units, which meant that I never had to worry about them being destroyed. Finally, the M-15A1 and aircraft vehicles were replaced with M-16s featuring quad .50-caliber machine guns. They didn't see many German aircraft, but did destroy many enemy squads and, in one battle, downed two Stukas in a single turn. —Patrick Miller

MILLER'S MARAUDERS AT WAR'S START

Formation	Rating	Exp.	Morale
A0 SMG squad	Green	49	50
B0 M-3 Stuart	Avg.	63	64
B1 M-3 Stuart	Avg.	61	64
B2 M-3 Stuart	Avg.	57	64
B3 M-3 Stuart	Gen.	47	54
B4 M-4 Stuart	Gen.	47	57
C0 M-3 Stuart	Avg.	52	51
C1 M-3 Stuart	Gen.	45	44
C2 M-3 Stuart	Avg.	56	45
C3 M-3 Stuart	Avg.	63	50
C4 M-3 Stuart	Avg.	61	56
D0 Rifle squad	Avg.	59	47
D1 Rifle squad	Avg.	61	51
D2 Rifle squad	Avg.	58	56
D3 Rifle squad	Gen.	47	49
E1 Rifle squad	Avg.	56	56
E2 Rifle squad	Avg.	54	63
F0 Eng. squad	Avg.	61	59
F1 Eng. squad	Gen.	47	53
F2 Eng. squad	Avg.	60	56
G0 M-15A1 AA	Avg.	53	49
G1 M-15A1 AA	Gen.	48	53
H0 Elmer mortar	Gen.	47	68
H1 Elmer mortar	Avg.	60	59

MILLER'S MARAUDERS AT WAR'S END

Formation	Rating	Exp.	Morale	Kills
A0 Eng. Squad	Avg.	67	78	0
B0 T-26 Pershing	Elite	100	94	33
B1 T-26 Pershing	Elite	100	99	38
B2 T-26 Pershing	Vel.	90	98	14
B3 M-36 Jackson	Vel.	81	93	10
B4 M-36 Jackson	Vel.	96	98	21
C0 M-43EB	Elite	103	94	2
C1 M-43EB	Elite	101	96	33
C2 M-43EB	Elite	100	94	25
C3 M-36 Jackson	Elite	100	96	31
C4 M-36 Jackson	Vel.	99	99	4
D0 SMG squad	Vel.	92	95	0
D1 SMG squad	Avg.	77	90	3
D2 SMG squad	Avg.	76	79	1
D3 SMG squad	Vel.	82	94	0
E1 SMG squad	Vel.	80	83	1
E2 SMG squad	Vel.	82	88	4
F0 Eng. squad	Vel.	80	96	2
F1 Eng. squad	Avg.	74	98	2
F2 Eng. squad	Avg.	72	89	2
G0 M-16 AA	Vel.	88	96	13
G1 M-16 AA	Elite	101	99	20
H0 Sherman Calllope	Avg.	76	95	2
H1 Sherman Calllope	Vel.	83	98	1

GERMAN ARMORED FIGHTING VEHICLES

	Front Armor Turret/Hull	Side Armor Turret/Hull	Gun	Range	Penetration	Speed	Cost
Tanks							
Panzer II Lynx	4/4	2/2	20L55	20	6	18	6
Panzer III G	4/4	3/3	50L42	30	8	14	10
Panzer III J	7/7	3/3	50L60	30	9/13	15	12
Panzer IV C	4/3	2/2	75L24	30	6	15	8
Panzer IV G	5/8	3/3	75L43	50	14/19	15	13
Panzer IV H	5/8	4/4	75L48	50	14	15	15
Panther	12/14	6/5	75L70	60	19	17	25
Tiger	12/10	8/8	88L56	60	17	14	30
King Tiger	18/23	9/9	88L71	60	22	11	50
Tank Destroyers							
Stug III G	8/9	3/3	75L48	50	14	15	11
Marder	2/3	1/1	76L51	50	13/19	14	10
Nashorn	2/4	1/2	88L71	60	22	13	16
Jagdpanzer IV/70	12/11	5/3	75L70	60	19	15	15
Jagdpanther	14/14	6/4	88L71	60	22	17	35
Elephant	23/20	9/8	88L71	60	22	9	40
Armored Cars							
Sdk-234	4/5	1/1	20L55	20	6	18	6
Puma	4/5	1/1	50L80	30	9/13	18	9
Self-Propelled Artillery/AA							
Wespe	1/2	1/1	105mm How.	130	0	13	12
Hummel	2/3	1/2	150mm How.	130	3	13	15
Wirbelwind	3/6	3/3	20mm Quad	30	3	14	11

AMERICAN FIGHTING VEHICLES

	Front Armor Turret/Hull	Side Armor Turret/Hull	Gun	Range	Penetration	Speed	Cost
Tanks							
M3 Stuart	4/5	3/3	37L53	30	9	18	9
M5 Stuart	6/6	4/3	37L53	30	9	17	9
M24 Chaffee	4/5	3/3	75L38	40	10	22	10
M3 Lee	10/6	5/4	37L53	30	9	13	11
(w/HWAP)	10/6	5/4	75L31	40	9	13	11
M4A1 Sherman	8/10	5/4	75L38	40	10	13	11
M4A3 Sherman	8/10	5/4	75L38	40	10	15	11
M4A3E8 Sherman	9/12	6/5	76L54	50	12/18	15	12
Sherman Jumbo	17/14	15/6	75L38	40	10	12	18
T26 Pershing	14/16	8/8	90L50	60	16/25	13	24
Tank Destroyers							
M10 Wolverine	8/6	4/4	76L54	50	12/18	15	12
M18 Hellcat	3/2	2/2	76L54	50	12/18	25	11
M36 Jackson	10/9	9/8	90L50	60	16/25	15	14
Armored Cars							
M20 Scout Car	2/3	1/1	50 MG	20	3	20	5
M8 Greyhound	2/3	2/2	37L53	30	9	20	7
Self-Propelled Artillery/AA							
M7 Priest	2/6	1/4	105mm How.	130	0	14	9
M12 GMC	3/4	2/2	150mm How.	130	3	14	15
M15A1	1/2	1/1	37mm Flak	40	6	18	6
(w/HWAP)			50 MG x 2	20	3		
M16	1/2	1/1	50 MG x 4	20	3	18	6

TWIST AND SHOUT!

"Got red and blue on my tail. Can you swipe 'em before I go into the screw?... over!"



Actual IBM screen shots shown



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Popular Hot Rodding For Computer Gamers

How The New High-End Game Computers Stack Up

by Loyd Case

We've known all along that the only reason for owning a fast Pentium is to play. Now, after years of saying "Silly user, games are for kids," the big computer companies are wising up and targeting you, the gamer, with their top-of-the-line systems. With this in mind, CGW's technical staff recently spent a day down at the leg-

endary ZD Labs, checking out some seriously hot machines that should please any gamer. The systems we looked at are nothing to sneeze at. All of them have been configured with the consumer market in mind—meaning games. (Okay, your kid can run GROLIER'S NEW MEDIA ENCYCLOPEDIA on these machines as well.)

**THE NEC POWER PLAYER
LIMITED EDITION**

NEC ostensibly designed this sys-

tem just for game players. For the most part, they did a nice job, but did stumble in a couple of areas: graphics and sound. First, the good news.

The first thing you notice about the NEC is the case. The case is a mid-sized tower, but wider than most systems in its class. The lines are more graceful and aesthetically pleasing than the rather spartan look of most PCs. Then, when you turn the case around, you immediately notice that

the cover is secured with thumb-screws, a more thoughtful design than the usual Phillips-head hardware.

The innards of the system are a little out of the ordinary as well. For one thing, the motherboard is a passive backplane board. There are no PCI or ISA slots on the motherboard itself. Rather, there is one very large slot, into which plugs a very large printed circuit board. On this board are the two PCI slots and four ISA slots.

Like all of the systems we checked out, the NEC uses the Intel Triton chipset. The NEC also sports a 1.6-gigabyte Maxtor hard disk and an NEC IOE CD-ROM drive. This system has an on-board graphics adapter with 2MB of VRAM and an Alliance Promotion graphics accelerator.

There are some other nifty components supplied as well. The NEC came with the Microsoft Sidewinder 3.0 Pro joystick, a nice, compact all-

in-one controller that has digital capabilities. The sound card is an NEC-manufactured card that uses the Ensoniq processor for MIOI, but has a meager megabyte of wavetable sounds. The speakers were outstanding: Yamaha YST-M10s are included, complete with a powered subwoofer. Our particular test system came with 32 MB RAM (16MB is standard) and a 256K level 2 cache. Windows 95 was pre-installed. All in all, this seemed like a very nice machine.

Underneath the smooth-looking veneer, however, are some nasty warts. The main problem is the Alliance graphics chip. This chip has neither the Windows acceleration horsepower or the raw OOS performance to be the perfect game machine. We ran WINBENCH 96, 2D Labs' new Windows 95 benchmark, to test Windows performance. For OOS, we used PC

BENCH 9.0 and the venerable 3-D BENCH. The Alliance chipset brought the NEC system in dead last for graphics performance in all three benchmarks. This directly affected game performance, as the frame rate for FLIGHT UNLIMITED was noticeably slower at 640x480 than any of the other systems in our roundup.

Equally worrisome, the Alliance graphics processor utterly failed our VESA VBE standard test. Not only did the NEC fail VBETest, it crashed on exit, completely hosing the system so that only by shutting down power could we cudgel it back to life. Luckily, UniVBE, the universal VESA BIOS emulator from Scitech, supports the Alliance chip, so this is not as serious a problem as it might originally seem. Still, if you get this system, you might want to consider disabling the onboard graphics and getting a faster PCI graphics card.

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The other problem with this system is the NEC-built sound card. This card is based on the Ensoniq Soundscape design, but unfortunately has a very limited wavetable set. This meant that the digital audio was okay, but MIDI sounds were thin and unrealistic, with the exception of the piano voices. We never could get the Sound Blaster emulation to work with DOS games, though. Several of the games we ran (CAESAR II, FLIGHT UNLIMITED) had direct support for the Soundscape as a digital audio card, and these sounded very nice indeed—except that CAESAR II consistently locked up the system whenever we left the game.

The CD-ROM drive exhibited some unusual behavior as well. We first thought it was a six-speed CD, but the WING COMMANDER 3 installation program reported a data rate of BOB,936 bytes per sec-

ond, making it more of a "5.5-speed" CD ROM drive.

The news on the input side was somewhat better since the Microsoft Sidewinder 3-D Pro is a good choice for an all-around controller. Emulating a CH Flightstick Pro with rudder pedals (the rudder pedal motion is emulated by twisting the stick), it offers a solid-feeling and smooth performance, although the lack of spring tension and short throw might be undesirable to veteran flight simulator pilots. Unfortunately, the Sidewinder was offset by a poor keyboard, with a mushy feel

and an inferior layout. In addition, NEC supplied the lowest-cost Logitech mouse available.

Of course, the Yamaha speakers sounded awesome enough to make up for some of the disappointment with the system. It was altogether too easy to crank these babies up and be deafened by the audio output. In addition, the stereo imaging seemed exceptional.

On the visual side, we tested the system with an NEC XV17 monitor. This is a terrific 17-inch monitor with a rock-solid refresh rate and digital controls using on-screen menus. Unfortunately, this monitor isn't standard with the system, but we certainly liked it best of all the screens we looked at.

Finally, there's the overall system performance. We were startled to observe that the NEC only runs a little faster than the Dell XPS 120c we tested. Since the Dell uses a 120-MHz Pentium, we had to scratch our heads over this one. Perhaps, the Dell's use of pipelined burst synchronous cache and EDO memory improves its score dramatically.

Our overall impression of the NEC is that it has the core of a fine, high-performance system, but is hobbled by poor graphics performance and a mediocre sound card. If these problems were remedied, this could be a very nice system for your money. Game bundle highlights include full versions of MICHIGAN WARRIOR 2, NASCAR RACING, and DESCENT.

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BUYING THE DREAM MACHINE

Last month, we covered in great detail the individual components that constitute a gamer's dream machine. Starting with the CPU, you'd want the fastest chip out there. When we tested these systems, the 133-MHz Pentium was the chip of choice, but by the time you read this, the 150-MHz and 166-MHz Pentiums should be on the streets. And this time Intel has announced some very aggressive pricing, so it's very likely that a 166-MHz Pentium rocket sled won't cost any more than the systems we check out here. Additionally, there's a good chance that 133-MHz systems will be quite a bit cheaper. Either way, you win.

The second most important component in a high-performance game system is graphics performance. After a couple of years of only incremental improvements, the state of the art in graphics is moving with incredible speed. For example, 3-D has become the hot buzzword in the graphics hardware game (see this month's article on the Diamond Edge in "Under The Hood"). By the time this issue hits the stands, the early generation of 3-D graphics cards specifically tuned for fast gameplay will have already hit the streets and the even-more-impressive next generation of 3-D cards will be just around the corner. Unlike CPUs, however, it's fairly easy to upgrade a graphics card—but you do have to coat the hood.

A third factor to consider is that little, rarely unmentioned software release called Windows 95. All right, I'm kidding about the unmentioned part, but Win 95 will have a huge impact on games and gamers in the upcoming year. Some of the early Win 95 games have no doubt appeared in a few Christmas stockings around the country. These early games are a mixed bag in terms of gameplay, but they do demonstrate, for the most part, the performance potential for Windows 95 games. No longer do we have to worry about which VESA driver to load, multiplayer games are much easier to configure, and graphics performance has been stunning. All of which results in better game performance, since the CPU has to do less work.

(16MB RAM system, does not include monitor). Call 1-800-NEC-INFO for more information.

DELL DIMENSION XPS 120C

Although it fared well in a higher class, the Dimension with a 120 MHz processor is a good example of a PC that was on the leading edge only a few months ago. Even though it's no longer a top performer, it has dropped

enough in price that you might consider this system rather than the 133 MHz which is now shipping, but costs more. Remember, both 120 MHz and 133 MHz Pentiums are double-locked. In other words, like the 486DX2, the internal chip runs twice as fast as its communication to the outside world. This means that the 120-MHz chip's external clock rate is 60 MHz, while the 133-MHz chip clocks the system bus at 66 MHz. Ultimately, communication with memory happens at a slower rate.

If you look at the performance differences of only the chips, the 120-MHz chip should run at about 90% of the 133-MHz chip. However, the Dell's overall CPU benchmark is 1/3 less than the Falcon Northwest system. Note that both systems use EDO memory, have pipeline burst cache and use Intel's Triton chipset. The bottom line: look for balance in system performance. The clock rate of the processor is only one of many factors.

Having said that, the Dell proved to be a smooth, well-balanced performer. It even edged out the NEC system for DOS graphics performance, although Windows graphics performance was inferior.

The Dell ships with a pair of Labtech CS-900 speakers. These multimedia speakers are adequate performers, but lack punch in the low range and seem to strain at high volumes. The Dell does not ship with any kind of game controller and has a stock Sound Blaster 16 for audio. The Logitech two-button mouse had a nice, ergonomic feel to it, and the keyboard was Dell's standard IBM-compatible keyboard.

The monitor we tested with the Dell was the Dell Ultrascan 17. This digital monitor seemed to lack brightness compared to the NEC XV17. Other than that, the display was rock solid and the digital controls easy to use.

The NEC 273 CD-ROM supplied with the Dell is a quad speed, IDE CD-ROM drive. Performance was typi-

cal of a quad-speed drive, and was slower than the others tested. It took thirty seconds to load a Wing Commander 3 mission, from the time we hit the Esc key as Luke Skywalker, Christopher Blair ran down the stairs to mission launch.

TESTING... TESTING... ONE TWO

Testing a complete system is not a task for the faint-hearted. We wanted to do justice to the systems we tested, so we made use of 20 Labs test facility. 20 Labs is Ziff-Davis' technical laboratory. They're the ones responsible for the "We Test 500 Printers" articles you see in our sister publications like PC Magazine and Computer Shopper.

Just as important as the facility, though, are the tests we ran. We began with Ziff-Davis' latest Windows benchmark suite, WinBench 95. This benchmark tests performance under Windows 95 and adds 32-bit processor benchmarks and CD-ROM benchmarks. We also used it for our disk benchmark. Next, for DOS performance, we used that aging standard, 3D Bench. This particular benchmark is not very useful for testing the highest performance video cards, but can still reveal slow performers.

We also used PC Bench 9.0 DOS graphics mix for DOS graphics. The final test was VBEtest, which comes with UniVBE 5.1. It specifically tests for VESA VBE compliance. (VBE stands for VESA BIOS Emulator, a mouthful that relates to the current DOS-based standard for Super VGA graphics.)

BUT HOW DOES IT PLAY?

The ultimate test, however, is how games perform. To that end, we checked out these systems with a suite of games. For raw performance, we ran Looking Glass Technologies' *Flight Unlimited*. At high resolutions, this game is a real CPU killer, and will identify poor CPU and graphics performance in a very (pardon the pun) graphic way.

Wing Commander 3's installation routine supplied one of our CD-ROM benchmarks. We also used it to measure game and mission load times.

We ran id's latest masterpiece, Hexx, to check out audio and music and Sierra's Aces of the Deep: Commando to see how the systems performed with a real Windows 95 game. Finally, we loaded *Crash 2* as an experiment. *Crash 2*, also from Sierra, is a real time strategy game that runs in DOS, but is autoplay enabled, allowing for easy installation and play under Windows 95.

(What a difference a year makes—thirty seconds would have seemed luxuriously fast when *Wing Commander 3* first shipped!)

The real sleeper in this system was the use of the Quantum Fireball 10BOAT hard drive. This is a real performer, edged out only by the overall performance of the Falcon Northwest system. Making use of mode 4 PIO data transfers, the disk benchmarks far surpassed the NEC's Maxtor drive.

Overall, we'd classify the XPS120c as a well-

GATEWAY PS-133XL

GATEWAY has long been associated with good quality, low cost systems. While they've had some teething problems with customer service in the past, the systems themselves have enjoyed a good reputation for performance. This latest incarnation of Gateway's high end is no exception—if you're patient enough to get through the installation process.

At first

preconfigured. Even so, it's a relatively straightforward installation, although you do have to dig out the Windows 95 manual in order to enter the serial number.

However, frustration rears its



GATEWAY PS-133XL

balanced, middle-of-the-road system. It's worth a look if you can't quite afford the ultimate in performance, but if you've got the bucks, you might look to a faster system.

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glance, the 133XL seems to be a no-brainer to install. The set-up documentation is concise, yet seemingly thorough. It's only when you connect all the pieces and hit the power switch that the warts begin to show.

This system supposedly comes with Windows 95 pre-installed. Well, it is—to a point. When you power on the system, you are greeted with the Windows 95 install menu. Gateway probably sets up all disk drives with identical Windows 95 installations, but since they sell systems with a variety of peripherals, they don't all come

ugly head when you try to configure the system to run OOS games. The problem is not Windows 95 *per se*, but the Ensoniq Soundscape Plug-and-Play sound card. Actually, the problem isn't so much the sound card as the poorly organized documentation which is supposed to help you contend with it. For example, there's a lot of documentation on using the Soundscape under Windows 95 and a little bit of information on running OOS games under Windows 95. However, the information on using the card while running OOS games in OOS-exclusive mode is nearly nonexistent.

It wasn't until we delved into the section on configuring the Soundscape under Windows 3.1 that we un-

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covered the information needed to set-up the card. Even then, when we ran the DOS setup program, we got an error message that the Soundscape environment variable wasn't configured. After much trial and error (and more than a little wailing and gnashing of teeth), we got everything working. This particular Ensoniq card comes with 2MB of wavetable sound. These MIDI sounds feature some of the best horn sections we've heard in a sound card, and the piano and bass sounded quite realistic, but the kick drums and guitar were considerably lacking.

Once it's working, though, the system is a nice, balanced performer. Gateway has fixed one weak link, replacing their old, non-standard keyboard with a standard keyboard layout (which includes two "Windows 95" keys.) While you'll have to supply your own controller, the system comes with a genuine Microsoft mouse.

FALCON NORTHWEST 133MHZ MACH V

The 133XL comes with ALtec-Lansing ACS 400 Dolby ProLogic surround-sound speakers, complete with powered subwoofer. These are, in a word, awesome sounding, even better than the Yamaha speakers that ship with the NEC system. They are a great match for the Ensoniq card (if you can get it working, that is.)

The graphics adapter is the Matrox Millenium, with 2MB of WRAM. This is a fast card, turning out 125 frames per second in 3D Bench and a phenomenal 6375 on the PC BENCH DOS graphics mix. Windows performance is stellar as well, churning out 24.2 million pixels per second on the 8-bit graphics Winmark test. The Gateway comes in second in overall CPU performance, with a CPUMark 32 of 270 and a CPUMark 16 of 268. The overall DOSMark came in at 1333.

The weak link is the Vivitron 17 monitor. While the image put out by the Vivitron was sharp and bright, there was a significant amount of distortion (pin-cushioning) around the edges of the display that we couldn't alter. Also, despite being a digital monitor with a variety of resolution presets, you'll find yourself adjusting the monitor frequently.

Hard disk performance excelled due to the Western Digital Caviar 1.6 gigabyte disk, the same one that's included with the Falcon Northwest system. The CD-ROM drive is manufactured by Epson, and is a six-speed, IDE drive. It placed fairly high on our tests, though it is not quite as speedy as the NEC 6X in the Falcon.

Speaking of games, the Gateway ran

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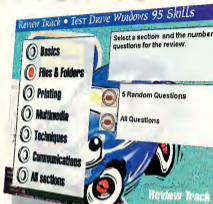
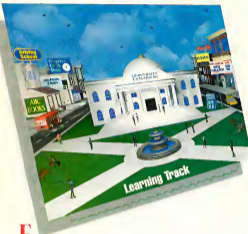


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Ultimate Game Machine: Features

	Dell 120MHz Dimension XPS P120c	NEC 133MHz Power Player Limited Edition	Gateway P5-133XL	Falcon Northwest 133MHz Mach V
RAM	16 Megabytes	32 Megabytes	16 Megabytes	16 Megabytes
CPU	120MHz Pentium	133MHz Pentium	133MHz Pentium	133MHz Pentium
Level 2 Cache	256 Pipeline Burst Mode	256K	256K Pipeline Burst Mode	256K Pipeline Burst Mode
Motherboard (Intel i486 chipset)	2 free PCI slots	2 free PCI slots	2 free PCI slots	2 free PCI slots
BIOS	AMI	Phoenix Plug and Play	AMI Plug and Play	Award Plug and Play
Hard Disk	Quantum Fireball L80	Maxtor	Western Digital	Western Digital
HD Interface	Mode 4 EIDE	Mode 5 EIDE	Mode 4 EIDE	Mode 4 EIDE
HD Size	1GB	1.6GB	1.6GB	1.6GB
CD-ROM	NEC 273 4x	NEC DEM 6X	Epson 6X	NEC 502 6X
CD Interface	IDE	IDE	IDE	SCSI (Adaptec)
Graphics Adapter	NumberNine 771	On motherboard	Matrox Millennium	STB Powergraph 64
Graphics Chipset	S3-958	Alliance Pro Motion	MG2064M	S3 Trio 64 V+
Sound Card	Sound Blaster 16	Ensoniq DEM	Ensoniq Soundscape ProP	Sound Blaster 16 ASP
General MIDI	No	Yes	Yes	Roland SCD-10 daughtercard
Joystick	None	Microsoft Sidewinder Pro 3D	None	CH Flightstick Pro
Speakers	Labtech CS-900	Yamaha YST-M10	Altec-Lansing Dolby Prologic	Sony SRS
Subwoofer	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Monitor	DELL Ultrasec 17	NEC XV17	Widron 17	CTX 1565CD
Price	\$2,999	\$3,299	\$3,499	\$3,995
Contact Information	(800) 545-3604	(800) NEC-INFO	(800) 846-2000	(800) 258-6778

our games without a problem. Since the 133XL uses the Matrox Millennium graphics card, we had to install a patch to get FLIGHT UNLIMITED to run, but all of our other DOS and Windows games ran quite well, indeed. Also, the quality of the MIDI music from the Ensoniq was excellent, surpassed only by the Roland daughterboard included with the Falcon system.

The system ships with a limited, but very solid set of games: MAGIC CARPET 2 (yes, 2, not the original), WING COMMANDER 3 (all four CDs) and BIORGE. These should keep a budding gamer busy for a few (hundred) hours.

Overall, the Gateway P5-133XL is a balanced system, with fast graphics, fast mass storage and fairly zippy performance. However, Falcon Northwest goes a step further in configuring their system for the needs of gamers. Still, if I found this box under my Christmas tree, you can be sure I'd be ripping through the Kilrathi home fleet before dinner.

Price: \$3,499 (note picture shows larger ACS 500 speakers). Call (800) 846-2000 for more information.

FALCON NORTHWEST 133-MHZ MACH V

Falcon Northwest, headquartered in picturesque Coos Bay, Oregon, has known the recipe for cooking up hot game machines for several years now. Here's the secret: Start with an Intel-made motherboard with a 133-MHz Pentium processor. Add 256K of pipeline burst cache (as an option, you can make it 512K of eight-nanosecond cache. (If you don't understand what this means, let's just say it's real fast.) Toss in 16 MB of EDO memory and the latest Western Digital 1.6 gigabyte Caviar hard disk. Garnish it with an STB Powergraph 64 graphics card, using S3's latest graphics accelerator chip, the Trio64V+.

For a side dish, add an NEC 502 six-speed, SCSI CD-ROM drive and an Adaptec 1515 SCSI controller. Dessert consists of a CH Products Gamecard III, a speed-compensated joystick card, and a CH Products Flightstick Pro.

Of course, you'll want background music for this tasty snack, so Falcon Northwest blends together a Sound

Blaster 16 and an attached Roland SCD-10 wavetable daughterboard—a sweet treat to the ears, indeed. Of course, the music needs an outlet, so the system includes a set of Sony SRS-powered speakers, a three-piece system with satellite speakers and a powered subwoofer.

In terms of raw performance, the Mach V easily bested the other systems in our roundup. It surpassed the other systems in every benchmark. I was frankly (pleasantly) surprised by the graphics performance of the STB graphics card, as my earlier experience with the Trio64V+ had left me singularly unimpressed.

Let's be frank. This is definitely a system designed with game players in mind. From the use of the Roland daughterboard to the CH Gamecard controller card, the system is replete with game-oriented features. The only thing substandard was having to use the CTX 1565CD 15-inch monitor. It may be nice for a 15-inch monitor, but

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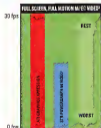
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MS-DOS VGA	Techn 3200
MODEL	WINTURBO
OS/2 CPU	Windows 95/NT/OS/2
OS/2 VGA	1280x1024 (16MB)
MS-DOS CPU	2MB (25MB)
MS-DOS VGA	Techn 3200
MODEL	GRAPHICS PRO TURBO
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Ultimate Game Machine: Benchmarks

Benchmark	Test	Dell 120 MHz	NEC 133MHz Power		Falcon Northwest
		Dimension XPS P120c	Player Limited Edition	Gateway PS-133 XL	133MHz Mach V
Winbench96	Graphmark: 1024x768, 8bit	10.6	14.2	74.2	21.8
Winbench96	Graphmark: 640x480x768, 16bit	8.67	11.2	21.7	18.1
Winbench96	CD mix	414	490	501	549
Winbench96	Disk Winmark	561	726	1000	1020
Winbench96	CPU 16	200	215	268	287
Winbench96	CPU 32	193	202	270	291
PCbench 9.0	3DSmark	707	967	1333	1342
PCbench 9.0	Video mix (graphics)	3593	3577	6375	4595
3D Bench	3D Bench	100	76	125	125
VESA Compatible?	VBE Test	Passed	Failed!	Passed (VBE 2.0)	Passed
VESA Compatible?	Ran Flight Unlimited	Yes	Yes	Yes (patched)	Yes
WC 3	WC Load Time	20	16	15	12
WC 3	Mission Load	30	26	23	23
WC 3	CD Benchmark	623,579 bytes/sec	809,936 bytes/sec	952,223 bytes / sec	927,164 bytes/sec

it can't hold a candle to the 17-inch monitors we used with the other systems. You can optionally get a 17-inch CTX monitor for ca. \$350.

The Western Digital Caviar drive bested the other systems in overall hard disk performance, and the NEC 6X CD-ROM drive outpaced the competition as well.

The Roland-equipped Sound Blaster 16 sounded very sweet, indeed. The Sony speakers, were not quite as robust sounding as the Yamahas, but were easier to set up. Fortunately, the sound was superior to bundled speakers in many multimedia packages.

There were a few oddities, though. Falcon Northwest apparently doesn't appreciate people mucking around inside their boxes. There was a warning seal on the case stating that the warranty would be void if the case was opened. Most folks won't need to open the system when they buy it, but at some time, a user might want to add more disk space or memory. Having to call a service technician seems a bit severe for simple upgrades. No other vendor seems to have such a severe penalty for opening the case.

Opening the case (we're nothing if

not bold) revealed one interesting discrepancy. The data sheet shipped with the system listed 512K of pipeline burst cache, but we noted only 256K. This difference didn't seem to affect performance, but buyers need to double-check their orders (something you should do with any system from any vendor.)

The appearance of the case was nothing to write home about, but the keyboard was the best in the roundup—an excellent layout, coupled with a light, tactile feel. Also, a genuine Microsoft mouse came with the system.

Overall, the Falcon Northwest Mach V has a lot to recommend it. Clearly, Falcon Northwest understands the needs of gamers, and the Mach V has a lot of nice touches that indicate this awareness. While we're slightly disappointed that the \$4,000 price tag doesn't include a 17-inch monitor, the use of the Roland daughtercard for MIDI music and the other outstanding components in the system outweigh this lack. Overall, we liked this system a lot. (It's the only system we've seen that comes close to our custom rig in performance, and is quite a bit less expensive—more on that next month.)

Price: \$3,995 (w/ 15" monitor). Call (800) 258-6778 for more information.

DECISIONS, DECISIONS

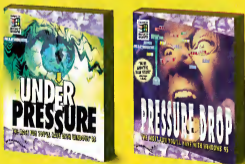
Just a couple of years ago, it was fairly tough buying a system adequately configured for games. There were a few "home multimedia systems," but these were generally underpowered systems with inferior components. Now, some specialty vendors such as Falcon Northwest and even some major companies like NEC have come to appreciate the performance needs of game players. NEC's first attempt at a game-oriented system falls short, but the company bears watching. Similarly, the Dell system is nicely balanced, but lacks some of the amenities game players need. Obviously, the Gateway system had even more to commend it.

Yet, we really have to appreciate the attention to detail that Falcon Northwest has applied to the Mach V. Not only was this a real fire-breather in terms of performance, but it came with a very nice set of premium components. If you're willing to overlook the odd warranty policy, this system is definitely the one to beat. ☺

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Insectocide



"BUGS, MR. RICO! ZILLIONS OF 'EM!" IF THAT CRY SENDS chills down your spine, if creepy-crawlies give you the heebie-jeebies, or if the thought of multi-legged critters four times your size is your worst nightmare, ENTOMORPH may not be for you. This is definitely a game about bugs.

Of course, one could say that a "game about bugs" applies to almost any software product these days (heh), but here we are definitely dealing with the kind that fly and crawl rather than lurk in software. A few of the latter did raise their ugly little feelers, but we'll come to that in due time.

ENTOMORPH takes place in the world of Aden, but aside from that, there is no connection at all between this game and THUNDERSCAPE. Engine, interface, graphics, and gameplay are all new, and the setting is a different area of the world, the island of Phoros.

JAGTERA ALLIANCE

Phoros used to be a happy place, where all the hard work was done by large domesticated insects, collectively known as "jagtera." When Darkfall occurred ten years back, the jagtera suddenly disappeared, and the island went into a decline. Now, so the rumor goes, the jagtera are returning, and the population is celebrating—perhaps a little too soon.

Your character, Squire Warrick, arrives on Phoros in search of his sister. It isn't long before he discovers the truth about the jagtera revival. The Phorovian nobles are giving special nectar to the inhabitants that morphs them into insects. Even worse, the nectar is tainted with evil: the jagtera created by it are all vicious and bloodthirsty. Those who do not become jagtera usually end up victims of their insatiable jaws.

Naturally, no red-blooded hero could resist

this situation, and Warrick determines to put an end to the nobles' schemes. Since there are no jumbo-sized cans of *Raid* handy, he'll have to do it the hard way.

ENTOMORPH is not exactly a role-playing game in the traditional sense. Warrick comes pre-created, without visible stats (strength, intelligence, dexterity, and so on), and there's no character advancement in the form of experience points or levels. All you see are two indicators on the screen, one for hit points and one for mana.

Combat is equally simple, with two methods of attack. Physically, Warrick disposes of enemies by punching them out, literally. He has no armor or weapons of any kind. Later, after go-



SPELLBOUND It's great to find spells during your travels, but you may have only three ready at any given time.

ing through some morphing himself, he becomes somewhat less than human in form and adds spitting to his repertoire, giving him a distance weapon.

His other type of attack is magic. Warrick has the ability to cast spells, once they've been found. The spells are both offensive (lightning bolt, mana bolt, and similar) and protective

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CRUSH ON THE
CRAWLING THINGS
IN ENTOMORPH

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(healing, poison cure, armor, etc.). Spells can be cast at any time, provided Warrick has enough mana. Up to three spells can be ready for casting from the menu bar.

So, ENTOMORPH is more in the action/adventure category, although it is certainly not a slaughterfest in the DOOM mold. While you could spend a lot of time crunching insects, much combat can easily be avoided simply by walking around hostile critters. The point is not

how many monsters you can kill, but getting to the end of the game and setting things right again.

Of course, there is still a fair amount of fighting to wade through. Sometimes, you just have to bash a bug that's in your way, and there are a number of set encounters with hostiles that can't be avoided. Yet, if handled properly, this game has less combat overall than many traditional CRPG's.

Even so, you may not care much for this style of combat. Happily, ENTOMORPH comes with five difficulty settings: Very Easy, Easy, Normal, Hard, and Very Hard. These control how powerful the opposition is, so you can tailor the fighting to your own taste. Keep in mind, however, that even at the easiest settings, some creatures are going to be difficult, no matter what. In addition, once the difficulty level has been set, it can't be changed after the game begins.

Graphically, ENTOMORPH is similar to the ULTIMA series, with an overhead view rather than 3-D first-person. You see Warrick on the screen all the time, as

well as all of the immediate area. Movement can be by mouse, keyboard or joystick. With the mouse, there are two forms: normal and travel. Normal movement requires you to hold down the mouse button. In travel mode, you click the button once, and Warrick moves continuously in the direction of the cursor. I really liked travel mode; it's much easier on the hand than always holding down a button or key.

Interacting with the world is also simple. Moving close to someone and clicking on the person starts a conversation (if that character has something to say). Clicking on a button or lever causes Warrick to take the appropriate actions. In some situations, items have to be used. Most of the time, an object will be used automatically if it's in the inventory; sometimes, you have to choose what to use yourself. There seems to be no limit to what the inventory can hold, although Warrick never carries too much at one time.

SAVE EARLY, SAVE OFTEN

ENTOMORPH allows plenty of room for

ENTOMORPH



Price: \$40

System

Requirements: IBM

compatible 486-66

(Pentium recom-

ended with local

bus or PCI video), 8 MB RAM, 1 MB

SVGA card, Windows 3.1, NT or Windows

95, 25 MB hard drive space, 2x CD-ROM

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Publisher: SSI

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SWAT TACTICS The action-based combat is simple, but there's a lot of it, and for most of the game, you can only take out monsters by punching them.

saving: there are 30 slots available, each with its own little picture of the save position. Unlike in *THUNDERSCAPE*, with its meager four saves, here you should have no trouble returning to an earlier position if you find yourself in a bad situation. You can save or restore almost any time in the game.

The game installs under either Windows 3.1 or Win 95, and requires Win32S to run, which is included on the CD. You have a choice as to how much of the game you want on the hard drive; the maximum install requires about 80 MB, not counting room for saves. If you have the hard drive space to spare, go for the maximum, because the game will run better. Even with that, you can still expect some waits

whenever Warrick crosses a boundary to a new area. And sometimes, when the screen is busy with lots of animation, there is a noticeable slowdown in Warrick's movement. Overall, though, you should find the game fairly smooth going.

Aside from talking, fighting, and exploring, there are some puzzles to solve,

although they are not, for the most part, hard (the game difficulty settings do not affect the puzzles). However, after a point, what to do can be somewhat less than obvious.

At the start, Warrick receives a certain amount of direction from various people. Beyond that, he's pretty much on his own, and it may take you awhile to figure out where to go, or that some places are currently dead ends. For example, early on, you can get into the ant hill, but you won't be able to do anything there for a long time, except perhaps learn how to not be killed by the warrior ants.

Similarly, if you miss an item in the third rebel hideout, the game is at a standstill, since the item is vital to allowing you access to the giant beehive behind the Ziggurat. This one (yes, I did overlook the object first time around) cost me many hours of fruitless wandering until I picked it up.

It's also important to revisit locations throughout play. The world changes as time progresses. In particular, the island becomes more ravaged as the jagtera

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OBVIOUSLY THEY NEVER PLAYED



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Descend upon the Interplay web page at <http://www.interplay.com> or check with your local computer software retailer for the latest release of the *Descent II* interactive demo. Available for IBM and compatible.

Watch for the full 30-level version coming this March.

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Software**

mindlessly munch everything around them; the lush forests turn into chewed tree stumps (a nice touch there), and eventually even the town is deserted except for a few transformed humans. Some places that weren't accessible earlier open up, unless you return now and then for a look, you won't know it.

One thing this game needed was better control for combat. There is really no way to dodge or back up. Warrick always turns to face the way he's moving, which can be awkward at times, if not deadly. Keys to allow for sidestepping to avoid blows/poison spit/spells, and to backup while facing opponents (to get off your own spells or spit) would have made combat more playable.

ENTOMORPH ran cleanly overall, but, in a game about bugs, perhaps it's not surprising a few of the software variety showed up. There were three instances in the game where problems surfaced. The first was in putting a flower on a certain grave. The option to do this didn't appear, and using the flower from the inventory didn't work. The only way I

found around this one was to restore back to before entering the third rebel hideout (where you hear about the grave), and playing on from there.

The second was in the Kexchda cave. The game hung after the head Kexchda began a certain repair job for me. SSI fixed the problem here (I sent them a save game), and this one seems related to where Warrick stands in the room when he begins the conversation. If your game should hang, restore and try different positions in the room.

The third was in the kitchen of the Mutalid palace. Here the game froze again, this time after Warrick listened in on a conversation between the chef and a worker bug. Position didn't matter; the game always hung no matter what. This one I got around on my own by restoring to an earlier save in the palace and playing on from that point.

ENTOMORPH supports Redbook audio, which is nice, but there isn't much in the way of digital voice. Conversations are actually done via text. Voices are heard only in special instances, which are usually the

automated sequences that pop up now and then featuring a particular villain or the storyteller.

The storyteller is a character Warrick meets early in the game, and who gives our hero an amulet so he can see what Warrick is doing (and thus write about Warrick's heroics). After that, every so often, the game is interrupted while a window opens with the storyteller commenting on the current situation. Occasionally, he drops a hint or two in his comments, but otherwise his only purpose seems to be to belabor the obvious, and his interruptions eventually became irritating.

Overall, ENTOMORPH is something of a hybrid: part action, part adventure, part role-playing. While it probably does not have enough of any one element to satisfy fans of a particular genre, the game does work fairly well with what it has, and is a quick play. It's the sort of game you do while waiting for the next epic to come along. If you don't mind romping among the insects, or the somewhat limited combat, you might have some fun with it. ☺



Cthulhu Calls Again

Advice For The Lovecraft Lorn In PRISONER OF ICE

by Scorpia

WELL, IT'S THE HOLIDAY SEASON ONCE AGAIN. I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S MORE FESTIVE: FRED'S shrunken head garland on the wall, or the Christmas Tree Monster over in the corner, lights blinking and tinsel swishing. Of course, the snow and ice outside adds to the feel, but some places border on being *too* chilly even for me. Then again, if you like the Arctic, PRISONER OF ICE is not really too hard a game—so long as you keep in mind the need for always running the cursor carefully around the screen to avoid missing some important item.

One good thing about PRISONER is that events in the game usually depend on each other and time passes only when something is done. So even if you do get stuck, nothing is likely to happen, and you have time to figure things out (certain real-time sequences excepted).

Okay, here's our boy, American Navy Lieutenant Ryan, on board the HMS *Victoria*, a British submarine. The British

have just pulled off a mission at a secret Nazi base in the Arctic, making off with two mysterious crates and Hamsun, an archaeologist who was being held there.

However, it's not plain sailing, as the Nazis pursue in a ship that drops depth charges, doing some damage to the sub, in particular the hold where the crates are stored. In no time at all, the Captain and Ryan enter the hold to check on damage, and find a fire raging. This is bad news, as the ice is melting, and whatever's in one crate wakes up enough to make short work of the captain. Uh oh. Ryan will be next unless he does something quick, and this one is pretty obvious. Just don't waste any time about it, and don't hang around in the hold when you're done.

TAKING COMMAND

Driscoll, the navigator, is a handy source of information; remember to talk to him from time to time throughout



"UH, IS HE HOUSE-BROKEN?" Hopefully, you know what to do with Professor Hamsun's seemingly insane rantings.



Bjorn Hamsun

YOUR MOUTH IS GETTING SLEEPY Once you get time alone with Hamsun, practice a little hypnosis on him to extract some vital information.

this section of the game (he doesn't always volunteer comments). In the meantime, you now have the run of the sub, and taking a look around is a good idea. Taking everything you can get your hot little hands on is also a good idea (heh).

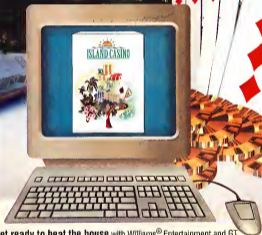
One person you want to check on is Hamsun, who appears to be delirious. Wayne is keeping an eye on him for the moment. If you can't get rid of Wayne (even when he says he's going to the bridge), you probably didn't find everything important in this room.

Once he's gone, you can get to work on Hamsun. Gently, of course, as he's in bad shape, at least mentally. But he does have something to say that's rather important. Once you have that down, so to speak, be prepared, because the critter in the hold is about to break loose (you'll know because the game will autosave for you).

You only have a couple of moves to do the right thing, but thinking about what triggered this event should make the correct action clear. Just because the monster is gone, though, doesn't mean everything's fine. The sub's been damaged again and is taking on water in the

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For PC and MAC


Developed by
GT Interactive Software
10000 E. 15th Ave., Suite 100, Denver, CO 80232


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torpedo room.

Stanley, the engineer, is also in trouble, but fixing him up is no problem. After that, you'll be able to send an SOS, al-

One thing you find is half the combination for the safe. The other half is around somewhere, although you can also figure it out by trial and error, which goes



FIRE OFF A WET ONE Do a good turn inside the flooded torpedo chamber and you could earn yourself a quick ride out of the *Victoria*.

though draining is still needed for the sub to hold out long enough for rescue.

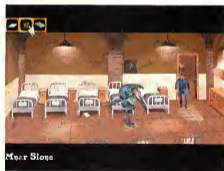
First, you have to restore power to the torpedo hatch. This is a simple puzzle; all that's necessary is to restore three complete power circuits. You'll know it's done right when you exit the screen automatically (you can't blow up anything with wrong moves here, fortunately, so feel free to experiment).

If you're having trouble draining the room, you may have missed something on the bridge. If Ryan can't get into the empty torpedo (he volunteered to be shot to the surface to send up a flare), perhaps you haven't been back to the hold since the critter died. Once you have all the items, the rest is automatic, and before long, Ryan is at Edwards military base in the Falkland Islands.

After your chat with Captain Sears (who is in charge of the base), grab whatever you can when he leaves. Quartermaster Quincy will then arrive, hand you a duty roster, and kick you out. Don't worry, you'll be able to get back in there later.

For now, take the opportunity to explore the base and become familiar with it. Naturally, you'll want to view that film from "Miss Molly," and checking with Shaw for messages ought to be high on your list of things to do. By now, Quincy ought to be gone, and you can snooper around Sears' office.

quickly (and may be faster than looking for the other half). Ah, inside is a key and an official stamp. Just the thing for the partly-completed pass on the desk. Oh, is there still something missing? A photo, perhaps? Have you looked over Ryan's inventory lately? (It's something to get



ONE UGLY NURSE The third Prisoner you have to deal with has eaten Quincy and will destroy you, too, unless you can use the Mear Stone against it.

steamed up about.)

With a complete pass, you can finally enter the basement. While the armory is your goal, you have to make a few stops first, like the store room and the infirmary. Ryan isn't really sick, but he needs to fike out the doctor to get him out of the room temporarily.

Although Finlayson will let you into the armory, he won't allow you to access the personnel files. So, now you have to get *low* out of the way. No doubt, visions of the sub hold are dancing through your head about now. Just be careful where you stand when the fun begins.

All that work, and the file cards are gone! Shucks! I wonder who could have been here first, and why? Maybe we'll find out later. For now, Sears pops up again, and sends Ryan back to the sub to look for Hamsun's notes.

ON THIN ICE

First you have to get to the forward end of the vessel, which means finding a way of walking on the ice (there isn't much to work with, so this is easy). Inside, notice where the self-destruct is, since you'll be needing it soon. Hamsun's stuff is not hard to find, if you recall where he was hiding. On the way out, another critter arrives on the scene (you were expecting this, of course). Do the obvious and get out of there.

Back at the base, the doctor shows you something interesting, and yet another critter (they seem to be everywhere) appears in the infirmary. This one munches Quincy, who lives long enough to tell you some important information. Ryan automatically puts the critter on hold, but a permanent solution is needed. On the way out, check over the doctor's desk very carefully.

After the critter has been dispatched, Ryan can finally get the card files, and the game automatically segues to the next section, a museum in beautiful downtown Buenos Aires. Here Ryan meets Dr. Parker's daughter (the same Parker from *SHADOW OF THE COLOSSUS*), and picks up some background information.

A Nazi agent arrives, kills one of the

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staff, and is in turn blown away by a mysterious person who appears from nowhere, and looks amazingly like Ryan. He stays just long enough to do his job and disappears again.



HAYSAYING NAZI NABOBS Once you follow Jupiter's lead to the Solar Disc in Argentina, you'll be nabbed by the Nazis. Chin up—not much you can do about it, mate.

The rest of this section is getting to the roof of the museum via the library, which is a series of simple puzzles. Just remember to grab everything possible in each room, starting at the bottom, and you won't have much trouble. Once on the roof (with the proper item found), Ryan and Diane are unfortunately captured by Nazis, and hauled to Schlossadler Base (where this all started).

Of course, you want to escape from the cell, and the way is obvious, but some preparation is necessary. First, you have to wait for Dietrich (the nutty Nazi behind all this) to have a chat with you. Then a diversion is needed, and the paper from Dietrich is helpful for plugging the gap. When the guard arrives, clout him, shut the door, and get out of there (time is limited in this sequence).

Eventually you end up in some sort of mine, surrounded by frozen critters (oh joy). The big door out is too heavy to open, and the mine cart is frozen to the track. Well, maybe you can find some way of warming things up a bit. As for the critter that revives when the door opens, just walk out quickly into the next room, and keep going until you reach the grate.

Now you watch an automatic sequence with Dietrich going through a portal called the Sun Gate. As soon as you can, open the grate and take care of (yep) Yet Another Critter (they are everywhere!). Then it's through the Sun Gate and into the future for Ryan.

Here you play pick up sticks, finding the parts to assemble a futuristic weapon. You also, incidentally, learn somewhat more of Ryan's background, which even he didn't know. Everything in this section is pretty obvious. When you're done, it's back through the gate to Schlossadler Base.

Don't be fooled here; do NOT use the gun on the critter (even though that's what it was designed for). You have to use something else. Then, after a chat with the others, everyone goes through the gate, including Ryan, who this time arrives in the Argentinian museum (deja vu strikes again!). All you have to do is make sure history repeats itself, and then Ryan teleports out, ending



HOT HEAD This granite tribute to the Greatest Old One is a door that can only be opened once sight is restored to the rocky head.

up in a cave in Illsmouth (the setting of COMET; we are going in circles here).

Old Home Week

Here you solve a fairly simple match-up puzzle (the order doesn't matter so long as the pairs are correct), and then THE book appears (the *Necronomicon*; don't leave R'lyeh without it!) Soon after, Narackamous and Boleskine (also both from COMET) show up. Sure seems like old home week, doesn't it?

Anyway, you need to chase them off, and then the door opens, allowing you to progress to the lake, where you enter a rowboat and soon meet an old acquaintance. This is perhaps the trickiest part of the game. You can't defeat him in a straight fight. You probably have bright ideas about the rope, but you need to do something first, and that something is talk.

It's best to avoid sensitive subjects, and stick to safer, more mundane topics, except at the end. Note that in this one instance, the conversation does not continue automatically (which is what gave me trouble); you have to keep clicking on your opponent to keep talking. Three times is enough.

One more puzzle to solve (save the game for more trial-and-error) and then you're finally at the endgame. Here you must act quickly and correctly. Ryan only has two items to work with, so it shouldn't take you long to figure out the proper actions. And besides, you did get some instructions back in the cave. Whew!

Once more, the world has been saved for another evil to menace it later (grin).

By the way, regarding the two choices at the very end: I tried both, and it didn't make much difference either way.

And that's about it for now. In the meantime, if you need help with an adventure game, you can reach me in the

following ways:

On Delphi: Stop by the GameSIG (under the Groups & Clubs menu). On GENIE: Visit the Games RoundTable (type: Scorpio) to reach the Games RT). By U.S. Mail (enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you live in the U.S.): Scorpio, PO Box 338, Gracie Station, New York, NY 10028.

Until next time, happy adventuring! ☺



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Riddler Of The Lost Artifact

Believe It Or Not, You'll Uncover Many Treasures As You Solve

THE RIDDLE OF MASTER LU

by Allen L. Greenberg

HIS YOUNG, SMOOTHLY-TEXTURED FACE SEEMS MORE SUITED TO PEACH-FUZZ THAN IT DOES TO THE standard archaeologist's stubble. He carries no whip, and on his head there is a jungle-helmet where we might have expected a Stetson. The young man is clearly not Indiana Jones, nor is he even an archaeologist. He is Robert L. Ripley, true-life founder of the New York *Odditorium*, and author of the famous newspaper cartoon series *Believe It Or Not!* However, in *Sanctuary Woods'* adventure game *THE RIDDLE OF MASTER LU*, you guide the young Mr. Ripley in a quest that would certainly be worthy of the fictional Dr. Jones.

It is indeed difficult not to draw comparisons between the two adventurers. Like Jones, Ripley searches for treasures from the ancient past that have some fantastic or supernatural quality about them. *THE RIDDLE OF MASTER LU* takes place on

the eve of the second World War, as would-be world conquerors search for any source of power that would guarantee their success in battle. Like Jones, Ripley fights to ensure that evil hands do not get their grasp on that source of power.

THE SEARCH FOR THE SEAL

Ripley's goal (or "macguffin," as Alfred Hitchcock might have called it) is the seal of office belonging to the first emperor of China. The seal is somewhere in the emperor's tomb, hidden and protected by a series of traps and puzzles devised by the ingenious Master Lu. The information as to how to obtain the seal rests on a giant tablet in *The Hall Of Classics*, a giant library in Peiping, China. However, the material necessary to translate the tablet has been lost. Master Lu, however, was also known to have traveled throughout the world in search of the "elixir of life." Thus begins a race between Ripley and an unknown enemy competitor to follow in the ancient footsteps of Master Lu. Whoever succeeds will win the tablet and uncover a "key" (much like an annoying copy-protection device) which will allow the tablet to be properly understood.

While the seal may or may not live up to its supernatural reputation, whoever owns it could clearly use it to unite the Chinese people, and use their strength in the oncoming world war. Be it Nazi



TRAVEL ADVISORY Your quest for the First Emperor's seal will take you to China and many other exotic locales, as you search for clues to unlock his tomb.

Germany, Japan or some other power seeking the seal, Ripley frantically fights to keep it safe, even if doing so prevents him from profitably adding the object to his collection of the fantastic.

Ripley may not, however, forget about his collection while he is out saving the world. Back in New York, Feng Li, Ripley's eccentric associate, struggles to keep their museum of oddities, or "odditorium," open and out of red ink. To help him do so, Ripley must send various objects of interest back home. Therefore, it is up to you to keep an eye out for such objects while you are solving the adventure, so that you are not put out of business for lack of funds. Ripley also sketches into his journal any odd or interesting scenery which he may use in his popular series of cartoons.

Unlike the LucasArts' *INDIANA JONES* games, *THE RIDDLE OF MASTER LU* contains no lighting or arcade sequences, although there are moments when quick thinking is necessary. The program is a neatly balanced combination of puzzles

The Riddle Of Master Lu

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and story-telling, proving that those two ingredients can co-exist in today's high-tech adventure games. Both story and puzzles manage to live up to each other's



BELIEVE IT OR NOT There is no action in *Master Lu*, but the game is actually a very fun mix of puzzles and traditional adventure game-playing.

high quality, so that gamers who were disappointed in the past by minimally-interactive movies attempting to pass as games will certainly find *MASTER LU* far more satisfying.

ONE COMMAND USES ALL

The game's interface is perhaps too simple. The one "use" command is intended to accomplish any sort of interaction or manipulation with any object that Ripley encounters. Other than that, you can "examine," "pick up" and "speak to." Clicking on a location generally directs Ripley to walk there, although the program often interprets this as "examine"

instead. If another character knows any special information, then "speak to" brings up a set of multiple-choice questions for Ripley to choose from. There is no limit to Ripley's inventory just as there is no way for him to drop an item. Most items are useful somewhere in the game, and those that are not can be sent back to New York. There are only a few "hot" items which Ripley would be better off not trying to take. Finally, the program provides a "photo" at every saved game, and will automatically save at any point that you exit to DOS.

Graphically, *THE RIDDLE OF MASTER LU* features a fascinating

combination of animation and live-action. It is often impossible to tell which of the two is currently on the screen, and the result is very impressive. The details allowed by SVGA, however, once again challenge players to carefully inspect and mouse-survey every pixel so that minute, yet critical, discoveries are not overlooked. Accompanying the graphics are a convincing collection of sound effects, and an enjoyable music score. The voice-actors, at times, sound a bit self-conscious, yet they still manage to turn in a respectable performance.

The cast of supporting characters make for an interesting group. Ripley's associate at the odditorium, Feng Li, insists on wearing a lit candle on his head and is teaching his pet turtle to perform the same trick. Take careful note of that turtle because Ripley will need him. Ripley's only traveling companion is also his lover, Mei Chen. This multilingual beauty is as re-

sponsive as she is dangerous in a fight.

A letter from the mysterious Baron von Seltsam alerts Ripley to the presence of the imperial seal, and suggests that he team up with an archaeologist named Dr. Twelvetees to find it. Ripley and Mei Chen briefly visit the great library in Peiping where, among other things, Ripley decides to prove that he can enter a restricted area through something other than the front gate. Unfortunately, the priest who guards the tablet turns out to be something other than cooperative.

Not without hope, Ripley next decides to visit the Baron von Seltsam. The Baron is not available to speak, but Ripley is able to meet his son who is far more interested in gaming (!) than he is in departed emperors and their artifacts. One of the most challenging puzzles in *THE RIDDLE OF MASTER LU* resides behind the



DR. JONES, IS THAT YOU? One of the problems with *Master Lu* is that at times it looks too much like an *Indiana Jones* movie.

Baron's billiard room. Behind the Baron's unique castle is a small graveyard where, with some help from home, Ripley will find a valuable discovery.

PLAYING CHARLIE CHAN TO FIND DR. TWELVETEES

THE RIDDLE OF MASTER LU is not a demanding linear game at this point, and you may visit many of its locations in any order until you reach the endgame. At Easter Island, you will finally catch up with the elusive Dr. Twelvetees. The doctor has some reservations regarding the worth of a journalist/entertainer who seems to fancy himself a "real" archaeologist. Yet, Ripley will find some way to impress the doctor. There is an old woman on the island who mourns her fallen



THAT'S ODD One nice touch to the game is that you must continue collecting oddities for your museum while you are adventuring.

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stone god, and she also hides some information. The greatest discovery, however, rests in the island's rock quarry, if you can instruct Ripley to do a little sketching and connect the dots.

Master Lu also visited Sikkin, where Ripley discovers the Temple of the Hidden Way. Using an item he picked up at the Baron's castle, Ripley convinces a guard that he is qualified to enter the place which is surrounded by prayer wheels and private prayer cells. By attempting to speak to each of the cells' occupants, Ripley may learn what he must do to enter the inner temple and follow



NAVE YOU LOOK This game has full-motion video and stunning graphics, which both serve to enhance gameplay rather than distract gamers.

along the same "Hidden Way" that Master Lu followed. This turns out to be an extensive maze that Ripley must navigate by pulling ropes and watching to see which way is "enlightened." At least the hero is rewarded with valuable information once the maze is complete (and his comment as he exits the place is indeed words to live by).

The lost city of Mocha Mocha in Peru is the final place Ripley needs to visit. There is a foul character here whose own selfish actions quickly lead to his downfall. There are a variety of objects to be picked up around here, including one that is hidden in an alcove near the top of a tower. Ripley must obtain the item and bring it to a nearby observatory where it turns out to be the key to gathering even more information from Master Lu. Now, if you have taken everything you could from that tower, you should have no problem getting down.

PEIPING HOT

Back in Peiping, things are heating up. The great hall's guardians are gone or murdered, and soldiers surround the place. However, Mei Chen now has all she needs to translate the tablet. Ripley's evil followers appear and grab the translation. You'll need to save Mei Chen as she struggles with one of the hit-men, and then figure out how to reproduce the stolen translation.

Translation in hand, you find yourself and Mei Chen at a local farm. Pieces of broken pottery are a clue as to where you should be digging. If all goes well, you'll find yourself in a giant chamber with five corridors. Carefully follow the instructions from the translation, and you will be able to pass through the corridors into yet another chamber. Don't forget to take everything available, including the giant chariot.

The emperor has been buried in an amazing miniature city, surrounded by a lake of mercury. If you have taken along everything you have found since you entered this place, you should have the equipment necessary to cross the lake. The seal is there for you to take, should you decide to do so, and perhaps you'll finally discover who has been shadowing you throughout the game.

THE RIDDLE OF MASTER LU is a challenging piece of work that tells a good story and offers engaging puzzles. Highly advanced adventurers may whip through the game a bit too quickly for their tastes, but most others should prepare themselves for many evenings with Master Lu.

THE EDITORS SPEAK

RIDDLE OF MASTER LU

RATING ★★★★★

PROS An enjoyable story, eye-catching graphics, interesting characters and puzzles will enthrall gamers with hours of fun.

CONS Too many similarities to *Raiders Of The Lost Ark* and an occasionally ambiguous interface are all that mar this title.

Let's Do Lurch

Interplay Resurrects FRANKENSTEIN And Crafts You On The Monster, But The Game Definitely Has Some Dead Parts

by Kate Hedstrom

THE FRANKENSTEIN LEGEND ABOUT A MEGALOMANIC SCIENTIST AND HIS PITIFUL CREATION HAS BECOME A Western pop cultural icon. But in every retelling of the tale, the audience plays the passive role of observer, free to wallow in the delights of creepy gothic horror and then walk away when it's over. *FRANKENSTEIN: THROUGH THE EYES OF THE MONSTER* puts an intriguing spin on the old story by thrusting the player squarely in the middle of the fray: this time you are the monster.

Awakening on a slab in a laboratory, you struggle to recall who you are and how you got stuck in this weird castle with a sooty guy in a white lab coat looming over you. You eventually get to stand up and stagger around, while Dr. Frankenstein (portrayed in appropriately over-the-edge style by Tim Curry) makes cryptic rude remarks and warns you not to touch anything important. But this is,



WHAT'S THIS, DOCTOR? Poke your nose too far into Dr. Frankenstein's business and he'll shackle you in the dungeon.

after all, an adventure game, so you can't keep your hands off of anything, especially when the hand-shaped cursor makes little grabbing motions like a toddler in a supermarket whenever it passes over a hotspot. (This "help cursor" feature can be toggled off if you prefer to wear out your finger clicking on everything in sight.)

Luckily, this Frankenstein guy is pretty loose with his personal papers, and your brain works better than "Abby Normal's" (couldn't resist at least one *Young Frankenstein* reference). Pretty soon it becomes clear that your name is Phillip, and you've recently been hanged for the murder of your own daughter. The mad—or is it brilliant?—Dr. Frankenstein has brought you back to life with the aid of his own invention, Energy-L. Many of the papers you come across discuss the doctor's experiments and Energy-L in greater depth. Others fill in pieces to the puzzle of nefarious activities the doctor might be involved in. Some papers have nothing to do with anything. Some papers may be kept, others must be left where they were

found, but there doesn't seem to be much rhyme or reason between the two.

SWEET MYSTERY OF LIFE, AT LAST I'VE FOUND YOU

It doesn't take long to solve the first few puzzles, as objects cannot be moved very far until you find something in which to carry them. You'll be feeling awfully snug as you breeze through the first part of the game, proud of your superior adventuring skills, until the puzzles abruptly cease to be of the solve-a-problem-with-the-neatthing-I-found variety and suddenly become heavy-duty button-and-lever brain teasers, à la *Myst*. Unlike *Myst*, however, you must solve all the puzzles to complete the game.

Unfortunately, many of the puzzles you encounter right off the bat will not be important until later. Some puzzles have solutions scattered somewhere in the castle, so you might wrestle with something for several minutes—even hours—working yourself into a lather of frustration, only to discover the solution in a sheaf of papers later on.

Frankenstein

Price: 49.99

System

Requirements:

Mac: Any 256-

Color Macintosh,

68040 or

PowerPC processor,

System 7.0

or later, 10 MB

hard drive space,

2x CD-ROM

drive; PC: IBM-compatible 486-33 or bet-

ter, 8 MB RAM, 10 MB hard drive space,

2x CD-Rom drive, mouse; supports

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Protection: None (CD must be in drive)

Designer: Amazing Media

Publisher: Interplay Productions

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FRANKENSTEIN lets you save as many games as you have room for, and it's advisable to save often. There are several diabolical and deadly little traps lurking throughout the game to catch the careless monster unawares. In fact, keep all of your

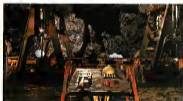


FEED ME, SEYMOUR Make sure you have something yummy in hand before attempting to take the garden shears from these brutes.

saved games until you're done, because you will find yourself having to go back and redo entire sequences if you missed something important. While some puzzles may be left alone until later in the game when you feel more like taking them on—or until you've come across the solution somewhere—FRANKENSTEIN is styled as an interactive story, so major puzzles must be completed in a particular order before the plot will advance.

PUT ZE CANDLE BEK

And then there are the mazes. Be sure to map your route as you wander around. This game has three true mazes, as well as a few areas that are just plain difficult to navigate. As you will probably be visiting



I'VE GOT A CRUSH You must solve a series of mechanical puzzles like this pulverizing machine to convert ore into something usable.

some areas several times over the course of the game, you will want to get around as quickly as possible. Even knowing your way around the castle rooms becomes very

important in the timed sequences toward the end of the game. The often laborious process of getting from one place to another merely serves to lengthen the game at the expense of play value.

The plot does take a while to get going, because you spend so much time in the beginning wandering around and getting your bearings, and the main task at hand is not immediately apparent. At first you seem to be trying to escape from the castle (or maybe just get somewhere out of range of that jerk Frankenstein's voice). But once you escape, where do you go? The townspeople think you're a murderer, and probably won't pause long enough to question why



YOU SEND ME To get the crystal out of the lab, turn to your right and drop it on the table. Then use the rag and the string to make a parachute and fly it out the window where you can collect it later.



you're suddenly lurching about—especially since the last time they saw you, you were dangling from the gallows (not to mention that you're now sporting a woman's left arm). So, you unaccountably decide to test out the doctor's mad experiments yourself, and set about collecting the necessary tools to do so. This turn of events seems slightly far-fetched, because up to this point, Phillip has been expressing some decidedly unfavorable opinions on the propriety of Frankenstein's activities. But as there's precious little else to do in the castle, you might as well take up a new hobby.

WHERE'S THAT MUSIC COMING FROM?

The resurrection of the dead is a pretty grim subject, and this game does nothing to lighten the mood. The music during

quieter moments is affectingly sad. The pacing flows well for a horror story; in the beginning as you get your bearings, there is no pressure. But after you've begun to rifle through the good doctor's stuff, he gets suspicious and insists that you return the things you've taken, or he'll lock you in the dungeon. Tension builds as you stay just steps ahead of Frankenstein, feverishly collecting the objects you need for your experiment before he catches you. And he will catch you. This is only a momentary delay, but now the plot thickens as you realize that the situation may not be what you originally thought. The action picks up in the final chapter, when you're running for your life and the missing elements of the mystery are clicking into place.

The lack of a hint feature is disap-

pointing, as all the puzzles must be solved to complete the game, and the time needed to come up with a solution can be frustrating. But despite the number of little annoyances throughout the game, FRANKENSTEIN is a good mood piece for anyone with the patience and doggedness for this kind of puzzle adventure. ☺

THE EDITORS SPEAK

FRANKENSTEIN

RATING ★★★★★

PROS An interesting story, moving soundtrack and some challenging puzzles should capture the attention of adventure gamers.

CONS The puzzles get tedious after a while, and the plot makes a few unexplained twists. FRANKENSTEIN resurrects the tired device of the maze, lengthening the game without adding anything to it.

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Every Man Has His Preiss

But Byron Preiss Multimedia Fails To Capture The Magic Of RAY BRADBURY'S *THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES*

by Charles Arday

IN HIS PRIME, RAY BRADBURY WAS THE GREAT PORT OF SCIENCE FICTION. IN EACH OF HIS NOVELS AND HIS BEST short stories, there exist passages of such grace, intensity, and beauty that they stop the reader in his tracks. *The Martian Chronicles*, after *Fahrenheit 451*, Bradbury's parable about book burning, is probably his best-known work. And deservedly so: the stories that make up the *Chronicles* include some of the most powerful and harrowing tales in all of science fiction. This is why it is all the more painful to see what a banal waste of magnetic media **Byron Preiss** has turned the book into in this endlessly-titled adaptation, **RAY BRADBURY'S THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES ADVENTURE GAME**.

THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES is an "ad-

venture game" of the worst sort. Instead of offering thought-provoking storytelling or really clever puzzles, the game offers only endless, repetitive exploration of a visually tiresome environment and a handful of puzzles that were already old chestnuts when our grandparents were in their cribs.

To fill up the CD, Preiss throws in an interactive video interview with Bradbury and eight brief readings from the original text of the book. The fact that these two thin "extras" are the highlight of the package is a mark of how weak the whole enterprise is.

GHOST TOWN

As the game opens, you've just landed on the surface of the Red Planet. A government official hails you via interplanetary videophone to let you know that a nuclear war is brewing back on Earth. Legends grapevining their way across the human colonies on Mars suggest that a certain Martian relic, hidden near the deserted city of Xi, holds the greatest power ever developed on Mars, though just what sort of power this is, nobody knows. It might be the greatest weapon of all time, or it might be a technology that would bring warring nations together. Either way, Earth needs it, and soon.

Your mission is to find it—and while you're at it, to find out what happened to the last five people who went looking for it and were never heard from again. So



HIGHLIGHTS It's a shame when the best parts of a game are non-interactive multimedia clips, such as Bradbury's interview.

far, so good. Perhaps it's not the most novel plot that you or I have ever encountered, but that would be okay if the game that fleshed out the plot were any good.

But how good can any game be whose first puzzle is a magic square? (You know, one of those mathematical wheezers in which you have to arrange nine numbers in a square so that the values in each row, column, and diagonal add up to 15.) How about one where the next item on the agenda is a simple jigsaw puzzle which, insipidly, is alleged to be the "locking mechanism" for a Martian door?

Things don't improve after that. The next item is a logic puzzle in which you have to flick switches up and down in the right sequence—forty-two moves in all—to unlock another door. Later, there's a sliding tile puzzle, the solution to which gives you a map for a maze. Later still, there's the maze itself. And for the hardy souls who haven't given up by then, the game offers some geometrical puzzles,

The Martian Chronicles

Price: \$49.95

System

Requirements:

PC compatible
486-25 or better
processor, 8 MB
RAM, 256 VGA
graphics, 4 MB
hard drive, 2x
CD-ROM.

Windows 3.1 or

Win 95; supports Sound Blaster compatible
sound cards, Macintosh or Power Mac
68030-25 or better processor, 8 MB RAM,
13-inch or larger monitor, 2 x CD-ROM,
System 7.0, QuickTime 2.1 or later.

Protection: None (CO must be in drive to
play)

Designers: Andrew Davies, Peter Parks

Publisher: Byron Press Multimedia

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another jigsaw puzzle, and a musical note puzzle that you have to solve in order to unlock yet another door.

To cap off all this astonishingly ripe material, *THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES* in-



DISJOINTED DWELLINGS Though the backgrounds may be pretty, the rest of the graphics don't measure up. This "house" looks like a slap-dash joke.

cludes in the oldest groaner of them all: as you go along, your main goal is to collect a set of crystals, to power up the batteries of your spacesuit and make a special key. There is no plot hook lazier than the old collect-the-crystals gag, just as there is no lazier way to build a puzzle game than by throwing together a magic square, a maze, and two jigsaw puzzles and then calling it quits. Which leads me to wonder: why would anyone bother to license a work like *The Martian Chronicles* if all they're going to do is shovel tired old tripe like this onto the disk?

ROOKING THE NEW GAMER

Please understand, I am not saying that all old puzzles are bad, much less that they are bad simply because they are old. I realize, for one thing, that not every gamer out there has been playing computer games for the past two decades, and that there may be a large and appreciative new audience for material that veteran gamers would find familiar. For another thing, even veteran gamers can appreciate classic puzzles, if they are chosen well and executed with affection and skill.

The problem with *THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES* is that it is as devoid of affection and skill as any game I have ever seen. I fear that novice gamers will get sucked in by the appealing cover art and the provocative package sticker that asks, "Where do you go after *Myst*?" only to

get turned off of computer gaming entirely when they discover that this game doesn't come close to *Myst* in terms of visual beauty, design or integrity.

First of all, the game is ugly. Aside from some nice-looking dunes and hills, the scenery is poorly drawn, disjointed and messy. The artists' vision of a Martian landscape includes three-dimensional *TETRIS* pieces that hover in mid-air, pipes that stick out of walls at odd angles, and architecture that is a hodgepodge of styles, each more unattractive than the last.

The game's human characters come off even worse—they're stiff, waxy figurines with creaky joints and bad lip-synching. Even the cursors and icons are ugly, not to mention poorly designed. Who decided that it

was a good idea to use as your cursor a pushing square that's maddeningly hard to position with precision? Probably the same person who came up with the game's hideous movement arrows and dysfunctional inventory system.

Nor are poor visuals the limit of the

bad design. The game's soundtrack is every bit as ugly and disjointed. The movement system is clumsy. (You get around by pivoting in ninety-degree increments and then moving forward, both



SOMEBODY MYST THE POINT *MARTIAN CHRONICLES* not only has boring puzzles but also a lame, collect-the-crystals treasure hunt.

at a snail's pace.) Most locations you come across are empty. You turn, turn, turn, turn, and then lumber onward, hoping against hope that you'll find something to do a few screens further on.

When you actually "do" something



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B IS FOR BRADBURY

About a dozen years ago, back when the miniseries was God on network TV, NBC tried to make a miniseries out of *The Martian Chronicles*. They even drafted SF author Richard Matheson to write the 350-page screenplay. But all for naught: as anyone who catches it on cable these days can attest, it came only a little closer than the Byron Preiss game to capturing Bradbury's magic.

No, if it's Bradbury you're aching for, you've got to go back to ink on paper. Go to famous stories like "The Sound of Thunder," with its gut-wrenching time travel twist, or "The Yeldt," with its early glimpse of virtual reality, or to some of the stories collected in *It Is For Rickett or Is For Space*, such as "The Million-Year Picnic," which also makes an appearance in *The Martian Chronicles*.

Few years will give you a better taste than "The Million-Year Picnic" of what Bradbury calls his "strange mixture of awe and wonder and beauty, along with terror."

If you want to chow down on a double helping of short stories, a good place to start is with the two-volume *Classic Stories*, published in 1990, or with *The Best of Ray Bradbury* (1976), if you can't lump up a copy.

If it's novels you're after, there is no question that *Fahrenheit 451*—about to become a movie for the second time, incidentally—is the place to start. *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, with its powerful evocation of sinister small-town doings, is a good place to go next.

For a less overtly science-fictional story, treat yourself to the charming and timeless *Dandelion Wine*

(other than a brain teaser from the Jumbo Bag O' Yarns), it consists of turning on your all-purpose "scanner." This handy tool lets you see through walls, magnifies images, and translates alien inscriptions—but only when the designers allow.

It isn't worthwhile to go on listing all the ways in which *THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES* is deficient. Suffice it to say that this is a badly designed and poorly conceived game.

What about the extras? Well, the readings from Bradbury's original text are nice; they remind you what the real *Martian Chronicles* has to offer. But the graphics that play in the background add nothing to the words—better to buy the book, or an audio version of it. The Bradbury interview, in which the author looks like Brando and talks like Yoda, may interest his old fans but isn't likely to win him any new ones. And it's only interactive in the same way that a record of a concert could be described as an "interactive concert"—you get to decide in

what order to play the 15 brief recordings.

The really great Bradbury game, like the great Astinov, Clarke, or Heinlein game, remains to be made. I just hope that when someone gets his hands on *The Illustrated Man*, it's not Byron Preiss Multimedia. Someone who gave a damn about Bradbury—or about making good games—would not have let this one out the door. ☹



THE EDITORS SPEAK

THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES

RATING ★★★★★

PROS The excerpts from Bradbury's novel demonstrate this author's enormous gift for language, even if the game doesn't.

CONS The off-the-rack puzzles and still gameplay feel 10 years out of date, and though the visuals are modern, they're an unattractive mess.

A VETERAN ASTRONAUT.
AN ADVENTUROUS REPORTER.
A DISTINGUISHED SCIENTIST.
A MYSTERIOUS ASTEROID.
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Stranger On A Train

Synergy's Moody GADGET Is Surreal But Not Serious

by Charles Ardai

THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH A GAME'S HAVING NO PURPOSE OTHER THAN TO BE VISUALLY INTRIGUING, AS long as it acknowledges that this is why it exists. GADGET does. It is to computer games what glossy, oversized coffee table books are to publishing.

Designed by Haruhiko Shono, who previously won awards for ALICE, a similarly eye-catching surrealist rife, GADGET is set up as a surreal spy story. To that end, the driving, drum-heavy soundtrack will remind you of "The Prisoner," as well as some of that TV show's "Why am I here and who's after me?" strain of paranoia. It also has bits of technology, half science-fictional and half retro; these are the gadgets referred to in the title.

The thin storyline involves something about waking up in a gloomy hotel room and getting a message from a sinister man named "Stonelap" that sets you off on a search for six scientists who hold the key to preventing a comet from colliding with the Earth. You travel by train, stopping at six stations between the city's West End and its East End. Along the way you meet figures

APPLY A LITTLE ENGLISH

It is not clear whether credit for these monikers belongs to the designer or to "David," the one-named chap listed in the credits under the job title "Englishing." David clearly deserves the "credit" for the overripe Englishing rampant elsewhere in the game. One random train passenger, when you catch his eye, launches into a rant as follows: "Electricity shot down my spine and I was numb from top to toe, a purplish rash came out on my thighs and groin...my cheek muscles twitched [and] the blood curdled in my veins..." There is more like this, but I'll spare you.

As in many translated artbooks where the emphasis is on the art, the text here is to be avoided. This is simple, since most of the game's text simply appears on the screen as text rather than being rendered as audio.

Too much thought is also to be avoided, something the game makes easy by being strictly linear. You progress from one location to the next when the game feels you are ready. The game's interface is a pared-down version of a standard adventure game interface, albeit rather too pared down for my taste. For instance, though nominally there is an inventory function, as far as I could tell there is no way for the player to call it up. Your inventory is there when the game wants you to have it, and not there at all other times.

Instead of thinking, you are encouraged to spend your time admiring the scenery. And the scenery is certainly admirable. Well-drawn, and in certain sequences well-animated, the game's artwork is slick and stylish. The architecture and artifacts come off better than the human characters, who look like ugly wooden puppets, but on the whole Gadget provides a satisfactory feast for the eyes even as it denies one to the cerebellum.

Gadget

Price: \$79.99

System

Requirements:

PC compatible

486-33 or better,

8 MB RAM, 3

MB hard drive

space, SVGA

graphics,

Windows 3.1, 2x CD-ROM, Windows com-

patible sound, mouse.

Protection: None (CD must be in drive)

Designer: Haruhiko Shono

Publisher: Synergy, Inc.

Tokyo, Japan



Even as eye-candy, though, GADGET could bear some improving. There is no "go back" function, so you spend a lot of time retracing your steps through the work-around (literally) of going left-left-forward-left-left. There are an awful lot of locations where you walk around, turning eagerly in place, only to find that there is nothing for you to do. And other than your fourteenth slightly different view of, say, an impressive staircase, there is not even anything for you to see. When you get stuck, it's sometimes hard to figure out what you neglected to do that's preventing you from progressing from one location to the next, which is deadly in a game this linear. Finally, when you see error messages like "Handler not defined/put Widget [in New 'dummy'] into AQ" pop up, your confidence in the game's being fully baked plummets.

Still, it's pretty. For people with too much time on their hands and a fetish for cool visuals, that may be enough. ☺

THE EDITORS SPEAK

GADGET

RATING



PROS Though not the best-looking eye candy around, it's handsome enough and cobbles together a nicely creepy atmosphere.

CONS Other than its looks, it's got zero to recommend it.



CONJUNCTION JUNCTION Gadget really missed the train with its funky Japanese-to-English dialogue translation.

in bulky overcoats, with peculiar spy-story names like "Constantine," "Wilhelm," and "Horselover."

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Circle Reader Service #138

The Discovered Country

TEKWAR Meekly Goes Where Everyone Has Gone Before

by Martin E. Cirulis

SO, I'M SITTING HERE THE OTHER NIGHT, WATCHING THE ONE TRUE GOD OF LATE NIGHT TV, DAVID Letterman, and who appears but William Shatner? Always one to heed to the words of Sci-Fi figures, I begin to pay even closer attention, my curiosity piqued. Is Bill going to announce another *Star Trek* movie? Apologize for the last one? Explain why he uses the pronoun "we" when talking about his "writing"? Tell us exactly how much of his hair consists of inorganic fibers? No! He was on the show to hawk yet another product tie-in to the unendingly derivative *TekWar* franchise, and this time it was a computer game! "Now this," says I, "is gettin' good."

Unfortunately, even after paying close attention to the segment I had no real clue as to what the game was about—and I was beginning to suspect that Shatner wasn't much more in the know than I. On the other hand, he did assure Dave and millions of late night viewers that it would be "The most advanced

computer game ever made." After such an unqualified statement from the one true Captain of the one true Enterprise, what could I do but wait by the door, eager for the courier to arrive with my very own review copy?

And once it did arrive, I had even more reason to be hopeful. It seems *Capstone*, according to the new subtitle under its logo, has become "The Pioneer of Entertainment Software" which I guess has a better ring to it than "House of B-Grade Doom-clones." Well, with a movie star and a pinnacle behind a game, you'd think it would have to be good. ...



TEK-NOIR *TekWar* looks pretty good, until you get up close and personal.

the TV show. In the game Shatner plays your sneering, preening boss, who sends you on dumb missions, just like the TV show. You're chasing after scummy little drug lords who sell that goofy Tek stuff—again, just like in the TV show. So, if you always wished you could sit much closer to your TV set and watch bad SF with a mouse in your hand, this is the game for you.

For the rest of us, though, this shtick is getting a wee bit tired, and I question whether the world really needs another Doom-clone, even if it is in SVGA.

Instead of levels, there is a series of different "neighborhoods" that must be searched and fought through. Instead of finding your way out of Hell, you must track down a bunch of Tek-lords across the city and find parts of their Tek-codes that will allow you to bust into the Tek-stronghold and kill the Tek-kingpin, hopefully while he's sitting on the Tek-can, reading a Tek-magazine...Well,

CORRIDOR 8

Well, before you get your hopes up about any "immersive 3-D world" blarbs you might have read, let's get straight to the heart of things here. Just as the *TekWar* books are cloned from much higher quality cybespunk fiction, so is the *TekWar* game cloned from much higher quality first-person shoot-em-ups, namely the defiled *Doom*. And there's really not much more to say about this game.

Oh sure, the details are a little different: you're playing some thawed-out tough guy, probably named something like Mike Turtlecock, who is just like the thawed-out tough guy Jake Cardigan in

TekWar

Price: \$59.99

System

Requirements: 486-50 or higher (Pentium recommended for SVGA), 8 MB RAM, 20 MB hard drive space, 2x CD-ROM; supports Sound Blaster compatible sound cards; IPX-compatible network required for network play

of Players: 1-2, network play supported

Protection: None (CD must be in drive)

Publisher: Capstone

Miami, Florida

(800) 468-7226



you get the idea.

Each of these Tek-lords must be hunted down one at a time, in the form of a "mission" that Shatner sends you on; tougher lords require you to fight through more neighborhoods. These areas, for all their attempted innovations, still contain the standard weapons and ammunition, with keys lying around higgledy-piggledy, shuffling logic and com-

mon sense. And once you finally corner the evil Tek-dude that Bill wants terminated, you discover that "lord" might as well read "Arcade-style Boss."

THE SVGA POP-UP BOOK

To be fair, an attempt has been made to create a semi-realized world. There are subways to catch, trucks to be run over by, civilians to shoot by mistake, dead bodies to bob in the water, and cops to make your life difficult instead of catching bad guys. Unfortunately, any sense of immersion into a simulated world is ruined by the quick-'n'-dirty graphic style and silly arcade-isms.

While everything looks great—like Shat-

ner's hair—don't step too close or the illusion is ruined. People look realistic from far away, but their faces devolve into pixel-mash and they take on a paper-doll appearance if you get too close. The buses and trucks going by are impressive, but become ridiculous the closer they get, at which point you realize they are made out of perfect box shapes with the picture of a bus painted on them. It's hard to be impressed when you're being run over by a glorified animal-cracker box.

TEKWAR tries to be something new, and with a bit more effort and probably a lot more money, it could have been in the same league as SYSTEM SHOCK. But the reality is that this game is just another first-person shooter and not, by any stretch of the imagination, "The most advanced game ever made." Game players who never get tired of this sort of thing will probably like it, (although I suspect the body-count of "non-combatants" will get rather high, once gamers hear the high-pitched panic noises they make when shot) and if you live for DOOM-clones, or just like to fantasize about William Shatner being condescending to you, then this could be your bag.

Alas, even network capability doesn't drag this retread into the world of relevancy for me, and after spending more hours playing it than I should have, I came away feeling only one thing: Tek-Bored. ☹



HARK, HARK, THE NARC Bringing drug lords to justice in this game warrants more than an arrest.

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THE EDITORS SPEAK

TEKWAR

RATING ★★☆☆☆

PROS Tries to do some interesting things with the first-person shooter ...and Shatner!

CONS Been there, done that ... and Shatner.



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Ancient Art of Gore

MORTAL KOMBAT 3 Delivers A Stiff Uppercut To PC Fighting

by George Jones

THINK I'VE FINALLY FIGURED OUT JUST WHAT IT IS ABOUT MORTAL KOMBAT THAT SUCKS UP GAMERS' SOULS, COMPRESSES time to the point where one minute equals thirty and causes you to actually think (and in some cases, play the joystick equivalent of an air guitar) about what moves you can use to beat Motaro (or whatever the hell his name his).

It's a three-part answer:

1) **Lifelike characters.** The realistic animations and graphics (except for the blood) quickly get you to buy into the Kombatants as real. How many times have you beaten Shao Kahn (or been beaten by him) and shouted "YOU [four word expletive deleted]"? Or how many times have you sworn the MK3 AI has something personally against you?

2) **Psychological, strategic action.** There is actually psychological strategy in this game. Although there are general strategies that serve well, each fighter must be handled differently because they



FIGHT TO THE FINISH When your opponent flops to the ground and you see these words, it's time to end things...for good.

all perform differently. This is even more true when playing against another humans—in fact, the game becomes more like chess than one could possibly imagine.

3) **Intuitive controls.** Okay, so moving the joystick to the left, down, up, then pressing one of six buttons doesn't exactly jibe with real life. But it isn't that hard to learn in for some reason, maybe because the MORTAL KOMBAT way has been ingrained in our heads over the years. Scary thought. Either way though, during life-and-death combat, it's frightening how fluidly I attack and defend. The game's interface never gets in the way.

Oh yeah, there's one more reason I should add, a reason many might argue is most important of all: *our society really gets off on violence.*

EASY ON THE EYES, HARD ON THE MIND

Visually speaking, all the essentials that make MORTAL

KOMBAT such a hit are present in this third installment. The Kombatants, eight of whom are new, appear more lifelike than ever before—you'll be amazed at the difference between MK 2 and MK 3. The blood of course, is as fake as ever (which actually might be a good

thing, considering how lifelike the fighters look), but it still flows copiously, particularly with some of the more gruesome fatalities.

Once again, each individual has been injected with lots of great-looking animation and lots of personality, which means, once again, that you'll find yourself gloating in victory and cursing in defeat at your computer. Sheeva, the four-armed warrior, looks particularly menacing, and the new version of Kung Lao, he of the razor-sharp hat, also looks good. Eye



NET YIELD You must become one with your fighters, grasshopper, if you wish to master *Mortal Kombat 3*; this time around, you have eight new characters to learn.

Mortal Kombat 3

Price: \$59.99

System:

Requirements:

486-33 or faster

(Pentium recommended), 8 MB

RAM (16 MB

recommended), 29 MB hard drive

space, 2x CD-

ROM; supports

Sound Blaster compatible sound cards;

IPX-compatible network required for network

play

of Players: 1-2, network play supported

Protection: None (CD must be in drive)

Designer: Williams Entertainment

Publisher: GT Interactive

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candy abounds, from the swirling trash and debris on some levels to being able to knock your foe up into another level with a well-placed uppercut. Whatever the formula is for emotionally convincing gamers they're fighting real people, not just two-dimensional sprites, the folks at **Williams Entertainment** have it. And **GT Interactive** nailed the translation on the head.

Although the sound effects are great, I have to admit that I was a little disappointed with the background music this time around (make sure your CD-ROM drive is connected to your sound card, the music plays straight off the CD). It just didn't have the emotional pull of **MORTAL KOMBAT 2** for some reason. Thankfully, it doesn't matter all that much—half of the time the action is so furious you won't even notice the tunes.

KOMBAT CHESH

The gameplay in **MORTAL KOMBAT 3** is, of course, mind-numbing.

Impressive graphics and lots of blood aside, **MORTAL KOMBAT** really doesn't get the strategic-action credit it deserves. Sure, you can just play the game performing leg sweeps, jump kicks and up-

WHAT'S NEW IN MK3?

New characters. Eight new characters, including Sheeva, four-armed demotess; Cyrax, the android assassin; the knife-throwing Kano; and Sindel, the long-haired, strong-haired queen of Shao Kahn.

Secrets. These nine-bit "cheats" allow you to unlock secrets, like fighting in mid-air, fighting as spacy fighters, and so on. Kodes are all over the on-line world.

Tournament mode. Remember Siva Corvo's melee? That's what this is—you gather up to nine fighters, your opponent does the same, and you duke it out. Kill one opponent off and another instantly takes his or her place. The combatant with the last fighter(s) left wins.

Fight circuits. Novice, Master and Warrior levels give you three different paths to the title, each of varying difficulty.

Network play. Provided you have an IPX compatible network, you can play with up to 12 simultaneous matches running at the same time.

Running. If you want to close the distance between you and a foe, there's no better way. Also helps get your attacks off to a "running" start.

also have to master your opponents—what they're susceptible to and what never to try.

The enemy AI is strong this time around, a fact that is bolstered by five difficulty levels and three different battle "circuits." Novice is the short route to the title, Master is the mid-point and Warrior is, well, close to impossible (at least at the highest difficulty level). And the increasing skill factor doesn't just make them stronger or faster—your opponents actually fight more intelligently, using their special attacks more effectively and

throwing more effective combos at you. I did not notice a cheating tendency at the higher levels, though—some special attack sequences are impossible performed in the blink of an eye by computer opponents.

And as challenging as the AI is, this game leaps to the next level when

played against other humans. When played at a high level, these matches can become the most intense game in town. To be successful, you've got to know your fighter, know your opponents fighter, and think about what kind of moves he or she might make. But while playing each oth-

er at the arcade is no problem, one-on-one with the PC usually means someone has to be crippled with the keyboard as their controls (see Controls below). **GT Interactive's** version of **MORTAL KOMBAT 3**, however, offers up a first-of-its-kind fix: network play. **Kombateers** can now set up their own MK3 "network," where users can challenge each other to match after match, or set up tournaments. Better yet, the network play actually works—depending on LAN capacity, up to 12 simultaneous matches can be held.

THE MONSTER BASH

Being able to play as 14 different characters (not including the, ahem, hidden folk) gives this title tons of replay value (sure you won it all with Sheeva, but can you do it with Stryker?), with all the special moves—each character has at least three and sometimes four or five attacks. (For special moves and cheat codes, see the article on MK 3 in the Lucky 7 Strategies section.) And, in a tip of the hat to the new breed of fighting games, combos are now a part of the MK world. Extremely effective ones, when executed properly, can take away 40 percent of a fighter's health. Getting hit by six kicks and punches in a row can be a tad bit annoying, but it does add another dimension to the game.

Fatalities (bloody limb-ripping, head-exploding), Friendships (humiliate your foe through a friendly/silly gesture) and Babalities (turn your foe into a baby) are all here and are executed in the same fashion as always. Once you hear "Finish Him!" you press the appropriate "secret"



BLOWHARD Fatalities, Animalities, Babalities and Friendship Moves like this humiliating experience—**Mortal Kombat 3's** got 'em all.

percuts. But to be Really Good, you've got to master a character to the point where you know which of their combos work better and when. For example, if you play with Cyrax, you must master throwing his Net in rapid succession. For Jax, it's the Backbreaker. Of course, you

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key stroke and—bam—something special happens. New to the game this time around is the Animality which, gamers will (or should) be happy to know does not involve unnatural acts with furry creatures; it's the animal equivalent of a Babality. Whatever the reason for gamers' strange fascination with these Finishing Moves, it definitely adds an air of finality to a match to slice him into pieces, to be Kung Lao, or to turn yourself into a snowman as Sub-Zero.



HE SAID, SHE SAID Man or woman, beast or machine—everyone's fair game when you set up a tournament, one of MK3's value-added features.

CONTROLLING THE ACTION

MORTAL KOMBAT 3's control scheme comes closest to matching the real thing, offering you both high and low punch, high and low kick, running and blocking. And while pressing left, left, right, right, high punch for a special attack could hardly be considered intuitive for a fighting game, you'll be amazed at how quickly you become fluidly versed in the way of the fist.

If I have one gripe with MORTAL KOMBAT's control scheme, it's that they didn't support the rapidly emerging breed of six-button controllers, like Suncom's SFX. This means that, unless you can use your joystick to emulate keyboard settings, which appears to give you a slight response hit, you're stuck pressing two buttons at a time to run and two buttons at a time to block. One positive to using a pad like the SFX is that two players can duke it out at the same PC—one using the "keyboard" and the other using their four-button controller. And while four buttons are better than the two buttons

allowed in MORTAL KOMBAT 2 (Acclaim), it still would have been nice, however, if GT Interactive thought ahead enough to provide support for six buttons.

TOE-TO-TOE

So how does MORTAL KOMBAT 3 compare to the new generation of fighting games, like VIRTUA FIGHTER 2, FX FIGHTER, et al? Very favorably, I would argue. VIRTUA FIGHTER is a tremendous game, with incredible fight action that not even

this game can match. But there's something about MORTAL KOMBAT (perhaps its long history) that makes it more emotionally compelling to me. And, of course, neither of the VIRTUA FIGHTER versions has made it to the PC. FX FIGHTER, it's PC offspring (by

GTE Entertainment) is very good, but I don't think it's up there with this title. MK3, for a two-dimensional game, has more depth (graphically and strategically) than FX FIGHTER.

Granted, this may be the end of the road for the MORTAL KOMBAT engine, as we know it (Williams refuses to comment on a MORTAL KOMBAT 4, and some insiders are hinting it will be radically different), but it's gotta be a good feeling to go out on top. And GT Interactive should be proud of their excellent, value-added translation of an arcade phenomenon to the PC. ☺

THE EDITORS SPEAK

MORTAL KOMBAT 3

RATING ★★★★★

PROS Authentic arcade-quality port, fast-paced excitement make this the best fighting game available on the PC platform.

CONS Lack of six-button joystick support; background music isn't great.

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Put Flipper To Steel With This Year's Bumper Crop Of Tables

by Arinn Dembo

PINBALL, SPORT OF RIBBELS, BANT OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS. FOR OVER 60 YEARS, THESE SIREN machines, lurking in the back corners of grocery stores and taverns, in the dark recesses of arcades and pool halls, have worked their wiles on the young, the cool, the fearless. Universally loved by gamesters, universally hated by authority figures, pinball machines were considered such a bad influence on the young that laws and city ordinances have actually been passed against them. It was illegal to own or operate a pinball machine anywhere in the city of New York for over 30 years, from 1942 to 1976; some of you may even recall the famous snapshot of Mayor Fiorello Henry LaGuardia, celebrating the passage of that law by smashing pinball machines with a sledgehammer in front of a grimly approving crowd.

Like so many wonders of 20th century America, the game's origins lie in the Great Depression. The missing link between modern pinball and its primitive ancestor, the pachinko machine, first appeared in the dark year of 1931—a coin-operated pachinko machine that lay on its side, the silver balls slipping past steel "pins" (get the connection?) and dropping into scoring holes for points.

Nowadays, pinball machines have voices, magnets, drop-targets, roll-overs, ball lock, multi-ball play and dot-matrix displays. They tend to use solid state rather than electromagnetic technology. The only thing they have in common with the pachinko machines of old is the silver ball.

For those of us who suffered through

the second wave of anti-game, anti-youth laws in the 1980's, when local city councils moved heaven and earth to keep us out of the video arcades, the pinball machine is still a powerful symbol. They're getting rare, it's true—they're expensive to manufacture (from \$5000 to \$15,000 per table) and they just don't appeal to the mindless hordes the way video games do.

If it's been years since you surrendered to the lure of silver balls, flashing flippers and blinking lights, all is not lost: nowadays you can recapture the thrill of days past and play pinball on your very own PC.

FINISHED TABLES

Three of the pinball titles I played are already on store shelves: **PINBALL ILLUSIONS**, the latest in a series of pinball games created by **Digital Illusions** and released by **21st Century Entertainment**, **ULTRA 3-D PINBALL**, a pinball fantasia created and released by **Sierra**, and **PSYCHO PINBALL** by **Philips**.

PINBALL ILLUSIONS DIGITAL ILLUSIONS

PINBALL ILLUSIONS is a follow-up to **PINBALL DREAMS** and **PINBALL FANTASIES**, both of which were released by Digital Illusions in 1992. The game features four tables with traditional pinball themes: **Law 'n' Justice**, a science fiction/cop table which uses the round-up of various criminals as challenge events; **Babewatch**, a beach-half-bimbo table with challenges like surfing, casino and jukebox; **Extreme Sports**, with bungee-jumping and

iron man race challenges; and **The Vikings**, in which the challenge events are named after various new lands—**Labrador**, **Italy**, **England**, etc. All of the tables feature fairly nice graphics and a traditional, straight-up pinball: no video-game aesthetics here. Players who prefer video-game/pinball hybrids to straight simulations may be somewhat disappointed. The game has sound effects and voices, but these are strictly to create the feel of a real pinball machine, right down to the *fox* dot-matrix display for



Pinball Illusions

scoring. There are no event animations, no strange 3-D, and very little on-line help on scoring or challenge events; as with the real thing, either you figure it out on your own or you don't.

A quick run-down on the features of the game: it supports up to eight players in the hot-seat and employs the two shift keys for flipper-control (far and away the best system; I subtract a few points from any game that doesn't use the shift keys, although they can get away with the "z" and "7" keys in a pinch), and offers multiple keys for nudging the table—right side, left side, and one key to tilt the table up—as well as controlled shooting, which means that you can choose how hard to fire the ball, a very important feature for true pinball aficionados. The music is fairly cool, although you can't turn it off. When you start up the game, you can set factors like balls per game, the angle of the table, maximum number of balls for multi-ball events, tilt sensitivity of the table, and screen factors like scrolling and graphical resolution.

The tables in PINBALL ILLUSIONS are seen up close, and the screen scrolls up and down the table to follow the flight of the ball. Generally I don't like that kind of thing—seeing the whole table at once can be important, especially during multi-ball play—but it was handled intelligently here, and some of the tables are separated nicely. This is a good product for pure, old-fashioned pinball play, and captures the feel of a rolling ball especially well.

21ST-CENTURY ENTERTAINMENT, WEBSTER, NEW YORK, (716) 872-1200

3-D ULTRA PINBALL SIERRA

Sierra's 3-D ULTRA PINBALL is a bird of a different feather. This is not a pure pinball simulator, but rather an innovative cross-breed of pinball simulation, video game, and strategy. Although it isn't the best pinball action available, it's an excellent tool for teaching pinball theory, pinball lingo and shot-making skills—and it certainly has the distinction of being by far the most entertaining product yet associated with the word "Outpost."

The game features three main tables, which can be played individually or as a campaign, all with themes from the now infamous title OUTPOST. Campaigns begin on the Colony table, with players permitted to warp to a Mine table and a Command Post table as their skill allows. Each of the main tables—Colony, Mine and Command Post—has five main challenges; the goal of the campaign game is to complete all 15 of these challenges within 3-5 balls, as well as accomplishing the other strategic goals of the game, like building structures, collecting premium points and extra balls, and discovering the two hidden levels. Once you do



all this, you can build a space port and launch a spaceship to win the game.

3-D ULTRA PINBALL has both good and bad points. On the good side of things, Sierra has done something genuinely new with the concept of PC pinball. Each of the main tables has an auxiliary table attached to either side; this particular three-in-one effect is something I've never seen before, and the formation is an original way to deal with the problem of bringing pinball to the small screen. Tables are seen in their entirety—no scrolling is always a plus—and the game also offers controlled shooting. It supports up to four players in hot-seat play, and there are a variety of entertaining event-animations, as most challenge events are spiked up with some kind of pleasing eye candy. The campaign game is goal-oriented and direct; this is the

first pinball title I've seen that integrates so many strategy elements, and that can be "won" per se. The on-line help, pinball glossary and suggested reading list all score big points, and the game has the virtue of being easy to load and run in the Windows 95 operating environment.

Unfortunately, there are a few drawbacks. The arrangement of control keys for flippers and nudging is not the best. Although you can set the keys you want to use for the flippers, it isn't possible to use the two shift keys—you can only use one of them, which is hardly useful. Smart players will settle for the "z" and "7" keys instead.

Also, there is only one key for granching the table; the game decides on its own which direction the player would want the table to be nudged. Hardly a precise form of control. Players experienced with both real and virtual pinball will note that the shots and combinations in this game are also extremely easy to make, and that the center of

each table is surprisingly sparse. All in all, 3-D ULTRA PINBALL is recommended more for newcomers than old pros, but for those who want a pinball trainer, this game is the best I've seen. It will teach any player how to make catches, passes and shots, how to watch for and control the indicator lights and how to start bonus events—and besides, it's one of the more entertaining games I've seen for the Windows 95 desktop.

SIERRA ON-LINE, CORNFIELD, CA, (800) 757-7707

PSYCHO PINBALL PHILLIPS INTERACTIVE MEDIA

PSYCHO PINBALL looks like a European import adapted for American consumption—most red-blooded Yankee titles don't support five different languages

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Psycho Pinball

(or represent English-speaking countries with the Union Jack, for that matter). It features four tables, which can be played separately and linked into a multi-table game, with traditional pinball themes: The Big Top table, which has a circus theme and features warp holes to the other three tables; The Abyss table, a very nice split table with an aquatic theme; The Trick or Treat table, which has a spook-house aesthetic; and the Wild West table, which is fairly self-explanatory.

PSYCHO PINBALL has a lot going for it. The tables are beautiful, loaded with targets, and they feature bonus events that turn up on the *fox* dot matrix display—a real plus for capturing that genuine pinball feel. It has three keys for nudging the table, and the grunch effect is pretty cool; the whole screen shakes visibly. Players have a good deal of control over the game, since it is possible to set the control keys, number of balls, tilt sensitivity of the table and the "difficulty" level of the game—as well as controlling presentation features like resolution, color contrast, music and speed. All this and a few seconds of really cool, slightly disturbing animation before and after play will give this game a boost with pinball fanatics.

Of the four tables, only the Big Top offers controlled shooting—the other three have uncontrolled "theme" shoot-

ers, which will annoy experienced players, even if they are cute. But this is a minor point. The scrolling, on the other hand, is a more serious problem. As I said earlier, I prefer to see the whole table on screen at once, rather than have my viewpoint scroll up and down the table with the ball, and players of PSYCHO PINBALL will quickly find out why. These tables are extremely long and they have a lot of drop-holes, tubes and "giddy-ups" that can fire the ball at high speed to an unseen

part of the table. It is sometimes very difficult to save the ball, because you simply can't see enough of the screen at once. Also, the scrolling follows the ball with slavish devotion as it bounces around, which means that the pitch and yaw of the screen can get a little nauseating. In the end, pinball wizards will have to make the call—are the cool graphics and target-rich environments worth a little humiliation and sea-sickness? I thought so.

PHILIPPS MEDER, LOS ANGELES, CA, (800) 340-7888

FACTORY UPDATES

The following titles were in various stages of development. I was allowed to see pre-release versions of them, but, as with all works in progress, things can change. With that understanding, here's the goods...

FULL TILT! PINBALL MAXIS

FULL TILT! PINBALL, designed by Cinematronics and soon to be released by Maxis, is another game that runs from the Windows 95 platform. The game thus far consists of three gorgeous, completely independent tables (no multi-table play as yet): Space Cadet, a sci-fi theme table with truly great bumper action; Skulduggery, a nicely painted table



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Full Tilt! Pinball

with a pirate motif; and Dragon's Keep, a very cool sword 'n' sorcery table with a nice three dimensional effect, castle walls and keeps connected by "giddy-up" tubes. Some of you genuine pinball fanatics may have already seen the Space Cadet table; it made its debut in the Microsoft Windows 95 Plus Pack.

All of the technical aspects of the game weren't nailed down when I peeked in, but things look pretty good. You can't use the old shift keys, but the trusty "x" and "y" are available. Two out of three tables have controlled shooting, and the game uses that all-important three-key grunching. Also—wonder of wonders!—the player gets beautiful, target-rich tables without having to put up with the dreaded scrolling effect. You can see the whole table at once, and not a great deal of graphical satisfaction is sacrificed. The game as-is supports four players in the hot seat and has a decent general help section, although there was nothing specific on the table scoring or challenges. I really liked their brief history of pinball; as a pinball fan I found it highly informative and very cool.

Overall, FULL TILT! is an attractive package, and promises to be a very nice pinball simulator once all the details are ironed out. The only down side I see is that for a non-campaign title, the game is a little light on tables, three rather than the standard four. But given the fact that Maxis doesn't propose to charge more than \$30 for the game, and the convenience of playing from the Windows 95 desktop, pinball fans may choose to put quality over quantity.

MAJUS SOFTWARE, ORLAND, CA, (800) 33-MAXIS

EXTREME PINBALL

ELECTRONIC ARTS

While on the subject of quality, I did get a peek at one last title—still unfinished, but very promising. This was EXTREME PINBALL, designed by Digital Extremes and eventually to be released by Electronic Arts.

EXTREME PINBALL features four of the brightest, most beautifully painted tables I have yet seen, including: Medieval Knights, a sword 'n' sorcery table with lots of targets and some

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Extreme Pinball

really beautiful spot animations, Rock Makers, a table with a rock-and-roll management theme and a ball that looks exactly like a miniature planet Earth; Urban Chaos, a very tight cop theme table; and Monkey Mayhem, a beautiful play table with a jungle motif and lots of silly chrome targets. All four tables have controlled shooting and use the shift

I saw some really great stuff, especially on the Medieval Knights table. For example, when you shoot the swamp target, the ball changes from a standard silver pinball to a glistening, slippery-looking dark sphere. Similarly, when you shoot the cannon target, you get an incandescent ball of fire. The pseudo dot matrix display was really nice, and so

keys for flipper control, but there was only one key for grunching (hopefully this will be changed). The game will eventually support up to four players and will allow the player up to seven balls per game.

Attention to detail is what's going to make EXTREME PINBALL enjoyable. As I noodled through the tables,

were the spot animations of a scaly black and green arm emerging from the Troll's Lair, and the dragon in the middle of the table belching fire.

Unfortunately, there is a price to be paid for these beautiful graphics. The scrolling, unless fixed by release, is a pain, causing lots of balls lost because you can't see where the rebound is headed. Ah well, I guess nothing is perfect.

ELECTRONIC ARTS, SAN MATEO, CA, (415) 571-7171

GAME OVER

This crop of games is a good one; everyone should be able to find some harmless diversion in at least one of these titles. There are also some other promising titles due a little later next year, like Virgin's HYPER PINBALL and Empire's PRO PINBALL: THE WEB. Of course, no simulator is going to be as much fun as winding up and getting physical with a real live table. But we don't fault flight simulators because we can't feel the g-forces in a tight turn, do we? ☹

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Alone In The Dak

ALIEN ODYSSEY Offers Up Semi-Interactivity At Its Finest

by Peter Olafson

A LOT OF GAMES OUT THERE COULD USE A SHIPF KICK IN THE REAR. AFTER ALL, WHO HASN'T "repaired" a television with a slap, or a lawnmower with a good toe-stubbing punt? *Argonaut's CREATURE SHOCK*, released by Virgin in 1994, was a game that could have used a few such stiff slaps on the back—maybe then it would have been worth playing.

In *Argonaut's* latest release, *ALIEN ODYSSEY*, released by *Phillips Media*, the designers seem to have given *CREATURE SHOCK* the hearty whack that it needed and have come up with a new title based largely upon the same approach, but executed with far more success.

PSAPH MEETS GAAN

ALIEN ODYSSEY lets you step into the shoes of Psaph, the everyman of humanoid aliens. Psaph's bad day gets worse when, during a planetary survey of a distant world, his scout ship gets caught up in an atmospheric disturbance and crash-lands. You regain consciousness to find yourself smack-dab in the middle of a

planetary war between the dominant Dak (robot-like, hence bad) and a peaceful, telepathic tribe (represented by your gallant rescuer, Gaan The Good). You must first reach the safety of Gaan's village and then infiltrate a pair of Dak bunkers in search of an escape ship and your by-now-captured ally.

Your quest consists of four discrete levels. A first-person forest chase sequence on hovercraft-on-motorcycles (a nod to *Return of the Jedi* here) and the ubiquitous 3-D mine-tunnel sequence (reminiscent of the *Star Wars* trench run) are intermingled with a pair of large, multiple-perspective adventure segments that calls to mind the polygonal world of *ALONE IN THE DARK*, reinvented with 3-D STUDIO.

None of this is particularly original, mind you, but each portion is nicely wrought and distinctive on its own terms.

The speeder scene, for instance, is patterned after we-put-you-in-a-demo-and-give-you-a-gun games like *Phillips' CHaos CONTROL* (the craft's path through the forest is fixed; you control only the guns). You follow the Dak through the woods, trying to blow them off their bikes, shooting the grenades they throw at you and being very cautious enough with your own fire so that you don't send the accompanying Gaan into a tree.

This sub-game is only semi-interactive, but it is semi-interactivity at its finest. Targeting the Dak with the mouse is a fine test of precision aiming; sometimes you're given just a few slim gaps between trees, rocks and Gaan to get your licks in. And



ENDOR BENDER Racing your speeder bike through the forest conjures up images of a faraway world a long, long time ago.

the way you shoot them—either blowing them off the seat or shooting the speeder out from under them—seems to influence which of a wide range of rendered crash sequences plays afterward. It's an effective way of preserving the rendered graphics and narrow band of gameplay while making you feel that the specifics of your performance actually count for something.

WORKING IN A DAK MINE

The mine sequence is a more traditional shoot-em-up, but with pleasant emphasis on two-handed coordination. In this sub-game, you not only have to aim your guns and activate your shield (both using the mouse), but you must also rotate your ship (with the keyboard) to prevent coming off the steel beams that block your route. It's far more difficult—at times infuriatingly so—but, because you're running the show, far more absorbing.

Sandwiched between these two sequences, and at game's end, are the two adventure segments, and this is where *ALIEN ODYSSEY* really sells itself. You send Psaph—here a 3-D creation closer to *Bio-Forge's* Robocop than *ALONE IN THE DARK's* detective—wandering in third person through two extensive Dak bases. The mood is one of quiet menace. The sparse use of sound effects only adds to it, and the glossy, rendered scenery is magnifi-

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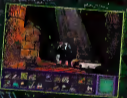
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cent—easily the best of its type for this sort of game—and gets better the deeper into the levels you get.

Along the way, naturally, are plentiful opportunities to fall fast and die young. Some are of the "oops" variety, like when Psaph steps into empty air and plummets shrieking into the screen, while others offer up a true stomach-turning experience; Psaph falls into a fan and is dismembered bit by bit into a red froth of organic muck, or falls into a river of molten rock and burns to death to the accompaniment of horrifying screams. Not a game for the young—nor is some of Psaph's rather rough-and-ready language.

ALIEN ODYSSEY even manages to make the mundane seem elegant, with smooth, speedy elevators, doors opening in exotic ways and little film clips of machinery that you've set in motion.

MORE THAN PRETTY PICTURES?

Those good looks come back to haunt ALIEN ODYSSEY, for most of the sumptuous scenery really is just that—background eye



MOTORIZED MOUNT The interface and inventory displays are succinct and simple—not that there's an overabundance of information.

candy. You walk around, you access the computer terminals, you kill the Dak, you open doors, and that about does it. Interaction with the environment is nil.

To be sure, there are some moderately clever puzzles within the fabric of the

game, and there's enough running back and forth over the same terrain so that you'll get comfortable with these places (is this a good thing? I'm not sure ...).

But, oddly, Argonaut hasn't exploited the beauty of its creation by allowing you to look at anything non-essential—something that might have been done at a



CREATURE COMFORTS Alex Bosser makes extensive use of unique camera angles to create dramatic tension during third-person segments of the game.

small cost in speech or text. It's like being in an art museum and discovering that the inscriptions beside all the paintings have been erased. For example, at one point late in the game, you will come upon what appears to be the remains of Psaph's crashed ship. You can kill the two Dak guards hanging around, but the ship itself is off-limits and doesn't merit even a word from Psaph. This puts ALIEN ODYSSEY just a step or two up the ladder from slideshow adventure games like C.H.A.O.S. CONTINUUM.

More description might also have made rational some of the determinedly irrational moments within this game. Why, when Psaph climbs through the acidic muck that damages him on an upper level, doesn't he actually suffer pain? Why, when the power is shut down, do lights continue to shine in the next room? In the speeder sequence, why does Gaan insist on flying directly in your field of fire? If he has guns, why doesn't he smoke 'em? And if he doesn't, why doesn't he just get out of your way?

Finally, some description of Psaph's surroundings, like what exactly the Dak are up to, would be refreshing. After all, it gets rather tiring hearing Psaph intone "Gotcha, you son-of-a-bitch" and laughing

his hollow, gloating laugh after every other kill without knowing what the hell is motivating him. It's not as if he has any adversarial history with the Dak.

Some of these decisions were doubtless deliberate sacrifices in the interest of simplicity, and these third-person segments do have a kind of direct, DOOM-like appeal. Your inventory is more like a tool kit than anything else: a set of detached Dak hands (used automatically), a range of code-bearing cartridges (the codes must be punched in to open certain doors) and that's it. Psaph keeps the same gun throughout these sequences, but can boost its firepower at certain computer terminals.

But simplicity and shallowness are different things. Unlike the character in BIO-FORCE, Psaph doesn't lose mobility as he loses life. He trundles along at one percent health as effectively as he does at 100 percent. Unlike *Psygnosis' ECSTASIA*, the opponents aren't tough or shrewd—they just stand there and take it.

Beyond that, ALIEN ODYSSEY, while more coherent than many games of this sort, is still just an amalgamation of interesting parts, and this concept, which reached its pinnacle in Interplay's *CYBERIA*, is beginning to grow thin. It's like having your steak arrive already cut up for you. The market is ripe for a game that provides a single environment that can transparently house a range of sub-games that don't have "sub-game" carved all over it.

However, when the sub-games are good, and they are pretty good in ALIEN ODYSSEY, it's enough to, if not immerse you, then at least entertain you for a good week or two. ☺

THE EDITORS SPEAK

ALIEN ODYSSEY

RATING ★★★★★

PROS Argonaut proves once again that it can make very pretty games; this one offers up a lot more consistency and engaging gameplay than its conceptual father, CREATURE SUCK.

CONS Still a bucket-full of "nearly interactive" sub-games. Too little "meat" in the gameplay and too many unanswered questions.

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Pucker Up

Despite Minor Flaws, NHL Hockey Continues To Lead The Pack

by Gordon Goble

IT HAPPENED DURING THE THIRTY-FIFTH GAME OF MY FIRST SEASON WITH ELECTRONIC ARTS' NHL HOCKEY 96. In charge of the Philadelphia Flyers (hey, I go where the going's good), I boasted a record of 21-11-2 and had finally started to figure out what it takes to win, most of the time at least. What's so remarkable about that? Well for starters, NHL 96's graphically revolutionary approach meant that it took me close to half a season to, as they say, "figure the game out." In most hockey games, it takes only a tenth as long. I also figured out something else less positive: this innovative reinvention has remained the same in many ways, particularly in some of its weaker areas.

Don't get me wrong—NHL 96 is without doubt the best PC hockey game going and arguably the most visually awesome computer sports spectacle in existence. But these little voices keep telling me it could've been better. If



HOT ICE NHL 96's amazing graphics help immerse you in the flow of the game.

you're new to hockey, this is where you must go. But if you're an EA NHL veteran, as much as you're impressed with the stunning graphics, you may be disappointed that more effort hasn't been devoted to increased gameplay realism.

THE NAME OF THE GAME

The first thing you'll notice when loading NHL 96 is the look. It's 21st century all the way, and the introductory sequence, backed with a brain-splitting rock score, is enough to send a tingle down the spine of even the most jaded gamer. Then there's the slick-looking interface, which allows you to easily configure settings and options.

Games may be played as either one-off exhibitions (modern play is supported) or as part of a short, medium or long season; you can also just skip right to the playoffs. All 26 clubs and 640-

plus players from the 1994-95 National Hockey League season are here, with copious quantities of statistics and pictures of almost every player as well. And if that's not enough, EA has included their own rating system that ranks each player in 14 individual categories. Video clips show a number of the higher-paid stars in action.

You can build your own free agents from scratch, giving them the traits you desire. You can also trade players, although only between human controlled teams and only before the season begins. Unfortunately, trading is one of several matters not fully explained in the skimpy NHL 96 manual.

Other pre-game options you can tinker around with lie in the NHL 96 Rules menu. Here, you'll find manual vs. automatic line changes, adjustments to period length, and infractions you can

NHL Hockey 96

Price: \$59.99

System

Requirements:

486-66 or faster

(Pentium recommended for high-

res game play), 8

MB RAM, 15 MB

hard drive space,

2x CD-ROM,

Microsoft com-

patible mouse; 16 MB RAM and VESA

compatible SVGA video required for high-

res mode, supports Sound Blaster compati-

ble sound cards

of Players: 1-2

Protection: None

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Publisher: Electronic Arts

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Circle Reader Service #211

toggle, such as offsides, two-line passes, icing, and penalties. New elements include fighting (?), manual goalie control, and something EA calls the "Speed Game," perfect for those who just want to Play Hockey; it eliminates extraneous, time-consuming actions like referees' skating to the puck, and so on. The manual goalie control is a good idea and an excellent way of increasing the difficulty level of the game, but it is extremely difficult to grasp and requires tons of practice time.

IF LOOKS COULD KILL

Set up your game, and it's on to graphical considerations. The main question here is: how fast is your computer? Thankfully, you'll be able to play the game regardless. NHL 96, in keeping up with the computer game Jones', offers both high-resolution (640x400) and low-resolution (320x200) visuals. It also offers a multitude of detail options for everyone in between. I must confess that only high-resolution gameplay does it for me; the 320x200 display just ain't that attractive. Running on a Pentium 90, I've found that doing away with the logos on the ice and the boards, ice textures, player shadows and plexiglass gets the frame rate purring along. This may sound like a lot of stuff to be switching off, but leaving the crowd, players' benches, and the gorgeous reflections on the ice activated is more than enough to convince me I'm playing hockey. If you're lucky enough to have a 120MHz Pentium, everything runs great with all the settings on. Your mileage, of course, may vary.

As game time approaches and the final bars of the American or Canadian national anthem are sung, you're taken

on a beautiful, spiraling 3-D camera ride from the rafters to center ice that's impressive enough to nearly make you chuck your puck. And it doesn't let up when the game begins. Nearly a dozen floating, panning cameras are at the ready, from press box to player level to a couple of end zone shots, and reverses of each. During the course of gameplay, most are best left for NHL's superb replay component; I've ended up using the

when looking for a breaking pass, "hang" at the blue line, and cover for out-of-position teammates on defense. Penalty killing units adopt a "box" formation, and players move to the points and into the slot when on a power play.

It's a bang-bang affair that rewards crisp passing and one-timer shots over cute little dekes, and though it'll take a while to grasp the scoring technique, there are a couple to be found. I have to

admit that I wish there was more of a happy mix of old and new NHL HOCKEYS, where 'round the net dippy-doodles would work as well as 60 mph passes and 100 mph shots, but that's not the basis of my marginally fussy complaints alluded to earlier. For that, let's go back to the third period of my Philadelphia-San Jose contest.

... I was playing a great game—statistically. Shots On Goal read 55-17 in my favor and I was completely controlling the puck. But somehow the score was only 2-2. This got me thinking that I'd

seen all this before. And when I was crowding the Shark goal and in the process of unleashing my 56th, 57th and 58th blasts (all without scoring), it hit me. Much like earlier versions of the game, the damn program didn't want me to win this game, and was going out of its way to accomplish this.

Granted, a team may be badly outplayed yet somehow emerge victorious on occasion, but this scenario occurs all too often. I was constantly winning games in which I was totally outplayed, and there are too many games where I dominated the game and barely eked out the win. As paranoid as this sounds, I began to feel that the outcome of some—maybe a quarter—of my games had been predetermined, and there was very little I could do about it.



PLAY IT AGAIN, SAN There's nothing better than rubbing in a score by replaying it over and over from all 10 different camera angles.

high-angle end zone camera for most of my games. The rest are just too tight to the ice or strangely unusual in their orientation.

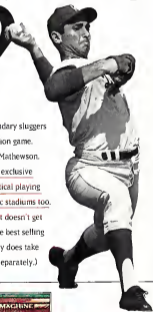
On the ice, players have numbers on their backs and logos on their fronts, and move about as close to their real life counterparts as is possible in a computer game. It's a grand 3-D visual achievement that blows everything else away—a feat of which EA should be immensely proud.

GAME ON

As for gameplay, NHL 96 continues to be the cream of a small crop. Games are fast-paced, requiring quick thinking and even quicker reflexes. The team concept works better here than in previous versions—players move to the open zone



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There are some other imperfections as well. Goalies occasionally hold onto the puck right to the whistle, even if you completely clear the zone (hey ref, that's delay of game!). And on power plays, players suddenly turn stupid, while the

opposition suddenly becomes incredibly powerful and adept.

Fortunately, this not-so-realistic programming can work for you, too. For example, why bother burning up all your energy chasing a guy for the puck, when you can simply hack him to the ice. Chances are there'll be no penalty and you'll get there first. Then there are the icing calls that just don't happen. Merely shoot the puck down the rink, then beat the suddenly disoriented computer guys to it. It's usually pretty easy, and you'll be set up deep in their zone.



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ICE CAP

It's funny, much like a favorite team or a close friend, sometimes the more you like a game, the more you can find wrong with it. NHL 96 is that kind of game. In many ways it is brilliant, and is indeed the best PC hockey game released yet, with tremendous game action, beautiful graphics and some robust stat-keeping. Yet it's just flawed enough to give cranky reviewers like me something to bitch about. Even with the negatives, this really is the only hockey game in town.

But, enough of that—the Rangers are in town and I've got a little Messier to clean up. ☺

THE EDITORS SPEAK

NHL 96

RATING ★★★★★

PROS Stunning graphics and the closest thing to real NHL action on the digital ice.

CONS Some minor flaws and some out-of-whack play balancing.

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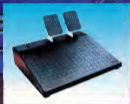
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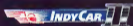
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Back To The Bullpen

Accolade's Latest *HARDBALL* Is More A Changeup Than A Fastball

by Jim Gindin

This is a tale of two cities, one awash in enthusiasm, the other pessimistically expectant. The city of Seattle discovered baseball this year, and, awash a torrent of Jay Buhner home runs and a whirlwind of Randy Johnson strikeouts, watched their Mariners build their first playoff contender in franchise history. They filled the Kingdome with thunderous ovations, sending journalists in search of decibel meters and enough column inches to devote to the new heroes of the Northwest. Just being a part of the playoff action was enough for them.

The fans in Atlanta, meanwhile, had somewhat different feelings about their team's presence in the postseason. Sure they were excited, but having been there before and failed, they demanded nothing short of excellence. Outfielder David Justice was afraid his Braves would be viewed as a complete failure if they again fell short of a World Series title. Thankfully, they didn't fall short. Of course, the fans are already worried about next year. ...

By this time, Accolade should expect more of an Atlanta reaction than a Seattle reaction from the gaming community to *HARDBALL 5*. This is a game system that

has been around longer than most, a pioneer in graphics and action-oriented gameplay. This most recent incarnation features more advanced league play and an enlarged full-screen view for batting against an opposing pitcher.

Apart from that, this incarnation of the game is virtually identical to last year's *HARDBALL IV*. It incorporates the long-needed concept of adjustable difficulty levels that was added in a patch a few months ago. And essentially, that's what *HARDBALL 5* is—a patch for the previous version.

This action-oriented baseball sim, especially if you haven't seen the fourth release, is well worth more than a quick look in today's market. **MindSpan** (the designer) has created a cartoon-like baseball world with SVGA graphics that surpasses any other game on the market, save **TONY LARISSA 3**. The detail in the pitching interface far surpasses any other game on the market, and should serve as a model for any game developer.

After playing several games, however, I have to admit that I'm disappointed with this version, and for a different reason than why I eventually shelved its predecessor. *HARDBALL 5* is as frustrating as it is fun, and it doesn't reward good gameplay the way I'm used to with good action games; too much of the action is controlled by the game—not enough is left to the players.

ON THE OFFENSIVE

Offense has always been the name of



SIGHTS ON CY YOUNG *Maxwell 5's* interface is, in a peanut shell, top-notch, allowing you to spot pitches by moving the cross-hairs around the yellow target box.

this game, and this was particularly true in *HARDBALL IV*. It was a hitter's dream: softball scores dominated, and every line drive seemed perfectly placed between the outfielders. With very little practice, you could generate 30 hits in a game. Of course, you might still lose, 12-11. Accolade heard those complaints, and their patch tightened things up a bit. This concept has been extended in the latest version.

But the fix only changes where balls are hit. Sure, the scores are lower, but this doesn't mean that the game is any harder. No matter how good you get at maneuvering fielders toward their circled destination, you're still going to give up a certain amount of hits every game for failing to do so. No matter how quick your reactions, you're still going to find it impossible to use your infielders unless the ball is hit right at them. This is a problem I find consistently throughout *HARDBALL 5*. I just don't feel I have much control of the action.

ACTION!

For example, common baseball knowledge tells me that my pitcher should aim most pitches at the corners of the strike zone; when I'm ahead in the count, I

Hardball 5

Price: \$59.95

System

Requirements:
486-33 or better,
8 MB RAM, 18
MB hard drive
space, VESA
compatible SVGA
graphics, 2x CD-
ROM, supports
most major

sound cards, mouse, 1-2 joysticks.

Players: 1 or 2, modem play supported

Protection: none (CD must be in drive)

Designers: MindSpan

Publisher: Accolade

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should spot pitches a few inches outside the zone. But the computer's hitting eye would make even Rod Carew blush with shame; computer batters rarely swing at balls outside of the strike zone, and almost always swing at strikes. You'll fire a little better mixing up your pitches and by not throwing anything down the middle of the plate. But still, even when I hit the corner every time, even with a Greg Maddux on the mound, I still find an enormous number of balls drilled into the outfield gaps. The difference between excellence and mediocrity is very tiny. There's not much of a learning curve.

At the plate, the timing of your swing only determines whether or not you hit the ball. Once contact is made, the computer seems to determine where the ball is headed without taking into account the quality of the pitch or when or

where contact was made. I wish there was more of the feeling of making solid contact with the ball—something that the Home Run Derby module gives much more of than the game itself.

BAT MEETS BALL

HARDBALL 5 still has a lot going in its favor though. Smooth animation, great graphics and a comfortable, albeit out of perspective, playing field. Popular sportscaster Al Michaels is the featured announcer, and delivers solid play-by-play commentary. And the pitching interface is simply beautiful.

Pitchers are rated for eight different pitches and can throw their best four in a contest. You select a pitch, then move the cross-hairs within the strike zone before the pitcher releases the ball. Thankfully, there's no ability to defy the laws of physics and waggle a pitch in mid-flight, as there is in many other baseball sims. A pitcher's accuracy rating and level of fatigue determine the sensitivity of the cross-hair and how close the pitch comes to that target. This simple interface is miles ahead of anything else in the genre.

There is an annoying tendency for computer batters to spray foul ball after foul ball—an at-bat rarely goes by that doesn't go to two strikes. This gets very tedious after a while. On the other hand, HARDBALL 5 has a full-screen batting interface, and, unlike its predecessor, where you swing in the strike zone plays a major role in whether you make contact.

After contact, however, is where HARDBALL loses its edge over the competition. Fielding is very difficult—even frustrat-



TO THE FENCE DEFENSE Many a routine flyball will roll past you to the fence, thanks to Homeau's shoddy fielding model.

ing—mostly because the infield is as big as the outfield. The end result is (again) that the game plays much more like softball than baseball, with very little you can do other than try not to overrun fly balls and make mistakes that lead to big innings. By the time the game's view switches to the appropriate infielder, there's generally nothing you can do unless the ball is hit right to your man. Compounding this problem is the fact that the game also frequently gives you control of the wrong fielder at first. This game could be vastly improved with a complete overhaul of the fielding interface. There is nothing more annoyingly game-altering than screwing up routine fly balls and easy grounders.

THE LONG HAUL

MindSpan made great efforts to improve HARDBALL 5's league play. The game comes with a full set of 1994 Major Leaguers along with a bonus league consisting of 12 great teams from the past. Each stadium, including the great parks from the past, was carefully designed, which adds a lot of character to the game.

Unfortunately, you can't customize the size of leagues you create on your own. So, while you can create teams and players and you can edit ratings, you are limited to the three-division, 28-team schedule circa 1995 or the two-league, 12-team schedule from the league of legends.

The developers also worked hard at improving the game statistically. It still doesn't come close to the statistical accuracy you can get with the text-based games, but it's much, much better than the silly results you'd get with previous versions of HARDBALL. The game does a poor job managing a pitching staff and generating realistic playing time for a lineup, but it will make trades among computer-controlled teams. You can also place players in a "bargain box," where computer teams will occasionally make offers for them.

Overall, offense is a little low in computer-simulated games, and individual walks and strikeouts completely ignored. Stolen bases are ludicrously high. But then, you don't purchase a HARDBALL game for statistical purity. One nice improvement is that this version offers a much improved interface for presenting statistics—one that can be customized to feature the stats most interesting to you.

POST GAME

HARDBALL 5 is one of those games that shows potential more than it entertains. I remember seeing HARDBALL IV and thinking "I can't wait to see the next version." I feel the same way this year. Yes, it's still the best action-oriented baseball game on the market, but like many major-league managers, I'm still looking for a player who can give me 100 percent day in and day out. Oh well, it took the Braves a few tries to get things completely right. ☺

THE EDITORS SPEAK

HARDBALL 5

RATING ★★★★★

PROS Gorgeous graphics and a simple yet sophisticated pitching model load this game with potential.

CONS Not much has changed since the previous version; the fielding is frustrating at best and there's a surprising lack of control for an action game.

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Makin' The Big Leagues

NFL PRO LEAGUE FOOTBALL Blitzes The Stat-Based Competition, Although Micro Sports' Finest Still Lacks Glitter

by Dennis McCauley

PERHAPS MORE THAN ANY OTHER GAME IN THE HISTORY OF SPORTS SIMULATIONS, NFL PRO LEAGUE FOOTBALL has ridden a roller coaster of success. In some years the game was quite good; in others it's been strictly 4th-and-long. No rookie in this highly competitive business, PRO LEAGUE FOOTBALL has been around since the late 1980s. Of course, designer Dave Holt's baby has grown up a lot since the early days. In fact, proud Papa Holt even found a sugar daddy for the latest version of PRO LEAGUE: IBM, of all people (thankfully, there's no truth to the rumor that all of the teams' colors were immediately changed to IBM Blue).

The IBM connection does seem a bit odd, but don't let it trouble you. The only thing it has done is given Holt and his company, Micro Sports, a financial shot in the arm and some extensive bug-testing. In years past, it was not unheard of for versions of PRO LEAGUE to appear well

after the regular NFL season had ended. But with the resulting infusion of green, this year's model blitzed the retail market in plenty of time to catch the rising wave of NFL hoopla. Even better, this year's model is a robust one, offering a thousand yards of good-looking NFL action.

COACHES ONLY

Strictly a coaching simulation, NFL PRO LEAGUE FOOTBALL is a world apart from most of its competition. The game is viewed entirely from the sidelines, where tiny, detailed players in authentic NFL gear scurry about, executing the plays you call as head coach. There's no helmet camera view, you can't jump in at cornerback as Neon Deion, and your joystick will get a well-deserved sabbatical. Boring, you say? Hardly. For the hard-core NFL fan, this football sim could be the end of the rainbow.

With an easy-to-use interface that has evolved over the years, NFL PRO LEAGUE FOOTBALL is simple to play right out of the box. That's a plus, because the manual isn't that great. The game runs under MS-DOS, and coaches can access the various program modules by clicking on clearly marked buttons. Maintaining the flavor of the NFL throughout was an obvious design decision, and even the main menu features helmets for each of



OLD MEETS NEW The wrapping's different, but it's the same Pro League engine underneath.

the 30 NFL teams, which, when clicked on, show team record holders in major statistical categories.

1ST AND 10

As the saying goes, coaching in this game is easy to learn, but hard to master. During the game action, you can select a play from a menu of nearly 100 offensive and defensive choices. On offense, players choose among six formations, ranging from the standard Pro Set to the Run and Shoot. Passing plays require you to select the intended receiver, the type of drop the quarterback will use, the receiver's pattern, and the distance. Running plays specify the ball carrier, the direction of the play, the type of run, and whether counter motion is used. Each play is graphically diagrammed as the player mulls his choice, providing a visual cue to assist in sorting out all the football-ese.

One drawback of this play-calling system that players of other pigskin sims might get frustrated with is the fact that,

NFL Pro League Football

Price: \$59.99

System

Requirements:
486-66 or faster
(Pentium recommended for high-res gameplay), 8 MB RAM, 15 MB hard drive space, 2x CD-RDM, Microsoft compatible mouse; 16 MB RAM and VESA compatible SVGA video required for high-res mode; supports Sound Blaster compatible sound cards
of Players: 1-2
Protection: None
Designer: Micro Sports (Dave Holt)
Publisher: IBM
White Plains, NY
800-426-2255



on pass plays, the quarterback is locked into the receiver you've chosen. There is no such thing as a secondary receiver in PRO LEAGUE FOOTBALL, which means if you call a streak to your wide-out, and the defense calls a blitz, you'd better hope that the pocket holds up, because your quarterback won't dump it off to the tight end.

Calling defenses is a more complicated proposition. After deciding whether to play the run or the pass, you select the defensive line play, the pass coverage, and the keys (offensive players to "key" on).

Coaches who feel the need to create their own plays can do so easily by selecting the ball carrier, blocking schemes, etc. This method is much easier than the tedious systems found in most games, and can be accomplished even in mid-game. The only drawback is that the plays designed in the game cannot be saved.

There is a cow chip in this game's Astroturf, however. As a defense coordinator, you'll never know what offensive unit your opponent has sent in. For instance, if you saw an extra receiver or two enter the game (or were simply notified that the offense had a "Hands" squad in the huddle), you'd probably go to your nickel package on defense. Or, on 4th and 1, you'd know whether the opposing team was going for it or punting based on which unit took the field. Unfortunately, PRO LEAGUE leaves you guessing, so it's possible to get burned on unit matchups.



WIND, RAIN, SLEET AND SNOW Pro League simulates the elements graphically as well as on screen.

AVERAGE GLITZ

Graphically, PRO LEAGUE doesn't compete with sims like FRONT PAGE SPORTS FOOTBALL, but it doesn't try to. Its player caricatures, although small and not-so-well animated, boast near-flawless recreations of authentic NFL uniforms. Better yet, the action runs just swell on a 486/DX2 (it can be sped up even further by eliminating the players' jogging back to the huddle after each play). The on-field graphics boast eye-catching detail of end zone and mid-field markings, as well as added eye candy like photographers, TV types, and bench players milling about the sideline.

that clearly hit the turf ruled an interception against my team (maybe the game is so authentic that the refs blow calls just as they often do in real life). On the minus side of the multimedia report card, PRO LEAGUE's sound is rather dreary, with down and distance given after each play, as well as a generic play result. What passes for crowd noise is so repetitive that most gamers will quickly toggle it off.

PIGSKIN PLAY

PRO LEAGUE offers plenty of play options. You can coach against the computer, let the computer handle both teams, submit game plans for remote play, or play via modem against a live opponent, an NFL PRO LEAGUE FOOTBALL staple over the years. It still works remarkably well, although noisy lines (seemingly on the increase) are a problem beyond even Micro Sports' reach. After one such "dirty line" problem, I had difficulty getting the modem feature up and running. It can be a finicky process. The unbeatable thrill of matching football wits against a live opponent, however, makes a little technical perseverance worthwhile.



SIDELINE Little details like the sideline action give Pro League Football lots of charm.

Modern players can work around this by using the chat feature to communicate their formation.

The animations are usually consistent with the play results, but I was disappointed on one occasion to see a pass

PLAYING BY THE NUMBERS

PRO LEAGUE FOOTBALL has all the classic NFL statistics on call. You won't find exotic new stats like Yards After Catch, or how many "Hi, Moms" were uttered dur-

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Computer Gaming World
May 1995

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Game Magazine
December

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Vivid Simulations, Inc., 164 Higganum Road, Durham, CT 06422. Telephone: (860) 349-2011

Hairy Carrier



IT'S THE STUFF OF NIGHTMARES. IT'S GETTING DARK, the sky is closing in and the winds are getting heavy. Looking

down at the seas below reveals huge waves that look to be reaching up to pull your plane to a watery grave. Your runway is only a few hundred feet long, it's moving slowly away from you, and it's tossing up and down in the waves. All standard fare for the carrier-based fighter pilot.

"The pilot chops his throttle and the plane starts down like a brick, heading for a sort of controlled crash," recalls John F. Forsyth in *Hell Dives*, his gripping book about his experiences as an SB2C carrier pilot in WW II. "Just before the plane hits the deck, the pilot pulls back on the stick, and if the timing is perfect, the plane strikes the ground in a hard, jolting three-point landing..."

And if the timing isn't perfect and the hook on the tail of the plane misses all four of the wires strewn across the deck, it's adrenaline time as the pilot throws the throttle forward and hopes that he's got enough speed to resume

flight and go around for another try.

When conditions are less than ideal, carrier landings rank right up there with combat in the tension and danger departments. If you make a habit of letting the autopilot handle landing for you when you're flying around in your favorite sim, you're missing out on some real excitement. There's not as much glamour in a successful carrier trap as there is in scoring a kill, but either feat will garner the respect of the pilots around you.

THE PROP DEPARTMENT

World War II-era carrier operations may seem like they'd be the easiest to handle, since the planes were smaller and could make slower approaches to the carrier. However, these piston-engined planes also had relatively primitive instrumentation that made approaches in poor weather very difficult. Even worse was the layout of the carriers of the day—the straight decks meant that, if the deck wasn't clear and you missed the wires, you'd not be going around, but rather plowing into a barrier (or worse, into a group of parked planes). The lack of a Landing Signal Officer (LSO) in the top WW II sims doesn't help matters. Since none of the WW II

sims give you much advice on carrier ops in their manuals, we'll look at the process in more detail here.

The current best choices if you want to simulate the WW II carrier adventure are 1942: THE PACIFIC AIR WAR GOLD, from MicroProse, and FIGHTER DUEL, from Philips. 1942: PAW wins for simulating the overall carrier operations experience, especially when your plane's in the middle of a group squadron takeoff. FIGHTER DUEL's not as authentic on the carrier deck, but the top-notch flight models and in-

ONCE YOU

MASTER CARRIER

LANDINGS, YOU'LL

BE HOOKED

ON THE RADAR

Finally, a helicopter simulation that doesn't model the AH-64 Apache! Although you will get to shoot at one... Interactive Magic and Digital Integration are following up their successful *Avatar* chopper sim with *Hoo*, based on the huge Mi-24 attack helicopter created by Russia's Mil design bureau.

Hoo promises a new play experience even for ace *Avatar* pilots. The *Hind* is a much larger, less agile copter with a low service ceiling. Players will have to deal with simpler avionics, and lack of auto-stabilization means sim pilots will have to compensate for airmail helicopter cross-coupling.

Despite its lesser sophistication, though, this is a mean machine. Twin 30mm cannons at the front and pylons capable of carrying anti-tank missiles, 80mm rocket pods, mine-dispensers, or up to 12 AT-6 missiles make the *Hind* a formidable threat.

The mission structure (Quickstart, Training, Single and Campaign) will be the same as *Avatar*, but the wider variety of missions flown by the real *Hind* should make for some new experiences. Look for *Hoo* sometime after the release of IM/DI's F-18 *Fusion* **FALCON**.

by Denny Atkin

INTERACTIVE MAGIC PRESENTS

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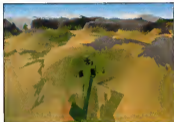
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-Strategy Plus, October 1995

- PC Gamer FINAL VERDICT: **95%**
"Terrific flight model, countless options and missions, great gameplay. A flight game with such broad appeal that everyone from arcade players to hard-core sim hounds should delight in it."

-October, 1995

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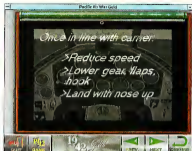


strumentation make for the most authentic carrier deck approaches in a WW II era sim.

In relative terms, taking off is the easy part. If you're flying 1942. PAW, the first thing you must do is make sure you're lined up toward the center of the deck; give a little power and use your rudder pedals to steer your plane into position, or else you'll end up clipping the carrier's superstructure with your right wing. Now you're ready for takeoff. You can execute a rolling takeoff in either sim; FIGHTER DUEL also gives you an optional catapult boost.

Set your wheel brakes and drop your flaps one notch. Push the engine to full power and release your brakes; keep the plane centered as it moves down the deck. As soon as you clear the deck, raise your gear to reduce drag. Raise your flaps when you're well above clean stall speed. Most important, avoid any drastic movements or maneuvers until you've gained speed and altitude.

Now comes the real challenge: landing. Drop to about 1,000 feet and line up be-



6000 AS GOLD MicroProse's 1942. Pacific Air War Game includes a brief multimedia tutorial for mastering carrier takeoffs and landings.

stall or spin at the slow speed you're traveling. As you approach the carrier deck, the real fun begins.

You'll want to hit the deck in a nose-up position, trying to make a three-point landing with all wheels hitting simultaneously. However, as you pull the nose up, you'll lose view of most of the deck, so make sure your line of descent is aimed properly at the rear third of the deck. (Note that FIGHTER DUEL unfortunately covers the entire deck with wires, allowing you to land anywhere on the carrier. If you want a realistic experience, you'll only consider a landing at the back of the carrier as successful.) As you hit the deck, watch your speed to see if your hook grabbed a wire. If it did, cut the throttle and breathe a sigh of relief. If you don't feel confident that you're lined up for a safe landing, increase your throttle, raise your flaps and gear, and go around for another pass. Always err on the side of caution; with too much speed and altitude, you can always try again. Without enough, you're headed for a swim at best, a watery grave at worst.

THE JET AGE

Despite the increased size, complexity, and speed of modern fighter planes, they can actually be easier to operate off carriers—at least in simulations. Better instrumentation and ILS landing aids help you line up your approach properly even in poor weather. Also, the better sims include LSOs to help guide you on to the deck. Which sim is best for carrier practice? It's

a tough call. F-14 FLEET DEFENDER GOLD from MicroProse gives you the most accurate instrumentation, both on the plane and on the carrier itself, but the plane is unrealistically difficult to handle at low speeds. EA's US NAVY FIGHTERS offers better handling, but at the cost of some instrument realism. Spectrum HoloByte's upcoming TOP GUN and Mission Studios' JETFIGHTER III both look like good choices if you're new to the carrier-landing experience.

You'll find thorough explanations of carrier launch and landing sequences in the manuals of all these sims, so there's no need to go into detail here. However, in one case, the manual will steer you in the wrong direction (likely, nose-down into the drink). When landing in USNF, you'll find it nearly impossible to follow the glide slope with your flaps down. Oddly, retracting your flaps makes the ILS function properly. Also, the planes in USNF have problems descending in a nose-up attitude with the flaps dropped. So ignore the manual's advice and land your plane clean, using the airbrakes instead of the flaps if you need to keep your speed down.

Landing a jet on a pitching deck at night is one of the most nerve-wracking and thrilling feats in modern aviation. Even if it's only a simulated flat-top, landing on it is still as rewarding as it is difficult. Here's hoping this will help you experience what it's all about, while keeping your gear dry. ☺



DOWN AND LOCKED Fighter Duel's sophisticated instrument panel is a big help during approaches; use the climb indicator to try for a 10-foot-per-second descent rate when you hit the deck.

hind the carrier. Throttle back, and as your speed falls below 200 knots, drop your flaps, landing gear, and tail-hook. (If the plane you're flying has adjustable flaps, choose a 2/3 down setting; full flaps can cause a drastic sink rate in PAW.) Remember that, contrary to instinct, you should use your throttle to control descent rate and your control stick for speed adjustments. As you approach, check your lineup; if you need to move to either side, use subtle rudder movements, as aileron maneuvers can easily lead to a

WORLD WIDE LANDING SITES

If you're seeking for a dolan's pit sim-ulation tutorial, break out your Web browser and point it to Thomas Russell Heng's W3 BSNF Landing Tutorial at <http://www.columbia.edu/~th34>. Here does a superb job of pointing out USNF's landing idiosyncrasies as he guides you step-by-step through carrier qualification. If F-14 Fleet Defender is your game, Robin G. Kim provides some excellent landing tips in his player's guide at <http://sunsite.unc.edu/gms-bytes/issue16/miso-f-14.html>.

If you can find a more realistic dogfight simulator, fly it.

"WWII air combat at its very best."
— Denny Atkin
Computer Gaming World

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— Joseph Nivitski, PC Gamer Magazine

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Tail Chasing

Fighter Duel Excels At The Aerial Grudge Match

by Scott A. May

LET'S CUT TO THE CHASE: FULL-SCALE, CAMPAIGN-LEVEL AIR COMBAT SIMULATIONS ARE SENSATIONAL, BUT do you ever wonder how many players never plan a single mission or re-enact an historic campaign? Why waste valuable flight time poring over maps when you could be hunting down and blasting your arch nemesis in a heart-pounding, hair-raising, real-time dogfight? Eat pixel dust, strategists, this is real dogfighting.

At least, that's the approach that FIGHTER DUEL's designers, Jaeger Software, have taken in this WW II combat sim. For the demanding joystick jockey, this streamlined air-combat sim offers the most enticing blend of realism and high performance the genre has ever seen. If dogfighting is your game, it simply doesn't get any better than this.

Originally released in 1991 on Jaeger's own label, FIGHTER DUEL appeared exclusively on the Amiga—at the time, a computer not known for its bounty of quality air combat sims. Jaeger's 16-color, high-

res graphics, blazing frame rate and two-player modem option rocked the Amiga world and raised eyebrows among the normally stoic IBM crowd. Through a PC version was promised years ago, the game has only now come into sight.

THE WAY THEY WERE

Thirteen classic World War II fighters are available to fly in or against, each reproduced to exact specifications and flight-model characteristics. Flight-sim veterans should be quite pleased with the realistic performance and handling of each aircraft's full-force flight model, whether those features result in handicaps or advantages during actual combat. The Corsair, for example, with its enormous propeller and high-torque radial engine, requires constant pilot compensation for the natural roll of the plane. The manual lists both historic and suggested performance matchups.

In single-player mode, you can face up to eight computer-controlled foes, with a choice of eight tactical scenarios. Each situation offers a special challenge to your piloting skills, ranging from carrier launches and combat air patrols to surprise attacks and freedom melees. Personal experience dictates your success in each scenario. Note, however, that all the scenarios boil down to air-to-air combat in a small arena; there are no full-blown simulated combat missions here.

To broaden the challenge, custom-design your enemies' abilities with the Foe Editor, where you can determine enemy aircraft type and eight levels of pilot skills, from novice to ace. Jaeger is quick to point out that computer-controlled pilots do not cheat, but must obey the same laws



INSTRUMENTS OF DESTRUCTION Fighter Duel's instrument panel includes jittering needles and realistic gauges; the gunsight is less genuine, but as this Zero discovered, it does the job.

of physics and aircraft specifications as you.

Realism features can be toggled on or off to handicap veteran pilots or make combat less frustrating for novices. These include flight models (full-force versus arcade style), mid-air collisions, combat damage, stalls, pilot blackouts, gun deflection and unlimited ammo. One of the best options lets you adjust the altitude of both top and bottom cloud layers, bringing a whole new perspective of hide-and-seek to the game.

FLIGHT MODEL

"Flight model accuracy" is most commonly used to describe the performance characteristics of simulated combat aircraft, in terms of lift, thrust, drag, weight and wing load. FIGHTER DUEL takes accurate flight-modeling one step further, tangibly affecting physical control of a simulated aircraft. For example, as fuel and ammo are spent, the aircraft becomes lighter and more responsive. The game even simulates real-life tactile feedback by decreasing joystick effectiveness during stalls or high-speed dives.

The game's high-resolution graphics (640x480, 256 colors) are absolutely stunning. Each aircraft is exactly rendered, with polished Gouraud shading and light-source effects. The game uses a generic ocean background as the fighting arena, with a streaming carrier and tiny atolls—one with a landing strip—dotting the otherwise empty blue waters. You didn't come to sightsee, did you.

By far the best graphic effect is the pho-

Fighter Duel

Price: \$49.95

System

Requirements:

486DX-33 or

better, 8 MB

RAM, DOS 6 or

higher, CD-ROM

drive, 2 MB hard

drive space, 256-

color VESA-com-

pliant SVGA

graphics; all major sound cards supported;

joystick and modem optional

of Players: 1-2

Protection: None (CD must be in drive)

Designers: Bill Manders and Matt Shaw of

Jaeger Software

Publisher: Philips Media

Los Angeles, California

(800) 340-7888



torrealistic instrument panel, digitized from a real P-51 and sliced together to fit on the screen. Your first look at this beauty will take your breath away! Not only do the dials work, but they jitter and stutter just like the real things. The panel can be toggled on or off with the touch of a button, for a better forward view. Sound effects are minimal, but extremely well rendered, limited to the distinctive throaty growl of your aircraft and hollow thumping of your salvos.

DOUBLE YOUR PLEASURE

Although single-player mode can be endlessly entertaining, the game takes on a whole new personality when two human pilots blast it out via null or remote modem connection. Null modem play, requiring two computers linked serial port-to-port, is the best, for obvious antagonistic reasons: instant verbal feedback for each near-miss, tail-burning taunts, and anguished cries of fiery annihilation. Null-modem play also appears to be smooth and stable, with each machine defaulting to their maximum baud rates.



SNEAK ZEME Left, right, and upward rear views let you know when you're about to get your tail waxed.

Remote modem play—for most people, a far more typical setup—also provides major kicks. You'll need a modem capable of at least 9600 bps to play, although 14.4K bps is preferred and 28.8K bps is optimal. The built-in communications program is more sophisticated than you'll find in most games, allowing access to COM ports 1-4, as well as the ability to de-

fine your serial port's IRQ setting. An address book serves as your enemy hit list, storing the names and numbers of fellow fighter jocks, including a space for personal comments. Once connected, both players can decide on starting parameters, realism features and aircraft. Several dueling styles are available: Standard Start lets each pilot pick their aircraft, after which you begin at random points and altitudes within the playing arena. Tournament Start places both aircraft at the same altitude at the beginning of a head-on run. A variation on Tournament Start places both pilots in identical aircraft, as chosen by the caller.

Digital Simultaneous Voice and Data (DSVD) modems are supported, so bleeding-edge telecommunicators can taunt their opponents even on a modem connection.

The game supports a wide range of advanced controllers, including rudder pedals, throttle controls and flight yokes, with specific commands for the CH Flightstick Pro, Thrustmaster FCS and compatibles. Even the Colorado Spectrum NOTEBOOK GAMEPORT is supported, in case you want to connect to a CD-equipped laptop to duel.

SMOOTH-RUNNING ENGINE

For the technically inclined, FIGHTER DUEL is a model of programming ingenuity and efficiency. Designed specifically

for 486- and Pentium-class machines, the program automatically detects a wide variety of hardware states—processor speed, cache size, local bus video, VRAM and fast chipsets—and optimizes gameplay accordingly. In other words, the more horsepower you have, the smoother the game runs, and the smarter the enemies fly. On the other hand, the program auto-

Planes of Fame

The complete list of Allied, German and Japanese fighters in *Fighter Duel* includes:

- North American P-51D Mustang (1942)
- Grumman F6F Hellcat (1942)
- Vought F4U-1D Corsair (1943)
- Goodyear F3G Corsair (1944)
- Supermarine Spitfire Mk I (1938)
- Supermarine Seafire Mk 2/Spitfire Mk V (1941)
- Supermarine Spitfire Mk IX (1942)
- Supermarine Spitfire Mk XIV (1944)
- Focke-Wulf F10A (1941)
- Messerschmitt Bf-109E (1939)
- Messerschmitt Bf-109G (1942)
- Messerschmitt Bf-109K (1944)
- Mitsubishi A6M5 Zero-Sen (1943).

atically compensates for less-than-premium machines, in terms of lower frame rate and graphic resolution. This is especially important for modem play, assuring equal response and a fighting chance for both sides, regardless of how mismatched the host systems are. Obviously, the game screams on a 120-MHz 486 or 90-MHz Pentium. The game's coding is so tight, however, that it tested extremely well even on a standard 486DX2-66 non-local bus system. That's great news for avid combat fans concerned that their aging systems won't power such a high-performance game.

FIGHTER DUEL's current incarnation should be a major hit with all air combat fans. Sensational in solo flight, but utterly outrageous in multiplayer mode, this may be your incentive to add that extra telephone line. ☛

THE EDITORS SPEAK

FIGHTER DUEL

RATING ★★★★★

PROS Realistic full-force flight models, beautiful graphics and a good frame rate even on 486 systems. Solo combat offers long-term challenges for dogfighting fans; modem play is like icing on the cake.

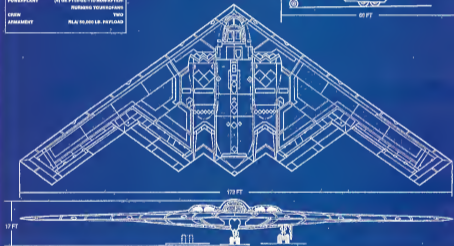
CONS A campaign or historical missions would give this game depth and longevity for all flight sim fans; carrier landings are unrealistic due to wires across the entire length of the deck.



THEY'RE BEING BUILT TO DESTROY COUNTRIES
THAT DON'T EVEN EXIST YET.

B-2A GENERAL ARRANGEMENTS

MAX TO WEIGHT	376,000 LB
POWERPLANT	(4) GE F119-GE-110 NON-AFTER-BURNING TURBOFANS
CREW	TWO
ARMAMENT	RLA/30,000 LB. PAYLOAD



ARM ET

55



57

If NOT BEING DETECTED AS YOUR WING CLIPS BEHIND THE B-2 STEALTH BOMBER, IT TOOK AN ARMY OF ENGINEERS TO MAKE YOU INVISIBLE TO SHIP RADAR. AND WE GOT ALL THE SPEED.

ARRIVED 30 MINUTES BEFORE OPTIMIZED SPECIAL SORTIES-AND TO THE BOMBER. ALSO MULTIPLE STAGES OF IMAGINE CATCH YOUR TARGET EXPLORE INTO BOMB AND DESTROYED BY BOMB.



RP

F-22A GENERAL ARRANGEMENTS



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One Tread Or Two?

SUPPOSEDLY, REAL-TIME WAR/STRATEGY GAMES ARE THE WAVE OF THE FUTURE. Perhaps—but I'll take PANZER GENERAL any day, if only because it generates new excitement within a turn-based structure. Gamers have grown up with *Mousetrap*, *Chess* and *Risk*, turn-based games which are almost genetically encoded in their blood. So, when they get the chance to move their tactical bombers, let loose with their artillery, throw their shock troops in to capture the objective, and finally, exploit the enemy's now Swiss-cheese line with their rampaging *Panzer IVs*, how can they resist? PANZER GENERAL gives you the best of both worlds: the changing ebb and flow of battle, as you rise and fall with each element of your various, yet linked, combined arms; plus the ability to structure the turn according to your master plan, moving and attacking with each unit indi-



vidually, without the frantic action degenerating into arcade sequences, as it would with real-time action.

If anything, STEEL PANTHERS is even more frenzied. Yes, you have your own turn in which to plan, but it's hardly the behind-the-scenes overview of PG. In SP, you must spot hidden enemies, deploy for the best fields of fire, and undergo withering opportunity fire that would make an X-COM veteran wince—all while pushing relentlessly toward your objectives. The designers really nailed the time scale, and SP gives you even more of a sense of urgency than in the toughest PG scenario.

WHO NEEDS LOGISTICS?

The old adage is that professional soldiers talk logistics, amateurs talk tactics. Unless *Quartermaster Leader 3D* changes my mind, I'll settle for being an armchair general. Thankfully, neither PANZER GENERAL nor STEEL PANTHERS are obsessed with supply.

In fact, most of the scenarios of SP have so few turns that you can go hell-bent for leather and ammo be damned—quite appropriate for a single engagement. PG's operational scale means that you must stop to refuel and rearm, even upgrade, a more strategic aspect which adds to depth of play. What's amazing about PG is that, despite the obvious concessions made for fun, it still does a good job of showing the fundamentals of managing a campaign. You never seem to have enough time, enough men, enough material, but the General Staff still expects you

VIVA LE DIFFER-
ENCE: HOW STEEL
PANTHERS AND
PANZER GENERAL
FIGHT FOR THE
SAME GROUND
DIFFERENTLY

G-2

* Those of you who wanted to send SSI's decision makers to the firing squad for delaying the release of Norm Koger's *The Ace of Rules* won't need a blindfold. It appears that the game should finally hit the shelves come February of 1996, possibly "aiming" for us to play it over President's Day Weekend.

* Gary Grigsby fans will want to snag his latest *Pacific War* (PWX22.zip) and *War in Russia* patches (WIRX2.zip). Both are now available on the GEnie network.

* Whatever happened to SSG's *The Last Blitzkrieg* game? According to SSG's Gregor Whitley, the first quarter of 1996 "looks promising." Well, there's always room for another good, operational level *Battle of the Bulge* game.

* Those who saw a release date of first quarter 1997 (!) for *Pax Imperia II* on Blizzard's web page can rest easy—the date was a typo. Some six years since the Pax universe began, it looks to finally up-
(continued on page 296)

by Terry Coleman

to get the job done.

STEEL PANTHERS not only keeps you to a similarly brisk timetable (I sometimes feel that all WWII generals have a plane to catch somewhere), it also has much more realism to keep you hopping. Unit facing (which would be ludicrous at PG's scale) is paramount in SP, as any US leader finds to his chagrin the first time his 75mm shells bounce harmlessly off a Tiger's frontal armor. Smoke obscures the battlefield, mortar shells scream like *wolkyries* bringing death from the hea-



G-2 (continued from page 295)

grade by Spring of '96.

* Deadly Games has indicated that *U-boat for Windows* should be ready "real soon now." The game mechanics are more sophisticated, and some new graphics have been added from the Mac version. Otherwise, it's still true to the company philosophy that anyone should be able to pick up their games and be playing them in under 20 minutes.

* Bob McNamara, known to grognards as "Mr. ASL" (*Advanced Squad Leader*), was a long time employee at Avalon Hill. He's recently left the company, making the move to TalonSoft, publishers of *Battle-*

ers, and the sounds of explosions combine with burning hulks of tanks and other vehicles to give you enough sensurround to help you almost smell the diesel fuel burning (like victory).

What keeps both SP and PG from being yet another tired rehash of the old "Well, it's the last turn, better throw all my Doughboys into the breach," are the

ground: *Ardenne*.

* Finally, rumors abound that TalonSoft has blueprinted a *Battleground: Waterloo* game. Granted, it will take some programming the *Battleground* game engine for Napoleonic, but legions of *L'Emperors*' followers await the drumbeat. Viva TalonSoft for planning to adopt this game system to the age of glory!

* Gamers looking for something a little different can get involved in the playtesting of a new game. A new designer by the name of Dutch Owen is developing a game called *Casus*. The strategic level game features scenarios from the American Civil War through World War II in its present incarnation. At press time, you needed to have a human opponent (either at the same computer or playing by e-mail) in order to have a solid game, but the AI routines should appear fairly soon. If you'd like to check it out, try the *Casus* web page at <http://www.infi.net/~sui>. Download the game and become a playtester. Tell Dutch you read about it in *CGW*.

campaigns. While SP goes farther than PG with its scenario editor (there is a rumored one for PG as well), both games have compelling campaigns based on a similar theme. In PG, the German *Blitzkrieg* is unstoppable early in the war, but finds itself faced with incredible numbers of US and Soviet troops toward the end, which even with super-weapons, such as the Me-262, are insurmountable. The various campaigns in PG teach you everything from exploitation to mobile defense to strategic withdrawal across the wide front of the endless Russian steppes.

In SP, the lessons learned are more sudden and brutal. As the Germans, it is incredibly hard to emulate the elasticity of the classic *Wehrmacht* cordon defense. And those French tanks of 1940 are even tougher than in PG—the only way to take some of them out is to call for air and artillery support. US generals have it even tougher; their troops practically beg to be suppressed. The British? Well, they are pros, but they're also jaded after four long years of war. Ironically enough, you tend to get almost as cautious as Monty himself. Any game that can make you emulate historical leaders—without forcing you to repeat their mistakes—is one you'll find yourself playing over and over again.

I find that, lately, STEEL PANTHERS is the main cause of my otherwise-unexplained bouts of insomnia. Ardrneline-pumping, visceral, tense and still leaving me just enough of a feeling that I have control of my own destiny, I marvel at SP's stark beauty and at how elegantly and realistically it recreates WWII tactical battles.

But even after a year, I still find myself returning to don my *feldgrau* once again—to sweep through the not-too-realistic Europe of PANZER GENERAL. This time, it matters not to which corner of the world I am assigned; I will conduct myself and my troops with honor. I move my units, scrolling around the map in a Zen-like trance, crushing the Poles, French, British, and Russians before me. Soon, very soon, the entire world will lie beneath my *Panzers'* treads—only to be reconquered, as soon as ALLIED GENERAL hits the gaming shores. What a wonderful time to be a wargamer... ☺



THE LITTLE EMPEROR THAT COULD In this *Casus* campaign, Napoleon has just invaded Russia when his cavalry scouts uncover Russian cavalry.

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Total Eclipse Of The MOO

SNEAK PREVIEW
Game Still In Development

MASTER OF ANTARES Looks Like A Stellar Sequel To MASTER OF ORION

by Alan Emrich
with Tim Jordan and Petra Schlunk

MOA, BESIDES BEING THE NAME OF A HUGE, EXTINCT, OSTRICH-LIKE BIRD FROM NEW ZEALAND, is what people will be calling **MASTER OF ANTARES**, designed by **SimTex Software** and due to be published by **MicroProse** in the first quarter of '96. For those of you who got heavily into **MOO (MASTER OF ORION)** or embraced **MOM (MASTER OF MAGIC)**, well ... you'll be ready for some **MOA**. **MASTER OF ANTARES** is clearly the progeny of **MASTER OF ORION**, but exceeds its parent in almost every area of galactic empire-building and diplomacy.

SOMETHING TO MOO ABOUT

The beloved alien races from **MASTER OF ORION** have returned, along with three new ones (tentatively dubbed the Eletians, who have a matriarchal elf-warrior society; the Gnomans, a race of dwarfs who know how to generate lots of money, but suffer in ground combat due to their small size; and the Triliarians, an aquatic race of telepaths that cruise through diplomacy and can produce plenty of food on ocean and swamp worlds). All the aliens are still vying for the office of Galactic President, still conducting diplomacy and espionage, and still hunting for the planet Orion—Guardian, technology and all.

As in **MASTER OF ORION**, **Antares** has you researching new ship technologies, fighting pollution, developing planets, shuffling population points, and in general, striving to improve your vast galactic empire. What's nice is that even the most



ISN'T THAT SPACIAL? *Master of Antares* picks up where *Master of Orion* left off, with better SVGA graphics and a galaxy of new features.

familiar aspects, such as random events and tactical space battles, are much more elaborate and interesting than in **MOO**.

I SEE YOUR MOM IN YOU

Aside from **MASTER OF ANTARES**'s obvious lineage to **MOO**, **MOM**'s influence can also be seen. You can now create a custom race, similar in style to the custom wizards in **MASTER OF MAGIC**, with some added bonuses. Refusing to use all your "picks" gives a score bonus at the end of the game, and there are even category handicaps that you can choose from to increase the picks available. Between the varying standard abilities (farming, industry, research, ground combat, and so on) and approximately 20 special abilities (aquatic, subterranean, telepathic, warlord, and so forth), there are a slew of directions available for you to customize your star-faring race.

Planet management is akin to city management in **MASTER OF MAGIC** (which, of course, resembles urban planning in **SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION**). There are even three primary categories of population points: the farmer, the miner, and the scientist. Population morale is also a factor, as it is in **MOM**, for improving or reducing the production efficiency of a specific planet. The goal of each world is still to create buildings on the planet (housing, pollution control facilities, laboratories, centers of industry and entertainment, *et al.*), defenses, plus a spacefleet. And even with the fascinating introduction of new population points (including settlers, natives, androids, conquered alien races, and expert colonists), players of **MOM** and **CIVILIZATION** will take to this interface like a Triliarian to water.

Then there are heroes. These are not



AAAGH! ASTEROIDS The tactical combat has been much improved, with beautiful SVGA graphics, the addition of heroes, options to board ships, and more.

the godlike heroes in *MASTER OF MAGIC*, beefed up by obscenely powerful artifacts. The new heroes are a single Legendary Crew Member residing on an individual ship, or the Governor of a single world (and you can only have eight, four of each). Their job is to use their skills to modify a specific value where they're located (the environmentalist helps cut pollution on his planet, the weapon's officer helps a ship's attack rating, and so on). The heroes of MOA are not the game unbalancing grenadiers of MOM, but rather just another important, albeit cool, facet to empire-building.

Ship crews and heroes, like armies in *MASTER OF MAGIC*, also have a rating for experience. Thus, the skill of each ship's crew can give it a small but crucial bonus in combat that can decide the outcome of a battle. To protect your investments, there is even a Survival Pod technology that preserves experienced crews (and heroes) from destroyed ships, thankfully keeping one's Starfleet veterans on duty. When worlds are lost, the Governor there will also hitch a ride on a Survival Pod and head back into your Hero pool.

Finally, at the end of the game, there is a Score screen, not unlike that found in *MASTER OF MAGIC*, along with a Hall of Fame page for the top 10 game scores. Unlike *MASTER OF ORION* or MOM, however, players score points for races they're allied to at the game's end, not just the ones that they've destroyed.

lots of SVGA graphics, ship refits, boarding parties, captured ships, an unlimited number of ship designs, larger galaxies, more opponents (up to 8), and multi-player capability (network, modem, null and hot seat), then *MASTER OF ANJARES* will meet your expectations perfectly. But the upgrade doesn't stop there.

There are even more goodies and features to keep the *MASTER* gameplayer drooling: various galaxy ages (young and mineral-rich, normal, or old and organic-rich), an option for strategic combat only, varying levels of starting technology (pre-war, small spacefaring civilization, or an advanced civilization), multiple planets around each star, an option to scrap ships and steal the technologies therein, random "stun" events (such as space monsters, wormholes, derelict ships, splinter colonies, and the like), various forms of government, captured populations, more technologies, more technology areas (in-

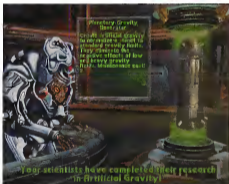
WHAT'S NEW?

The new features in *MASTER OF ANJARES* arose from a combination of MOO players' suggestions and the design team's wish list of features which couldn't be included in MOO because of time constraints. If you've ever played MOO and wished for

cluding sociology, genetics, chemistry, physics, power, and construction), technologies that improve spy and counter-spy operations, and a larger arena for tactical space combat.

Underlying the biggest difference between *MASTER OF ANJARES* and *MASTER OF ORION* is the approach to economics. Besides MOA's more MOM-like planet building, the cost to build and maintain ships has risen, leaving the 32,000 ship fleets of MOO a distant memory. Instead, a healthy empire would do well to maintain even 30 huge ships in their starfleet. Contrary to what MicroProse inadvertently stated on their MOA web page, there is no limit to the number of ships you may have, and each one can have a unique design or be refitted with new technology, rather than relegated to the scrapyard.

Better still, in addition to *MASTER OF ORION*'s missiles and small, medium, large and huge ships, are new ship classes: fighters and heavy fighters, titans,



PRESENTING THE ULTRA-RAY Researching technologies has returned, but has been fleshed out with a plethora of new techs and sciences to discover.

Doom Stars (bet you can figure out what those are modeled after), star buses, battle stations, and star fortresses. When designed, ships' weapons must be built with specific firing arcs—in quarters, up to 360 degrees—which makes facing play a part now in tactical space battles. In addition, players can now modify the weapon configurations of individual ships. Each degree of improvement (increased

weapon range and damage, more maneuverability, and so on) comes with an increase in cost and hull space, providing an elegant and engrossing set of trade-offs for the would-be *Dreadnought* designers of space.

For all you *Star Wars* fans, you can equip a Doom Star with a Mauler Device and blow up planets—reducing them to useless asteroid fields. Fortunately for the sake of game balance, the same technology tier that allows for Doom Star construction also provides Artificial Planet Construction, which turns asteroid fields into planets. Thus, planets can be destroyed and resurrected at will, throughout the course of the game.

Land combat, too, has been enriched. There are three types of troops: militia (inferior soldiers automatically added to a defender's force and equal to one-fifth of the planetary population), regular Space Marines, and Armor Battalions (which takes two hits to kill, instead of one, and are always the first to fight). Captured populations are no longer slaughtered outright, but can be assimilated over time into your empire, with the resultant political consequences. Of course, the type of government you have (unification, feudal, republic, or democratic) and your occupation policy (genocide, slavery-controlled, or liberal) makes a difference here, as well as in many other areas of the game.

BUILDING BETTER WORLDS

A new strategic element has been added to MOA that MOO never had, and that is the concept of population morale. You'll find yourself building Pleasure Domes and Holo Simulators to keep the masses happy; Marine Barracks and Battleroids to train them (or suppress them if you choose to run an oppressive government); an Artemis Satellites System Net or Battlestation to

defend them; Astro Universities and Autotolabs to educate them and assist in research; Weather Control Systems and Subterranean Ecospheres to keep them fed; Spaceports and a Planetary Stock Exchange to enrich their economy; and Deep Core Mining and Android Workers to make them productive. Oh, the things a world can build now besides the tradi-

THE ANTAREAN MENACE

According to the game's fiction, the Antareans are a race from another dimension who are few in number, superior in technology, and as xenophobic as Terminators. Nursing a grudge against the long-dead Orions, they feverishly attack all sentients in their destructive path. Their entry points are random, so

defense preparation is nearly non-existent. For those who wish to get their alien hands on the Antarean's unique technology, the only way to acquire it is to capture one of their ships (good luck—these guys have an itchy self-destruct finger). If you're really a space stud, and if you discover the Dimensional Portal technology, you can go after their home world to wipe them out and steal all their technology. If you thought Orion and its Guardian were tough, wait until you party around Antares. Fortunately, inexperienced Space Marines can toggle the Antareans off while they are learning the game.

On the up side, when it comes time to picking a galactic president, a good military record against the common Antarean threat is a real vote-getter. Even races that don't like you will respect the warrior who can best this feared foe.

WISHING UPON A STAR

By making a veritable wish list come true, MASTER OF ANTARES looks like it will achieve the "CIVILIZATION in Space" feel that MASTER OF ORION was striving to achieve, but with considerably more goodies added from SimTex's experiences with MASTER OF MAGIC. Questions remain, though. Will the AI be up to the challenge of all the new goodies? Will MOA be released before its time, as MOM was? What we've seen so far speaks of a dream game that will blow away all MOO and MOM fans alike. All we can do now is wait, and watch the stars for a sign. ... ☾



MASTER OF MANAGEMENT Planet management is more akin to the Civ and MOM engines, with population types, buildings to construct and city production.

tional missiles, and ships! There's even a five-item production queue so that players are not constantly bothered with announcements of an item's completion. These queues can even end with Housing or Trade Goods construction, a la MOM.

There is also an aspect of interplanetary commerce not found in MOO. One quickly finds in MASTER OF ANTARES that it is far more efficient, economically, to have worlds dedicated to either farming, mining, construction, or research. Rather than every world needing to sustain itself, an empire's resources are automatically shuffled around where they are needed. This feature allows besieged planets to be blockaded, and forces players to occasionally pay to enlarge their Merchant Marine. So, planets are generally sought along these lines: a fertile terran world for food, a mineral rich or ultra rich world for resources, and a worthless rock for factories (because who cares about the pollution or population growth rates there?).

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WHERE DO YOU WANT TO GO TODAY?™

The Governor's Race

Building Rome Can Make Your Day In Sierra's CAESAR II

by Arinn Dembo

HERE IT IS AT LAST, STRATEGY FANS: THE GLORY THAT WAS ROME. SIERRA HAS FINALLY RELEASED CAESAR II, the long-awaited sequel to the popular CAESAR (title of times past). This is a game that gives a whole new meaning to the phrase "empire-building." For the benefit of those gamers who never played the original CAESAR, and who have missed the pre-release buzz over this sequel, CAESAR II is a construction game in the tradition of SIM-CITY. The cities of CAESAR II are classic Roman settlements, complete with all the amenities of Roman life: aqueducts and forums, fountains and markets, bath-houses, gardens, factories and schools—not to mention 32 varieties of housing, from simple huts to grand palaces. All the structures are rendered in exquisite SVGA graphics. A well-developed city is quite a sight, and even the most jaded eye will be pleased by the graceful, lovingly-drawn buildings.

But that's not all! Although it's more than possible to develop carpal tunnel syndrome as you merrily point and click

at CAESAR II's addictive City level, the city is only half the game; a full campaign game features management on the level of Province and Empire as well. In effect, the player has the opportunity to build the mightiest Empire of the ancient world with her own two hands—laying down roads, forts and walls, encouraging commerce, developing industry, and commanding the mighty Roman legions in battle against enemies of the state. It's a challenge that the majority of experienced gamers—especially those who favor strategy titles—won't be able to refuse.

VOX POPULI, VOX DEI

For those who don't speak Latin, this is an old Roman proverb—"the voice of the people is the voice of God." On the city level of CAESAR II, the phrase is given its full import. One of my favorite parts of the game is the portrait it draws of the Roman people, their needs and expectations, and the shape of their daily lives. The designers get big points for the time and thought that went into their modeling of Roman culture—and since the Western world learned most of its civilization from the Romans, this is not as trivial an accomplishment as you might think. The parallels between a Roman city and a modern metropolis are obvious.

In no particular order, the priorities of a Roman citizen are these: sanitation, including water piped to a fountain, rather than drawn from a filthy well or a river; a

nearby bath-house and a hospital somewhere in the city; education, including a grammar school for the younger children of the household, and a rhetor for older stu-



THIS AIN'T NO ROMAN HOLIDAY Building your first Roman city is no picnic, but if you choose provinces closer to Rome first, rather than on the periphery, you'll have an easier go at it.

dent; political representation, which means a forum within walking distance of housing; and security, in the form of regular patrols from the city barracks and *vigiles* (riot and fire-prevention troops) from the prefecture. If these basic priorities aren't recognized, any would-be administrator is sitting on a powder keg; unrest within the city will grow until it reaches critical mass, and the people will riot, destroying every building in their path ... no matter how expensive it was to build!

Other things they generally don't like are unemployment, conscription (they didn't call them "peace rallies" back then, but the basic principle is the same), and high taxes. Any combination of these three things, especially when basic civic needs are not met, is a formula for disaster. Even the most peaceable people will go berserk if mistreated, and some

Caesar II

Price: \$54.95

System

Requirements:

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486SX-25 or bett-

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SVGA graphics,

12 MB hard drive

space, mouse, 2x

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provinces are prone to resist Roman rule anyway—building and governing a settlement in Upper Germania is a very different matter from doing the same in the Campania.

The player has to keep a close eye on his people, and try to keep a step ahead of their grumbles. Of course, just providing the basics won't get you any promotions; as the provincial governor, you are not only responsible for keeping the people content, but also obligated to make sure that they are entertained. They want books, plays, chariot races, combats to the death! The best neighborhoods have access to libraries, theaters, circuses and arenas; having entertainment available will raise local land values, and create more affluent neighborhoods. The cumulative value of all the amusements, gardens, temples and libraries in your city is called Culture, and you will have to achieve a minimum rating in order to be promoted. As you progress through the game, that minimum rating will be higher and higher.

Now, all this land development isn't cheap; it costs money. As a governor, you have a start-up fund to get your administration off the ground, but that money runs out quickly. As in SIMCITY, part of the trick of this game is to develop a sufficient tax base to run the city before that initial cash allotment runs out. If you don't budget yourself accurately, you may be forced to sit and watch while your city

builds, provided they are close enough to a forum. The amount of money raised annually by taxes must be greater than your net expenditures—the cost of running the city, the salary you pay yourself each month, the wages of your legion, and the emperor's annual tribute. Your administration's profit margin is called Prosperity, and like Culture, it is given as a percentage; until you achieve a minimum Prosperity rating, you can't be promoted. In order to find out how you're doing in all the areas necessary to your next promotion, you have to go to your forum—your control panel for the majority of administrative functions—and consult the oracle.

THE BIG PICTURE

Of course, in full campaign mode, you can't spend all your time in town. The province and the empire need your attention as well. Play balance is good

enough that the interests of the city, the province and the empire often mingle, so shifting from the city to the province is fairly painless.

As you look at your provincial map, the most obvious feature is the city which you've been building. In the surrounding countryside, there are potential sites for industry: meadows, which might be cultivated to support a crop or a herd of cattle; and rocky areas, which can be quarried or mined. Any industry, once built, will provide raw materials for the factories in the city and, by extension, employment for your city's population. The emperor will occasionally put in gentle requests for some industrial product—6 tons of lead, for example. Failure to hand over the goods will earn you a seat aboard that galley I mentioned previously, so it's best to attend to the matter quickly.

Establishing trade will also produce raw materials for your factories, but it does more than that. Trading posts and



HOW PROVINCIAL The Province level is vital to your city's economic and peace status; here you will build your commerce and maintain your legions.

ports are good for the empire and the province. The same is true for roads, which connect the city with all its industries, trade centers, borders, and neighboring towns. Building the infrastructure of your province is necessary for promotion; the net worth of all your roads, ports and trading posts is called the Empire rating—again, you need a minimum rating to be promoted, and it will be

more difficult as you go along.

As you look at the map of your province, you'll see a number of smaller towns scattered throughout the countryside. Some of these are Roman settlements, which should be connected to your city by roads, but some of them represent barbarian tribes. Unless you send Roman troops to conquer those barbarian villages, they will produce periodic uprisings; angry mobs will emerge from the countryside and begin a relentless march toward the city, hoping to destroy all you have built.

In order to keep the barbarians from sacking your city, you will have to maintain a legion. By building a cohort fort in the province, and arranging for a monthly wage, you can guarantee that a certain number of Roman legionaries will be available to quell uprisings, or battle invasions by sea. The legionaries are heavy infantry, the basic building blocks of your army. If you want a variety of troops, you will either have to conscript Roman citizens into a light infantry century (and I've already mentioned how Roman citizens love the draft), train your plebeians to be slingers, or pay foreign auxiliaries at a fairly outrageous sum per month. The number and type of auxiliary troops available varies from province to province.

The combat system of *CAESAR II* is much improved over its predecessor, and believe me, I'm grateful. But if I was to pick out one flaw in the game, this would be it. Combat occurs in real-time, with units being ordered around by the century (groups of 60-100 men). Range troops have an "aim" command. All other troops can be commanded to move, and to assume one of three formations: a standard formation, an attack row (two deep), or a "tortoise," with men standing shield-to-shield on the defense. This is good, and on paper, it sounds fine; unfortunately, the ability of your troops to maintain both defensive and offensive

formations doesn't seem to give any decisive advantage in battle. Oddly enough, barbarian villagers don't have any trouble maintaining formation either, and the same is true of hordes that arrive by sea.

The predominance of heavy infantry in the Roman army is not historically inaccurate, but some gamers will be disappointed, as I was, that it isn't possible to train your own light cavalry. Also, I ran

time your soldiers and vigiles are fighting barbarians. You will have failed to keep these uncivilized brutes from the walls, and your reputation as the governor will already have suffered. Your success in keeping barbarians away at bay is measured as a percentage—the oracle calls it your Peace rating—and once again, it has to reach a minimum level before you will be offered a promotion.

DRESS FOR SUCCESS

If you can bring Roman culture, Roman peace, Roman prosperity and Roman roads to ten consecutive provinces, you get the purple toga—they'll declare you Caesar, a god on earth, and you win the game. The last few promotions are extremely difficult; as your minimum ratings approach 100, it will take longer and longer to achieve your goals.

Because the game takes a considerable length of time to win, and because there are so many different paths to victory, *CAESAR II* will probably yield at least a hundred hours of play to the average gamer, and possibly much more. It's an excellent value for your entertainment dollar, and will also recycle extremely well to friends and relations (in the unlikely event that you ever get tired of your copy!). This is a good season for strategy titles, but *CAESAR II* stands out even in celestial company, well worth the fifty *dinarii*—I mean dollars—that it'll set you back. Even if you don't have the legs for a toga, it's a small price to pay for the chance to rule an empire. ☺



PHALANX, BUT NO PHALANX Although the combat system in *Caesar II* is dramatically improved over the original, players may find battles too inflexible.

into a few instances where Roman morale evaporated in less time than it takes to blink—from 85 to 0 in an instant. Now, I haven't spent a lifetime studying Roman military history, but I know that they didn't run like rabbits, especially when they outnumbered the enemy two to one.

The combat is still workable, of course, and does afford the occasional moment of excitement—it's always a thrill to see an elephant on the battlefield. My advice to prospective generals is to turn down the game speed a great deal during combat, so that you can control the movement of your troops with great care. Also, augment your legion heavily with trained plebeians—being able to counter the enemy's missile troops is vital.

The ultimate goal of all combat is to prevent barbarians from reaching the city; if they do, they will sack it. The urban cohort—the soldiers and vigiles that prevent fire, riot and theft—can deal with barbarians within the city walls, but not before they trash the place. In a very real sense, the battle is already lost by the

THE EDITORS' SPIN

CAESAR II

RATING ★★★★★

PROS Beautiful graphics, cool animation, balanced play, a simple interface, and a gradual learning curve are the best features in this strategy winner.

CONS The combat system is ahistorical and can be tricky, unless you turn down the game speed.

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Fear and Loathing In The Ardennes

Refight The Battle Of The Bulge In **BATTLEGROUND: ARDENNES**

by Patrick C. Miller

"The harsh memory of riflemen against tanks in the grueling Ardennes battle was stamped indelibly in my mind, and I could not avoid the overwhelming fear of meeting the Germans on such terms again."

—FROM COMPANY COMMANDER
BY CHARLES B. MACDONALD

AS A 22-YEAR-OLD CAPTAIN IN THE U.S. ARMY'S 23RD INFANTRY DIVISION, CHARLES MACDONALD found himself facing the full fury of Hitler's last desperate gamble, a surprise attack through the Ardennes Forest that later became known as the Battle of the Bulge. MacDonald's infantry company, equipped with rifles, machine guns and a single bazooka, dissolved under a torrent of small arms and tank fire among the fir trees of a snow-covered forest. Although he survived to fight another day, during battles in the following

months, MacDonald found it difficult to forget the helpless, hopeless feeling that engulfed him in the Ardennes.

BATTLEGROUND: ARDENNES, the first game released by new publisher TalonSoft, recreates 23 battles between the American and German armies from December 1944 to January 1945. The game also includes three hypothetical scenarios and a tutorial scenario. In the early battles, the initial confusion caused by the surprise German onslaught forces the Americans to fight holding actions against overwhelming odds. On the German side, **ARDENNES** portrays the difficulty of conducting a blitzkrieg attack through close terrain in the dead of winter. Later, the Germans must contend with a massive American counterattack to avoid being trapped in the bulge then offensive created.

ARDENNES, the first in a series of games TalonSoft plans to release based on its Battleview game engine, is a quality product nearly devoid of bugs and a fine first effort for the company. As a turn-based game running under either Windows 3.1 or Windows 95, **ARDENNES'** multimedia graphics and sound combine with superb, highly detailed hex maps, modem play and a scenario editor to create an attractive package many wargamers will find hard to resist. The problem is, for nearly every positive aspect of the game, there's a negative aspect diminishing its effect.



CAT LITTER German armor attempting to seize Clervaux litters the countryside as American GIs make good use of the town's defensive terrain.

THIS MAKES SNOW SENSE

Take the maps, for example—they're beautiful and amazing. Zoomed out, **ARDENNES** takes on the appearance of a fine board game printed in rich, full color. Zoomed in, the 3-D tactical view provides the look and feel of a miniatures game unlike anything currently on the market. But where the heck is the snow? The pictures in the manual and the video clips show American and German troops bundled up against the winter cold and often trudging through knee-deep snow. Yet judging from the maps, the Battle of the Bulge was fought in any season but winter.

Another issue with **ARDENNES** is TalonSoft's Battleview game engine, designed ostensibly to cover combat from the 18th century to the 20th century and beyond. This system emphasizes user-friendliness and fun gameplay over complexity and realism, which is fine as long as it works. However, the one simplistic tactic guaranteed to succeed in **ARDENNES**—firing,

Battleground: Ardennes

Price: \$50.00

System:

Requirements:

Windows 3.1 or

Windows 95; 386

DX-33 (486 recommended), 2x

CD-ROM, 4 MB

RAM (8 MB recommended), mouse, 256-color SVGA graphics, 5 MB hard drive space; supports most major sound cards.

of Players: 1-2

Protection: None (CD must be in drive to play)

Designers: Jim Rose, John Tiller

Publisher: TalonSoft

Forest Hill, MO

(417) 621-7282



WaterlooSoft: The New Kind Of Win-Down

Call up TalonSoft for technical support or ask for some advice, and you might be surprised to find yourself talking to, or exchanging E-mail, with Jim Rose, TalonSoft's founder, president and chief game designer. It's all part of the company's philosophy of staying in touch with gamers to develop and produce the games customers want.

Rose says he left Avolon Hill to gain more creative freedom and to focus his efforts on one or two projects. He started TalonSoft in February 1985, and teamed up with game programmer John Tifer. The company has since attracted former AOL employees Steve Langmead (History of the World, Fun Commuix II), graphic artist Charles Kibler, and Bob McManera (Asterix Chronicles).

TalonSoft is staking its future on the Windows-based Battleview system featured in *Barracoon: Assault* and its sequel, *Barracoon: Germania*. The system was inspired by miniatures wargames that used hex-shaped terrain. But why was Windows chosen when DOS has, for so long, been the operating system of choice for games?

"I used to be one of the biggest opponents of Windows programs," Rose says. "I said I'd never do a Windows game. I was wrong. I discovered that the more I worked in Windows, the more I liked it."

He explained that Windows offers a far more stable programming environment and can greatly reduce programming time. Rose points to the lack of bugs in *Axons* and the relatively few requests for technical support TalonSoft has received as evidence of Windows suitability for gaming.

In the future, gamers can look for Battleview games from TalonSoft featuring the Napoleonic era (*Waterloo* in particular) and the American Revolution. Rose also isn't ruling out computer strategy games and futuristic wargames as possible projects.

disrupting and assaulting—makes for rather monotonous gameplay after a while and seems more appropriate for Waterloo in 1815 than it does for Bastogne in 1944.

Windows interfaces are generally considered more intuitive and user-friendly than those of DOS-based programs, but in *ARDENNES*, such basic functions as fire, movement and determining line of sight are hardly intuitive. Fortunately, TalonSoft provides an excellent tutorial that

can teach you the game's basic mechanics within a half hour or so. However, you may need to play several games before both the point-and-click commands and the six-part turn sequence start to make sense.

A PLATOONIC RELATIONSHIP

Platoon-sized units are the basic maneuver elements of *ARDENNES*, which has nearly 90 different unit types and includes mines, fortifications, improved positions and roadblocks. Off-map artillery and air support are represented as well. Each hex is 250 meters across and a turn represents a 10-minute time period. Scenarios range in size from short, seven-turn skirmishes to the massive 37-turn battle for Bastogne. Scenarios are rated for difficulty on a scale from 1 to 10. Players have the option of either micro-managing their battles by moving and firing units individually or using "semi-automatic" artificial intelligence (AI) to give general orders on the regimental level while allowing the computer to handle platoon-level fire and maneuver.

From the game's main menu, you can choose to start a new scenario, reload a saved game, or begin a modem game. Since there is no campaign mode, the order in which you play the scenarios makes no difference. Starting a new scenario brings up a listing of the battles along with a brief description of the scenario, the map set used, its turn length and difficulty level. After selecting the scenario, you set the AI. The computer can play either with "log of war" (limited intelligence) enabled or without. Because the AI is so weak, most players will probably prefer to use micro-management over the semi-automatic mode, even though it's much slower.

IT'S JUST A PHASE

Units for both sides start the game in their historically accurate locations. There is no op-

portunity to change units or their deployment prior to battle, although you can alter the scenarios with the editor. Each turn consists of six phases, which are: preparation fire, movement, defensive fire, offensive fire, assault and mechanized movement. In many scenarios, reinforcements arrive for both sides at various points on the map. Units are rated for attack against hard and soft targets, defense, assault capability, morale and movement.

When a unit or group of units fires or conducts an assault, the result is either disruption, elimination, retreat or no effect. Ordering a unit to fire or assault opens a window, within which runs a short World War II combat video accompanied by appropriate sound effects. Initially, this feature adds to the gaming experience, but it gets old after a while and significantly slows down gameplay, even on the 100 MHz Pentium on which *ARDENNES* was reviewed. Turning off the



2-0 OR NOT 2-0? Gameplay can be sped up by using the larger 2-0 map view and letting the AI issue general orders to your troops. It's weak, but it quickens gameplay.



HEAVY MEDAL POISONING Performing well in combat, and playing tough scenarios, means some decorations and induction into the list of top 10 generals.

video and sound effects speed things up considerably, but at the expense of the fun factor.

Disruption and morale are the only indicators of your units' status, and they don't tell the whole story. On numerous occasions, I've pulled a disrupted unit out of the front lines, rested it to recover from disruption and then put it back into combat, only to have it eliminated the next time it took a hit. Obviously, there's more going on here than what the player sees. Having some indication of whether a unit has taken light, moderate or heavy casualties would be helpful. What's even more unrealistic is the fact that you know just as much about the status of spotted enemy units as you do about your own units.

TANK IT OR LEAVE IT

Even through ARDENNES is designed more with fun than realism in mind, it does use historically accurate orders of battle, providing players with a true picture of combat in World War II. Infantry units far outnumber armored units and

must be relied upon to conduct the brunt of the fighting. In addition, German Tigers and Panthers are represented in the numbers in which they were actually present. You quickly learn to appreciate armored support when you have it, and avoid subjecting your tank units to unnecessary risks.

Long-term playability is a question mark. With the weak AI, veteran wargamers will find that all but the most difficult scenarios can be easily won on the first attempt. And even though the AI will vary its strategy from battle to battle, once you've played and won a scenario from either side, playing it again seems almost pointless. Modern play is nicely done and helps make up for the lack of challenging AI. The scenario editor does add to the long-term value of the game, but because you're limited to the three map sets that come with ARDENNES, you can't alter the terrain or create new maps.

While I didn't find gameplay in ARDENNES especially challenging or stimulating, the game did rekindle my interest

in the Battle of the Bulge, causing me to reread Charles MacDonald's first-person account of the battle in *Company Commander* and portions of his later historical account of the Bulge campaign, *A Time for Trumpets*. TalonSoft might not have scored a direct hit with its first release, but it's clear the company has established a firm foundation on which to build future efforts, and that's good news for computer wargamers. ☺

THE EDITORS SPEAK

BATTLEGROUND: ARDENNES

RATING ★★★★★

PROS The colorful, highly accurate 3-D maps are excellent; the scenario editor and modern play added are bonuses; and the multimedia treatment is well done.

CONS Realism is sacrificed for the sake of fun, but gameplay isn't all that challenging or entertaining, and the Windows interface isn't exploited to its full advantage.

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Karen Allen
Burgess Meredith
John Rhys-Davies

RIPPER

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Nebulous Nebula

ASCENDANCY Shoots For The Stars, But Design Malfunctions Leave Gamers Lost In Space

by Martin E. Cirulis

MOST OF US HAVE A FAVORITE TYPE OF COMPUTER GAME—SOME SUB-GENRE THAT WE BUY again and again, looking for that perfect game. For some, it's the rush of flight-sims; for others, it's the endless Hit Points and Treasure Chests of CRPGs. For me, it's the Discovery and Strategy of the "spaceploitation" game. If I see an ad or a box that promises star systems to explore, ships to design and aliens to crush, it'll take Ralph Nader standing on my chest and screaming, "It's CRAP!!!" to stop me from throwing down the credits and buying my copy. So far, I've been lucky; with all the great games I've played, my current favorite at any given moment has always lasted just long enough for a new champion to arrive.

Well, with MASTER OF ORION getting very tired as a single-player game, and SPACEWARD HO! only offering laughs when the net gang gathers, I've been looking for a new king. For a few moments, I thought I had found it in ASCEN-

DANCY, from those new folks at **The Logic Factory**.

Unfortunately, like spotting Elvis in the neighborhood supermarket, a second look brought both disappointment and a sense of melancholy for the past.

PLACES EVERYBODY!

There's no great surprise in the setup here; it's pure spaceploitation, through and through. You start as one of 3 to 8 races, chosen from a pool of 20 strange and different species. Each has a little advantage all their own, and in a very nice touch, none of them is human. While setting up the game, you can pick such factors as: Star Density (read as "game length"), Atmosphere (read as "difficulty"), and number of computer players from 2 to 6.

You begin on your homeworld with a burning desire to expand and propagate throughout the star cluster, a basic knowledge of your own solar system, and an intense interest in the mysterious Star Lanes: circular distortions hanging in space that you just know will somehow lead to neighboring stars. Luckily, a major part of this game is infrastructure, and the system itself is more detailed than the one in MOO.

All planets are divided into a grid system, with each square representing an area upon which structures can be built. Larger worlds have dozens of squares, while moonlets may have as few as four. Each square has a color indicating what kind of structure it will favor.

Your infrastructure is based on three aspects of your empire: two output cate-



CONSTRUCTION JUNCTION In *ASCENDANCY*, you build various industrial, research, and prosperity structures to create a better, more advanced environment for your people.

gories—Industry for construction capability, Research for making new tech discoveries—and one growth category, Prosperity, which dictates how fast a planet's population can grow. Points in the three categories are generated by appropriate structures built on the surface. Factories and such generate Industry, which in turn accelerates the planet's construction of other structures and starships. Prosperity-generating structures, such as hydroponic centers, are also world-specific and create the population needed to work structures. Lab facilities send their Research points to a collective pool, representing the total science capability of your entire Empire.

Though industrial capacity allows you to turn barren worlds into production juggernauts, it's Research that really decides this game. In fact, you can't even build a shipyard at the beginning of the game, never mind a starship. This, combined with the fact that your number of vessels is limited by the number of star-systems you control, means that each ship in your fleet is crucially important, and therefore needs the highest technology you can muster and the largest hull you know how to build. In this game, a

Ascendancy

Price: \$69.95

System

Requirements: IBM

compatible 486-33

or better, 8 MB

RAM, SVGA graphics,

15 MB hard

drive space, 2x

CD-ROM drive,

Mouse, DOS 5.0 or higher;

supports most

major sound cards

of Players: 1

Protection: None (CD must be in drive to play)

Designer: Logic Factory

Publisher: Broderbund Software, Inc.

Novato, CA

(415) 382-4400





TAKE ME TO YOUR LEADER There are 20 alien races in *Ascendancy*, all with distinct personalities, special abilities, and refreshingly alien appearances.



THE BIG BANG Combat looks pretty and is engaged in a 3-D environment, but the bugs make fighting a ridiculous proposition.

Ship of the Line is easily worth two entire star systems.

The research system in general represents an evolution in spaceploitation games. Instead of the usual, Civ-style list of technologies, *ASCENDANCY* creates a more realistic model by presenting the player with a tree where technologies interconnect. This gives a player a chance to make more interesting and intuitive choices. If you see how gravity control is linked to inertia-less drive, you might consider choosing electromagnetic field technology, hoping it results in some kind of improved laser weaponry. Usually, you can't see the tech developments in a tree structure until after you purchase the strategy guide. Unfortunately, some of the realism of this presentation method is lost when the computer tells you the benefits of a science only after you've chosen it *and* finished researching it.

SPACE, ABOVE AND BEYOND

Of course, all this infrastructure stuff is great, but what most of you spaceploitation fans want to know is "Do things blow up real good?" I'm pleased to say that the answer is a good, solid "Pretty much." Graphically, the game is beautiful. All combat takes place in a circular area comprising a solar system and surrounding StarLane points, and the perspective is a kind of skewed 3-D, so those who got tired of watching simple 2-D cutouts get blown-up in MOO will be pleased by this "up-grade" to the spaceploitation combat model. While the cosmetic improvements to ship and weapon graphics are great, what I really appreciated was the ability to maneuver my ships in three dimensions. A definite step in the right direction.

All combat is device-based, meaning that your ships are only as good as the gadgets you put into them, and each ship has a limited number of slots, based on ship size, that can be filled. While this is nothing new, the attention to

detail is. You must choose everything for your ship, from Hyperdrives to power Generators, so your choices are much more complicated than how many guns to fit in. By the time you reach the end of a big game, there are a bewildering array of devices to choose from, allowing ships to be specialized for almost any task from explorer/colonizer to sub-light Monitor. Now at this point, you'd think it would be safe to say we might be looking at the best spaceploitation game made for the PC.

You'd think so, but when you least expect it...

ARRRRRRRGH!!!

ASCENDANCY could have been a five-star game but is seriously undermined by three flaws, made all the more tragic because they are completely unnecessary—and probably another two weeks on the

table could have cleared them right up.

The first is a bug so simple it shows, without a doubt, that playtesting is dead and gone. While this game is exceptionally crash-free, even while running as a DOS session in Win 95, it seems that nobody ran it through a final rule check, because the bug that got away, while subtle, is a game-screcker. You see, ship combat takes place over a number of phased turns during a single day. The number of phases a ship has is based completely on the energy production of that ship. Every action, from movement to shields to weapons fire, reduces the energy total for a ship, and once the level reaches zero, that ship is done until the next day. Of course, given this situation, multiple ship engagements should become an intricate dance of destruction as players weigh position, firepower and energy reserves—but instead, they're over faster than two-ship duels. Why? Because for some reason the computer has a tendency to treat all ships in the system as if they had one energy reserve: that is, when one ship drains power, all ships in the system lose the same amount of power. Sometimes this problem occurs with the ship's "hit-points" as well. This glitch effectively guts the combat system until a patch is issued.

And while on the subject of combat, the next flaw in the game is the Artificial Opponent. Gameplay is so tepid that you can set the game to its hardest level and declare war on everybody you meet, and you'd have to knock yourself in the head with a mallet before you find yourself hard-pressed. When it comes down to actual ship-to-ship combat, things are OK, though the energy-level glitch makes everything seem slow, but as far as managing empires is concerned, the computer is a real no-show. Of course, this wouldn't be an issue if there was even hot-seat multiplayer capability in this game, but no!

And finally, the most reprehensible defect in this game is the incredibly poor documentation. While there are dozens of cool technologies to invent, there is not a single literal description of their effect on the game in numbers. Even worse, while the technology tree shows you what new toys will come of your research, you can't get an explanation of what they will do un-

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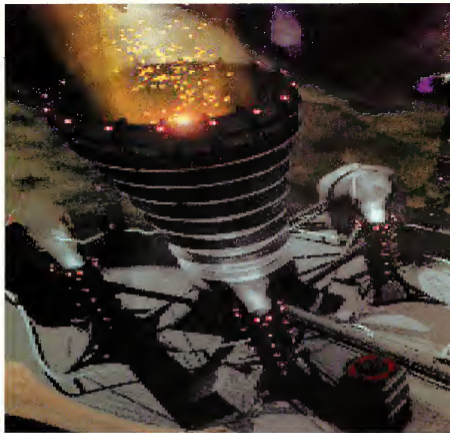
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Bloody Omaha Revisited

Return To Omaha Beach In Atomic Game's D-DAY: AMERICA INVADES

by Robert Mayer

ABOUT FOUR YEARS AGO, **THREE-SIXTY PACIFIC** RELEASED **UTAH BEACH (UB)**, THE FIRST OFFERING from new wargame designers, Atomic Games. UB broke new ground in graphics and player interface for computer wargaming, a branch of electronic entertainment which for many years suffered lackluster visuals and arcane, convoluted game play. Atomic's first game was an instant classic, especially for lucky Mac users who got it a year before the PC crowd had their shot at the bogage. Atomic produced three more games in the **V FOR VICTORY** series with **Three-Sixty**, before moving to **Avalon Hill**, where they delivered **OPERATION CRUSADER** and **STALINGRAD**, both part of the improved **WORLD AT WAR** series. Now, on the heels of the split between Avalon Hill and Atomic, the latest and perhaps last **WORLD AT WAR** game, **D-DAY: AMERICA INVADES**, makes its appearance.

Like **UTAH BEACH**, **DDAY** covers the campaign of the American VII corps on the Cotentin peninsula, but that is only

one part of this game. The other is the more famous struggle for the Omaha beaches and the subsequent battles around St. Lô and the desperate search for a breakthrough that culminated in the Cobra battles in late July, 1944. As an added bonus, gamers can choose to simulate the entire American effort on both beaches, with an opportunity to either expedite the push inland or, from the German side, throw the invaders back into the sea. As in all the Atomic wargames, numerous variants and historical options provide the opportunity for armchair generals to reshape history any way they want.

Graphically, **D-DAY** is much more sophisticated than **UTAH BEACH**. Different color schemes for the many military formations in the game add to the game's visual appeal, and the maps convey an excellent feel for the claustrophobic conditions of bogage fighting. While Atomic's last game, **STALINGRAD**, suffered from the boredom of the endless steppe, **D-DAY**'s map is much busier, and gamers should appreciate the tactical problems this terrain poses for both attacker and defender. Marshes and swamps are particularly well-depicted, and the addition of marked hilltops adds a little flavor to the tactical landscape as well.

The scenarios included are definitely more interesting when played from the Allied side. On the defensive, the Germans either have little opportunity to move or, as in the campaign scenarios, have a pretty easy time of digging in and halting the American advance. There is a real challenge in moving the Americans off their beaches with enough dispatch to



THEATER OF WAR D-Day sports better graphics and a more visually appealing look, but the poor AI and unrealistic gameplay are serious disappointments.

forestall an entrenched German defense. Using the historical variants, the Germans get the chance to throw Rommel and the panzers at the beachheads, which can be fun.

Like most sequels, though, **D-DAY** offers little that is new. It's beautiful to look at, but it lacks substance, and fails to make full use of the computer's capabilities. In an era when most board games use color coding to separate units of different formations, Atomic still makes all Wehrmacht forces gray, all U.S. Army troops green; the awkward and hard to see system of colored unit borders doesn't really help much. This is all the more disappointing when you consider that Atomic did employ different color schemes for formations. But they should have gone further and color coded units, as well. The ability to differentiate formations would have contributed greatly to both visual appeal and ease of play.

More critically, the combat models in the **WORLD AT WAR** games have little to recommend them over those used two decades ago. Though the game is advanced enough to employ an incremental, real odds Combat Resolution Table, one must ask why it still uses a barely ad-

D-Day: America Invades

Price: \$45
System

Requirements: IBM compatible 386 or better, 8 MB RAM, DOS 6.0, 11 MB hard drive space, 2x CD-ROM drive, SVGA-graphics, mouse; supports most major sound cards; Macintosh System 7.0, 5 MB RAM, Mac or PowerMac Color

Of Players: 1-2

Protection: None (CD must be in drive to play)

Designers: Atomic Games

Publisher: Avalon Hill

Baltimore, MO

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Bradley's Nightmare

One of the fictional scenarios in *D-Day: America Invades* simulates an attack by the 2nd Paratrooper Division against the ever-extended lines of the American Big Red One. Driving on Carentan, the 1st Infantry runs smack-dab into Rommel's tanks and the boggo becomes decidedly unfriendly. A small scenario, *Bradley's Nightmare* is much more fun to play from the German side, as the Americans really can't do much attacking. Even so, a German commander will have to push hard for the American rear if the paratroopers are to celebrate a victory.



VARIOUS VARIANTS One good feature of *D-Day* is the flexibility to create various historical variants, which should satisfy armchair generals with "what if" scenarios.

equates, decades-old combat resolution device. Most good games now feature highly detailed combat systems, with separate anti-tank, artillery, anti-aircraft, and other specialized resolution procedures. Modern boardgames make a strong effort to simulate the effects of leadership, command and control, and doctrine on battles, effects that for the most part are absent from *D-Day*. Modeling combat requires a lot more than simply figuring out how many combat factors or column shifts a company of Sherman's adds to a battle. You have to account for the overall dynamics of an army in the battlefield, dynamics that include command, control, administration, doctrine, and a real appreciation for the effects of warfare on units of disparate human beings. Even SSG's old *Battlefront* series, with all its flaws, made a real effort to do just that.

All of these lapses show up vividly in the lackluster computer opponent that has been an Atomic Games hallmark. The defenders leave their entrenchments too early, the attackers display little ingenuity, and solo play becomes an exercise in endurance. On the other hand, if there were accurate restrictions on the employment of troops, better assessments of the limitations of command and control, and movement/combat engines driven by ordering brigades, there could have been more realistic and fulfilling combat.

It is depressing to play a historical wargame where the best strategies involve ignoring all those things that, historically, were important to operational commanders, yet that is precisely what *D-*

Day involves. Scenarios that take too long to play, and degenerate into endless series of inconclusive and incongruous skirmishes. Without any structure for leading divisions and regiments into battle, the entire basis of battle planning at the operational level is removed, replaced by tedious micromanagement of troops.

Nevertheless, *D-Day* offers a worthwhile addition to the wargamers' library, if only because it works and there isn't any real competition. Gamers who want more of the same from the *World at War* system will no doubt find *D-Day* perfectly satisfying. Though I saw some reports of bugs, the game ran fine in a DOS session under Win95 on my Pentium 133 with 16 MB of RAM. The interface is clean, the graphics are attractive, and gameplay remains relatively straightforward. If you are looking for something more, however, such as a game system that really engages the difficult issues raised by simulating WWII operational combat, you won't find your answer here. Atomic's game engine remains the best computer recreation of the old SPI *World at War: Atlantic Wall* boardgame system, but in an era of 133 Mhz Pentiums, massive hard drives, and loads of RAM, gamers deserve something more than wargaming flashbacks. ☹

A WARNING TO PROSPECTIVE GENERALS: *D-Day: America Invades* can only be installed with the floppy command. This is the first time CGW has seen a game that neglected to include an installation batch file for users. Unfortunately, gamers who wish to play *D-Day* must complete a tedious, file-by-file copying for installation.

THE EDITORS SPEAK

D-DAY: AMERICA INVADES

RATING



PROS Myriad historical variants, more sophisticated graphics, and interesting scenarios should please the *World at War* gamer.

CONS *AMERICA INVADES* lacks good AI, suffers an antiquated combat resolution model, and is not at all faithful to the circumstances or historical factors that governed real WWII combat.



This sort of scenario shows perfectly the *World at War* system's strengths and weaknesses. It's small, so the unit by unit micromanagement isn't as wearying as in large battles, but the limited number of units and the greater importance of each battle only highlights the lack of sophistication in the game engine. Combat factors and column shifts are the only things that matter; subordination, formations, and unit boundaries are all immaterial. The German player does face an interesting challenge in crushing the exposed American vanguard rapidly enough to push the Wehrmacht spearheads deep into the 1st Division sector. For the Americans, it's largely a matter of fall back and hold, while the boys in the rear dig like crazy. With little room to maneuver and a short timetable, *Bradley's Nightmare* inevitably becomes a short, brutal slugfest.



One thing the Americans can do is use their artillery to interdict the roadways and paths through the boggo, which buys time for the B.L.s to prepare adequate defenses. Careful use of the delay defensive option can help, too. For the Germans, everyone needs to move forward as fast as possible. Once you have the drill down, though, the scenario loses much of its attractiveness. Too bad there isn't a scenario for the real nightmare—hordes of panzers descending upon Omaha Beach.

Explosive Decompression

Long-Delayed *BREACH 3* Goes Down In A Hail Of Laser Fire

by Martin E. Cirulis

WAS GOING THROUGH SOME OLD ISSUES OF *CGW* THE OTHER DAY, WHEN WHAT SHOULD I FIND BUT AN AD FOR *BREACH 3*—from early '94. Now, the wild world of vaporware usually doesn't thrill me, but in a display of synchronicity that would have pleased Jung himself, the very same morning the review copy of *BREACH 3* (B3) appeared in my mailbox in all its CD-ROM majesty. I scrambled to install the thing, wild with hope; after all, two-year delays usually mean good things. Maybe this would be the SF wargame equivalent to *MICROMANAGER 2* or *PHANTASMAGORIA*. Alas, sometimes a game that takes two years to reach the shelves is just a game that is 730 days behind the times.

X-COMAPHOBIA

BREACH 3 is the latest sequel from Omnitrend's line of tactical spacewar titles, and is meant to link with their complex starship title, *RULES OF ENGAGEMENT*. I enjoyed many hours playing the original *BREACH* on my old Atari ST many years ago, with its overhead views and detailed interiors. I was looking forward to this upgrade, but after an hour or so I had

only one burning thought: "This thing took two bloody years?"

To be honest, I can't figure out what they were thinking with this one. Sure, there are some improvements over the older *BREACH* games—nice touches like morale breaks and explosive decompression—but apart from this they just complicated the interface until it has reached a confusion level on a par with *RULES OF ENGAGEMENT 2*. At first glance, it appears that this game was ready a long time ago and was held back, perhaps for fear that *X-COM* had somehow cornered the turn-based market; it looks like it was sent back to the shop for a totally unnecessary upgrade to real-time combat. Instead of careful planning and tactical cunning you are left with yesterday's graphics, with your troops stumbling after your leader like a kindergarten class afraid to be left alone. This felt more like *TIGER'S MERCENARIES* on speed than the state-of-the-art in personal SF combat.

Instead of trying to spice things up, perhaps the designers should have been less afraid of copying *X-COM* and more willing to improve on it. I would have loved to play a "serious" phased-turn wargame, one that put the accent on realistic lines-of-sight and weapon effects instead of the merely adequate attempts made in *BREACH 3*. Perhaps, I could even have soldiers smart enough to ask if I really wanted them to blow themselves up along with the door or not.

BLAST FROM THE PAST

At least *BREACH 3* retains the scenario building portion; no extra charge for the toolkit here. As in *RULES OF ENGAGEMENT*,



LASER TAG! Unfortunately, the move to real-time play minimizes the emphasis on planning and tactics that made the original *Breach* successful.

you can even create campaigns that branch to different missions depending on success or failure. This, combined with the ability to link with *ROE2* itself, redeems the game somewhat for the wargamer or SF fan who must have everything. It would be nice to see a utility this powerful in a really good game.

For the rest of us though, this game is a little too yesteryear to satisfy in today's world of steep software prices. Not every game must be filled with glitz and special effects, but some attempt should be made to keep up with the times, other than awful scanned shots of office staff from whence you are supposed to choose the face of your squad leader. And, while *BREACH 3* runs well on a 386, so did *X-COM*; and the former isn't half the game of the latter. Maybe Nostalgia is good for something after all. ☹

Breach 3

Price: \$59.95
System

Requirements: PC compatible 386 or better, 4 MB RAM, 5MB hard drive space, VGA graphics, CD-ROM (MPC-2 compliant), mouse; most major sound cards supported.

of Players: 1

Protection: None

Design: Omnitrend

Publisher: Impressions Software, Inc.

Cambridge, MA

(203) 676-9002



THE EDITORS SPEAK

BREACH 3

RATING ★★★★★

PROS Nice scenario/campaign builder. Integrates with *RULES OF ENGAGEMENT 2*.

CONS Outdated graphics and woefully insignificant gameplay compared to the turn-based *X-COM*, or any really good real-time strategy game like *COMMAND & CONQUER*.

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On With The War

The Heroes Slowly Return To Battle In WARLORDS II

by Tim Carter

THAT'S RIGHT, FOLKS: THE HEROES, THE DRAGONS, THE CARNAGE—IT'S ALL BACK, THIS TIME UNDER THE title *WARLORDS II DELUXE*. What's new this time around? Apart from some bad cover art for the box, *WARLORDS II DELUXE* from SSG comes with some extra scenarios, a scenario editor, and a few added bells and whistles.

In addition to the usual empire and army building, *WARLORDS II* lets you explore worlds, find powerful artifacts and accomplish quests much the same as the original. *WARLORDS II DELUXE* comes with 60 scenarios, many of them new, and the previously released scenario editor.

This upgrade includes some new city features and e-mail capabilities. Also, a few new terrain types, such as the underground terrain set, are interesting and innovative. The new SVGA graphics are quite attractive, but for a strategy game, the vi-

sual polish is still only peripheral to the success of the product.

THE TEACUP DILEMMA

Although the game plays faster than before, the gap between turns, even on a



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fast computer with a boot disk, quickly engenders boredom. Every turn you must ask, "Do I watch in case something useful happens, or do I get up and fix a cup of tea?"

Even if you elect not to watch in the interest of play balance, there is still a several-minute gap between moves—not long enough to read a book, but too long to stare at the walls or admire the upgraded graphics. This was the biggest flaw in *WARLORDS II*, and *DELUXE* has not resolved it. Of course, most gamers will already be familiar with the flow of the game, and will have decided for themselves whether they can cope with it. Those unfamiliar with *WAR-*

Warlords II Deluxe

Price: \$69.95
System Requirements: IBM compatible 386 or better, 4 MB RAM, SVGA graphics, 7 MB hard drive space, 2x CD-ROM; supports NetBIOS, Hayes compatible Modem and Null-Modems; and most major sound cards
of Players: 1 to 8
Protection: None (CD must be in drive to play)
Designers: Steve Fawcner, Roger Keating, Gary Makin, Ian Trout, and Gregor Whitley
Publishers: SSG
Pensacola, FL
(904) 469-8880



WARLORDS II will find the *DELUXE* version a good buy. If you already have *WARLORDS II*, the repackaging isn't worth the extra money (even with the discount SSG offers). Certainly the new scenarios are welcome and interesting, but with the many home-made maps and character sets already available on various bulletin boards, the new additions simply aren't worth the wrath of the gods of credit. ☹

THE EDITORS SPEAK

WARLORDS II DELUXE

RATING ★★★★★

PROS Good AI, updated graphics, and new scenarios make this a good buy for gamers new to *WARLORDS II*.
CONS Waiting for the computer to move can take a while, and there isn't enough new to distinguish this game from the original.



ARE WE THERE YET? The AI is tough, but that pot o' tea might be cold indeed before you get a chance to move.

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"An immersive, satisfying and original experience" -Ultimate Gamer

"The only complaint I have is that I wish I had more time to play the game"

...3D Lemmings is a winner"

-Electronic Gaming Monthly (Editors Choice Gold)



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The Gamers Almanac

An Index Of CGW Articles From 1995

The CGW All-Stars The 1995 Five-Star Game Index

COMMAND: ACES OF THE OCEAN

Reviewed: Mar '96, p. 312
Publisher: Sierra On-Line

Genre: Strategy
Price: Voice command, added sounds in English and German, and improved graphics make an already superb game even better.

Does: No new missions. Although it requires Win 95 levels, it's not fully Win 95 compliant and it runs on a Pentium-130. We like the original date on a 486-33—indeed, but it won't let you speed records.



HEROES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC

Reviewed: Dec '95, p. 367
Publisher: New World Computing

Genre: Type: Strategy
Price: Great graphics and sound, easy-to-learn interface, evasive gameplay, strong computer opponents, multiplicity or capability, lots of great stuff. What else do you need?

Does: Not as infinitely adaptable as Heroes Generics, and the game lacks the depth of Heroes or Magic. However, it could be a bit more informative.



PANZER GENERAL

Reviewed: Jan '96, p. 216
Publisher: GSI

Genre: Type: Strategy

Price: Great, accompanied with a unique and compelling campaign devoted not just to warfare, but to adventure. Excellent cross-linked maps, legends, and good AppleLink files are easy to learn, and will play until the panzers come home.

Does: Those requiring great historical insights from their wargames will find it lacking, but they'll love an ability they compare.

Other Articles: Strategy: Jan '95, p. 116

Reviews: Apr '96, p. 139
Strategy: Jan '96, p. 164



FLIGHT UNLIMITED

Reviewed: Sep '95, p. 130
Publisher: Looking Glass

Genre: Type: Simulation
Price: Incredible flight model enables you to perform nearly any maneuver real planes can do. High-resolution graphics make the graphics lush and virtual cockpit look almost real.

Does: Infinite horizon requires you will reach flying goals to lower resolutions and detail levels. Lacks multi-processor capability. What are the pros?

Other Articles: New Playings: Feb '96, p. 33



MAGIC CARPET

Reviewed: Feb '96, p. 122
Publisher: Electronic Arts/Bullseye

Genre: Type: Action

Price: A novel first-person shooter with real-time magic ability, strong AI, and a lot of fun. It's a good game.

Does: A game that will push your hardware to the limit, and then some.



MECHWARRIOR 2: 31ST CENTURY COMBAT

Reviewed: Oct '95, p. 202
Publisher: Activision

Genre: Type: Action

Price: Great gameplay, great graphics, and adherence to the original BattleTech universe make MW2 the top dog of Mech ball sims.

Does: Less than stellar AI and lack of landscape features (such as trees, water, and land) often reduce tactics to toe-to-toe slugs.

Other Articles: Shock Frontiers: Oct '95, p. 32

Strategy: Nov '95, p. 188



FRONT PAGE SPORTS FOOTBALL PRO '95

Reviewed: Feb '96, p. 135
Publisher: Sierra/Synergis

Genre: Type: Sports
Price: Great online multiplayer, more play options, and tactical plays aimed at improving what was already the best football game available.

Does: More leagues, and the AI has trouble with player trades.

Other Articles: New Playings: Jan '96, p. 26



HERETIC

Reviewed: Mar '96, p. 104
Publisher: of Software

Genre: Type: Action
Price: The action is there. The multiplayer play is there. The graphics are there and they mean there in a plot. This game—what more could you want?

Does: If you're totally hooked, you may see this as more of the same. Heretic also evolves occasionally on various systems.

Other Articles: Heretic: Clear Codes, Mar '96, p. 26



STEEL PANTHERS

Reviewed: Dec '95, p. 263
Publisher: SSI

Genre: Type: Strategy

Price: Perhaps the best sound and graphics yet seen in a wargame. Very realistic, with great depth, variety, and outstanding play.

Does: Some obscure formations, mediocre AI and scattered technical problems may an otherwise excellent game.



WING COMMANDER III

Reviewed: Feb '96, p. 106
Publisher: Origin

Genre: Type: Action

Price: A classic space combat game is reworked with a complete movie—and a new breed of gaming birds is born.

Does: Outfitting your computer for this game can be a challenge in itself.



NASCAR RACING

Reviewed: Feb '96, p. 145
Publisher: Polygram

Genre: Type: Simulation

Price: Jaw-dropping graphics on SWGA, impressive opponent AI, and groundbreaking physical modeling, all in one, the most comprehensive racing experience in gaming.

Does: Daily hardware demands for SWGA graphics and maximum detail. The victory celebration is nothing to cheer about.

Other Articles: Strategy: May '96, p. 126



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Advanced Civilization	Mar 95	142	NA	Avision Int'l	ST	SP	Best Pilot Fly to Old Flight Sims	Apr 95	129	NA	N/A	N/A	SI	CO
Advanced Tactical Fighters	Oct 95	76	NA	Clasmatex arts	SI	SP	Bonus 13	May 95	71	NA	Take 2 Interactive	AD	SR	
Aids On Drug	Dec 95	345	NA	HFS Saratoga dist	MG	CO	Bonus 13	Oct 95	284	NA	Take 2 Interactive	AD	SR	
Ali Hines Conductor	Mar 95	156	****1/2	Tamtek Interactive	ST	RE	Bonus 13	May 95	76	NA	Take 2 Interactive	AD	SR	
Ali Hines: Arcade Racing	Oct 95	146	***	Headlogic	AC	RE	Bored in Time	Jul 95	22	NA	Saatchy Woods	AD	BE	
Alien Tapes	Mar 95	65	N/A	SSI	RP	SR	Bored in Time	Nov 95	120	****	Saatchy Woods	AD	BE	
Alien Virus	Jul 95	78	**	Way Tech, Inc.	AD	RE	Bored in Time	Dec 95	256	NA	Saatchy Woods	AD	ST	
Allied General	Apr 95	62	NA	SSI	MG	FE	Born Cycle	Nov 95	93	NA	Philips	AD	MP	
Allied General	Aug 95	129	NA	SSI	MG	FE	Burn Cycle	Dec 95	270	***1/2	Philips	AD	RE	
Allied General	Oct 95	115	NA	SSI	MG	SP	Cancer 1	Oct 95	88	NA	Impressions	ST	SP	
Alone in the Dark II	Mar 95	22	NA	1-Motion	AD	SR	Cello Tales	Feb 95	24	NA	N/A Software	ST	RE	
Alone in the Dark III	Jan 95	82	**	1-Motion	AD	SR	Cello Tales: Enter of the End Eye	Nov 95	254	NA	N/A Software	ST	ST	
Alone in the Dark III	Apr 95	72	NA	1-Motion	AD	SR	Control Intelligence	Mar 95	172	***1/2	Ocean of America	ST	FE	
Alone in the Dark III	Oct 95	168	NA	1-Motion	AD	SR	Crash Control	Sep 95	33	NA	Philips	AC	MP	
Apocalypse	Oct 95	238	***	Interactive Magic	SI	RE	Crash Control	Oct 95	260	**	Philips	AC	RE	
Apache Helicopter	Oct 95	213	NA	N/A	SI	CO	Clay for Windows 4.0	Dec 95	388	NA	Mike Zee/Adam Smith	NA	FE	
Assorted Fall	Jun 95	39	N/A	HomeLogic	SI	ST	Clay for Windows 95	Oct 95	368	NA	Mike Zee	NA	FE	
Assorted Fall	Jan 95	194	***	HomeLogic	SI	FE	Chromaster 500 for Windows 95	Sep 95	112	NA	HomeLogic	ST	SP	
App View	Jan 95	264	N/A	DaigleSoft	AC	MP	Civilization	Oct 95	25	NA	Infocore	AD	SE	
Assassinity	Dec 95	43	NA	Biosoft/Ad Logic Factory	ST	SP	Civilization 2000	Dec 95	32	NA	Microgame	ST	OT	
Atlas 2600 Action Pack	Jul 95	108	NA	Activision	AC	FE	Clothes	Aug 95	108	***1/2	Spectrum HelixByte	AC	RE	
Atlas 2600 Action Pack 2	Sep 95	33	N/A	Activision	AC	MP	Cloudy Stratosphere of Xena	Aug 95	72	NA	N/A	N/A	SR	
Award Winning War Games	Jan 95	264	N/A	N/A	MG	MP	Colonelius	Jan 95	74	NA	VideoProse	ST	ST	
Bad Mojo	Nov 95	34	NA	Over Pictures	AD	RE	Command & Conquer	Mar 95	32	NA	Virgin	ST	SP	
Baseball for Windows 3.0	Nov 95	206	**1/2	Miller Associates	SP	RE	Command & Conquer	Dec 95	352	****	Virgin	NA	RE	
Battle Beast	Nov 95	138	***1/2	Job-Love	AC	RE	Commander Blood	Apr 95	94	***1/2	Microscope	AD	RE	
Battle Into 2200	Jan 95	222	***	Accolade	MG	RE	Confidential Mail	May 95	36	NA	Gothick	SI	SP	
Battleground: Armores	Aug 95	25	NA	Taloust	MG	RE	Conquest AD 1086	Feb 95	364	NA	Commines	MG	SP	
Battleground: Serbberg	Dec 95	34	NA	Taloust	MG	RE	Conquest of the New World	Oct 95	66	NA	Infocore	MG	SP	

Game Name	Issue	Page	Rating	Publisher	Event Article		Game Name	Issue	Page	Rating	Publisher	Event Article	
					Type	Type						Type	Type
Crashers Check	Feb 95	120	**1/2	Virgin	AC	RE	Fighter Dual	Nov 95	238	NA	Pulsion	S	SP
Crashers	Oct 95	130	NA	Virgin	AC	SP	Fighter Wing	Mar 95	134	**	Ment	S	RE
Crashers: No Reverse	Dec 95	330	***1/2	Virgin	AC	RE	First Encounter	Aug 95	194	**	Geonix	AC	RE
Crashers: No Reverse	Dec 95	330	NA	Virgin	AC	CE	Flash Traffic	Jan 95	256	NA	Tera Network	AD	MP
Crash's Last Comment	Sept 95	24	NA	HPS Simulations	WG	RE	Flight Deckboard 2	Jan 95	200	**	MicroProse	S	RE
Crash's Last Comment	Oct 95	242	***1/2	HPS Simulations	WG	RE	Flight Commander 2	Feb 95	27	NA	Avion Hill	WG	MP
CyberHead	Apr 95	26	NA	Interplay	AD	BT	Flight Commander 2	Mar 95	196	***1/2	Avion Hill	WG	RE
CyberHead	Feb 95	27	NA	Interplay	AC	MP	Flight Commander 2 - Mission Builder	Nov 95	172	**	Avion Hill	WG	RE
CyberHead	Mar 95	218	**	Interplay	AC	RE	Flight Sim War College	Jul 95	123	NA	NA	SI	CO
CyberMagix	Nov 95	350	NA	Virgin	AC	SP	Flight Sims vs. Reality	May 95	123	NA	NA	SI	CO
CyberSims	Jan 95	151	***	Accolade	AC	RE	Flight Simulator 5.1	Dec 95	329	NA	Microsoft	SI	RE
CyClimax	Apr 95	306	**1/2	SSI	AC	RE	Forecast '95	Mar 95	36	NA	NA	NA	RE
CyClimax (DOOM Supplement)	Apr 95	31	NA	Wizards	AD	MP	Forbes at Dr. Radicals	Jan 95	55	**	Ment	AC	RE
CyClimax	Apr 95	31	NA	Virgin	SI	MP	Fort Line	Apr 95	368	**1/2	Impressions	WG	RE
Cy-Day Operation Overhead	Jan 95	148	**1/2	Virgin	SI	RE	Full Throttle	Aug 95	80	***1/2	LucasArts	AD	RE
Dark Forces	Jan 95	212	NA	LucasArts	AC	RE	Fury!	Oct 95	152	NA	Microsoft	AC	SP
Dark Forces	Sept 95	216	NA	LucasArts	AC	RE	Fx Fighter	Jul 95	22	NA	GTE Interactive	AC	RE
Dark Forces	May 95	94	***	LucasArts	AC	RE	Fx Fighter	Sept 95	176	***	GTE Interactive	AC	RE
Dave's Patrol	Jan 95	200	***1/2	Empire	SI	RE	Fx Fighter Cheat Codes	Sept 95	236	NA	GTE Interactive	AC	RE
Death Gate	Feb 95	68	***1/2	Legend	AD	RE	Gabriel Knight II	Apr 95	21	NA	Sierra On-Line	AD	BT
Death Gate	Mar 95	74	NA	Legend	AD	SH	Gabriel Knight II	Nov 95	70	NA	Sierra On-Line	AD	SP
Death Gate	Jun 95	80	NA	Legend	AD	SH	Galactic Civilizations	Apr 95	84	NA	Adv. Idea Machines	SI	RE
Death Gate	Aug 95	72	NA	Legend	AD	SH	Games Close	Jan 95	294	NA	Fun 'N' Games	WA	MP
Death Gate	Feb 95	58	NA	Legend	AD	SH	GenSimon	Mar 95	25	NA	Spectrum HobbySite	SI	MP
Defender of the Engine	Apr 95	222	NA	LucasArts	AC	SP	GenSimon	Apr 95	178	***	Spectrum HobbySite	SI	RE
Descent	Mar 95	24	NA	Interplay	AC	MP	General Admission Baseball/Football	Jan 95	256	NA	MicroLead	SP	MP
Descent	Jun 95	104	***	Interplay	AC	RE	Golden Pre	Jan 95	118	***	Candy G & Green, Inc	AC	RE
Descent Level Editors	Oct 95	172	NA	Interplay	AC	CE	Golden Venture for Windows	Jul 95	804	NA	Steve Hestley	SI	MP
Diggers	Apr 95	215	**	Millemark	AC	RE	Gene Fisher	May 95	26	NA	Arcus	SI	MP
Doomworld	Jan 95	58	***1/2	Pygmyus	AD	RE	Great Naval Battles II	Jan 95	26	NA	SSI	WG	RE
Doomworld	Jul 95	64	NA	Pygmyus	AD	SP	Great Naval Battles Vol. II	Jan 95	858	***1/2	SSI	WG	RE
Doomworld	Aug 95	72	NA	Pygmyus	AD	SP	Guilty	Apr 95	25	NA	Dixie By Zoo	AD	RE
Doomworld	Jan 95	168	NA	Pygmyus	AD	SH	H.U.R.L.	Sept 95	249	NA	Millemark	AD	SS
Doomworld	Dec 95	244	NA	Pygmyus	AD	SH	Hall of Fame	Dec 95	493	NA	NA	NA	IT
Domovoi	Feb 95	157	***	BS Gold	WG	RE	Harbour of the Gods	Feb 95	176	***1/2	New World Computing	SI	RE
DOOM II	Jan 95	84	NA	of Software	AC	ST	Hardball 5	Nov 95	32	NA	Accolade	SP	RE
DOOM Configurations	Feb 95	234	NA	NA	NA	UH	Hard Evidence: Marilyn Monroe Files	Sept 95	162	*	Novell	AA	RE
DOOM Games Under Windows 95	Oct 95	122	NA	NA	NA	RE	Hardball 4	Mar 95	24	NA	Accolade	SP	MP
DOOM Tactics for Windows 95	Oct 95	285	NA	NA	NA	UH	Hardball 5	Dec 95	42	NA	Accolade	SP	MP
Dragon Lore	Feb 95	50	NA	Mindscape	AD	SP	Hardball IV	Apr 95	139	***1/2	Accolade	SP	RE
Dragon Lore	Apr 95	52	NA	Mindscape	AD	SP	Harpoon II Deluxe Multimedia	Oct 95	246	***1/2	Infocom	WG	RE
Dragon Lore	Oct 95	160	NA	Mindscape	AD	SP	Hell 'N' Fray	Mar 95	98	*	Take 2 Interactive	AD	RE
Dragon Lore	Jan 95	149	***	Mindscape	AD	SP	Heroes of Might and Magic	Oct 95	29	NA	New World	SI	RE
Duke Nukem 3D	Jul 95	86	NA	Apogee	AC	SP	Heroes	Oct 95	28	NA	Raven	AD	RE
Dungeon Master II	Oct 95	161	NA	Interplay	MP	SP	Heroes	Dec 95	380	NA	Raven	AD	CE
Dungeon Master	Dec 95	250	NA	Bulfinch	MP	RE	Hi Octane	Aug 95	30	NA	Electronic Arts	AC	MP
Dungeon Master II	Nov 95	160	NA	Interplay	MP	SH	Hi Octane	Sept 95	170	***1/2	Electronic Arts	AC	RE
Dust	Dec 95	284	*	Cyberlink	AD	RE	High Seas Trader	Jan 95	26	NA	Impressions	SI	RE
Ecolandia	Jan 95	251	NA	Pygmyus	AD	MP	High Seas Trader	May 95	154	***1/2	Impressions	SI	RE
Ecolandia	Feb 95	182	***	Pygmyus	AD	RE	Highway Hunter	Mar 95	178	NA	Salem Software	AC	SS
Elder Scrolls: Daggerfall	Jan 95	32	NA	Bethesda	MP	SP	Hitchhiking on the Information Highway	Jan 95	258	NA	Moza Valley	MP	NA
Empire II	Aug 95	142	NA	New World	WG	SP	Hokey M' Pod	May 95	80	**1/2	Virgin Interactive	AC	RE
Empire II	Dec 95	369	***	New World	WG	RE	Houses of Valor	Dec 95	34	NA	Monologage Sports	SI	RE
Empire II	Dec 95	345	NA	New World	WG	CO	In the 1st Degree	Nov 95	38	NA	Embroider	SI	MP
Entomorph	Dec 95	40	NA	SSI	AD	SP	In the 3rd Degree	Dec 95	254	***	Broadsword	AD	RE
Entomorph for Windows 95	Sept 95	130	NA	SSI	MP	SP	Incredible Machine 2	Apr 95	178	***1/2	SierraTP	SI	RE
ESPN Baseball	Feb 95	132	NA	Sony	SP	SP	InteCar Racing 2.0	Oct 95	138	NA	Playtex	SI	SP
ESPN Baseball Tonight	Apr 95	132	**1/2	Sony	SP	RE	Interna	Feb 95	27	NA	Ocean Software	AD	MP
ESPN National Hockey Night	Jul 95	23	NA	Sony	SP	RE	Interna	Mar 95	212	*	Ocean Software	AD	RE
Expert Chess	Jan 95	256	NA	Expert Software	SI	MP	Interactive Music Game	Jan 95	258	NA	Millemark	SI	MP
Explosion	Sept 95	22	NA	Interactive Magic	SI	RE	Invasion of the Mutant Space Bats	Mar 95	358	NA	Pho Software	AC	SS
Explosion	Dec 95	382	**	Interactive Magic	SI	RE	Iron Assault	Mar 95	23	NA	Virgin	AC	RE
Fade To Black	Aug 95	24	NA	Electronic Arts	AD	RE	Jagged Alliance	Apr 95	24	NA	Si-Tech	SI	RE
Fade To Black	Dec 95	208	***1/2	Electronic Arts	AD	RE	Jagged Alliance	Oct 95	252	NA	Si-Tech	SI	SI
Fantasy Real	Jan 95	258	NA	SSI	MP	MP	Jagged Alliance	Jul 95	148	***1/2	Si-Tech	SI	RE

Game Name	Issue	Page	Rating	Publisher	Game Article		Issue	Page	Rating	Publisher	Score Article		
					Type	Game Name					Type	Type	
Adventures 3	Dec 85	226	N/A	Micro Star	SI	SP	Nov 85	262	N/A	Polygon	AG	MF	
Adventures of the Drake	Jul 85	68	****	Deuss Entertainment	AD	FE	Nov 85	118	**	Polygon	AG	FE	
Aero	Jan 85	104	N/A	Black Island Soft Sys	SI	SS	Oct 85	89	N/A	N/A	N/A	FE	
John Wooden Football	Dec 85	324	N/A	Electronic Arts	SP	SP	Jan 85	228	N/A	Epac MegaGames	AG	SS	
Ashley Williams	Feb 85	34	N/A	Sony	AD	SP	Operation Laser: Path to Victory	Apr 85	168	*	Kos	WG	FE
Ashley Williams	Apr 85	64	**	Sony	AD	FE	Operation Laser: Space	Apr 85	182	N/A	Software Dynamics, Inc.	AG	SS
Assault: First Logic	Jan 85	64	***	SSI	AD	FE	Out of the Sun	Jan 85	269	N/A	Denmark	S	MF
Assault: First Logic	Jan 85	80	N/A	SSI	AD	SP	Over the Patch	Apr 85	44	N/A	Dig Time Software	SI	FE
Assault: First Logic	Jan 85	258	N/A	Sixxology/Weeds	AD	MP	Pacific War	Dec 85	345	N/A	SSI	WG	CD
Axel's Quest VI	Feb 85	64	****	Sears Ro-Lo	AD	FE	Parasol	May 85	178	N/A	Segmented Software	AG	SS
Baywatch: The Far Beaches	Aug 85	55	***	Intrepid	AD	FE	Parham in the Shadows	Nov 85	268	****	HPS Simul-Action	WG	FE
Baywatch	Dec 85	292	**1/2	Goldbox Enterprises	FP	FE	Parham in the Shadows	Dec 85	345	N/A	HPS Simul-Action	WG	CD
Baywatch: The Far Beaches	Mar 85	25	N/A	MicroPro	AD	MP	Paperport: Paperport	May 85	23	N/A	MicroWorld	AD	MP
Baywatch 3: Malcolm's Revenge	Jan 85	223	N/A	MicroWorld Station	AD	SP	Phallos	Dec 85	432	N/A	N/A	NA	DT
Baywatch 3: Malcolm's Revenge	Apr 85	32	N/A	MicroWorld Station	AD	SH	PG Pool	Apr 85	28	N/A	N/A	NA	DT
Baywatch 3: Malcolm's Revenge	Jan 85	80	N/A	MicroWorld Station	AD	SP	PGA Tour Golf 486	Jan 85	362	****1/2	Electronic Arts	SP	FE
Beasts of Lore	Apr 85	32	N/A	Virgin/Weedwood	FP	SH	Phantasmagora	Oct 85	34	N/A	Sears Ro-Lo	AD	MP
Beasts of Lore	Jan 85	58	N/A	Virgin/Weedwood	FP	SH	Phantasmagora	Nov 85	62	****	Sears Ro-Lo	AD	FE
Beasts of Lore	Aug 85	72	N/A	Virgin/Weedwood	FP	SH	Phantasmagora	Apr 85	28	N/A	Sears Ro-Lo	AD	DC
Beasts of Lore	Oct 85	108	N/A	Virgin/Weedwood	FP	SH	Pictures Perfect Golf	Jan 85	383	**1/2	3rd Mill	SP	FE
Beasts of Lore	Dec 85	244	N/A	Virgin/Weedwood	FP	SH	Pipe Dream	May 85	128	N/A	Atari	AG	SS
Benny Hill	Feb 85	30	N/A	N/A	N/A	DT	Planet The Moya's Adventure	Sep 85	318	N/A	Activision	AG	SP
Best Quarterly	Nov 85	176	**	Sears Ro-Lo	AG	FE	Planet The Moya's Adventure	Nov 85	350	****	Activision	AG	FE
Best Quarterly	Feb 85	182	***	MicroPro	VC	FE	Pelican The Moya's Adventure	Nov 85	354	N/A	Activision	AG	ST
Bonnie's Chronicle	Feb 85	26	N/A	Polygon	SI	MP	Pun Team	Jul 85	25	N/A	MicroPro	SE	MP
Bonnie's Chronicle	Nov 85	126	**	Danski	MP	FE	Pun Team	Jul 85	168	*	MicroPro	SI	FE
Bonnie's Chronicle	Apr 85	24	N/A	N/A	N/A	FE	Police Quest: SWAT 2	Apr 85	21	N/A	Sears Ro-Lo	AD	DC
Bonnie's Chronicle	Jan 85	56	N/A	Impressions	VG	ST	Punch-Out	Aug 85	31	N/A	Impressions	ST	MP
Book Eden	Jan 85	28	N/A	Virgin	AD	MP	Punch-Out	Oct 85	236	**	Impressions	ST	FE
Book Eden	Jul 85	50	N/A	Virgin	AD	SP	Pressure Drop	Nov 85	270	**1/2	Starbit	AG	FE
Bookworm: The Prince	Jul 85	175	****	MicroPro	SI	FE	Prize Rage	Nov 85	135	****	Time Warner	AG	FE
Bookworm: The Prince	Dec 85	212	****1/2	Bullfinch	AG	FE	Prisoner of Ice	Dec 85	237	N/A	Emtron	AD	SH
Bookworm: The Prince	Jan 85	30	N/A	MicroPro	MP	SP	Reckless: The Street Prophet	Jan 85	75	N/A	SSI	FP	SP
Bookworm: The Prince	Apr 85	184	N/A	Bloom	SI	SS	Reel Assault II	Oct 85	190	N/A	LucasArts	AG	MP
Bookworm: The Prince	May 85	112	****	Buick Software	AG	FE	Reel FX	Sep 85	180	***	Compton's	AD	FE
Bookworm: The Prince	Dec 85	374	**	A-Minar	SI	FE	Relentless	Jan 85	142	****	Electronic Arts	AD	FE
Bookworm: The Prince	Sep 85	162	**	Novell	AD	FE	Reignite	Apr 85	30	N/A	SSI	AG	MP
Bookworm: The Prince	Oct 85	224	****1/2	Electronic Arts	S	FE	Reignite: Battle for Jacob's Star	May 85	90	***	SSI	SI	FE
Bookworm: The Prince	Dec 85	35	N/A	Brown Prices	AD	FE	Rebellion	Apr 85	130	**	US Gold	AG	FE
Bookworm: The Prince	Dec 85	32	N/A	Seneca	SI	FE	Return to Atlantis	Apr 85	22	N/A	Tek Lead	SP	FE
Bookworm: The Prince	Jan 85	132	N/A	MicroPro	SP	FE	Return to Zork	Jan 85	80	N/A	Activision	AD	SH
Bookworm: The Prince	Apr 85	36	N/A	New World	SI	SP	Return to Zork	Aug 85	72	N/A	Activision	AD	SH
Bookworm: The Prince	Nov 85	38	N/A	Capecom	AG	MP	Return to Zork	Dec 85	244	N/A	Activision	AD	SH
Bookworm: The Prince	Feb 85	57	N/A	SSI	FP	SP	Roman	Feb 85	188	**	Mud	ST	FE
Bookworm: The Prince	Apr 85	38	N/A	SSI	FP	SH	Robo of the Robots	Jan 85	138	**	Time Warner	AG	FE
Bookworm: The Prince	Mar 85	183	**	MicroPro	WG	FE	Robo of the Robots	May 85	38	****1/2	Apogee	AG	FE
Bookworm: The Prince	Jan 85	132	**1/2	Sierra/Dynamix	AG	FE	Robo of the Robots	Jul 85	31	N/A	FWB Entertainment	WG	MP
Bookworm: The Prince	Feb 85	112	***	Sears Ro-Lo	AG	FE	Robo of the Robots	Nov 85	196	****	FWB Entertainment	WG	FE
Bookworm: The Prince	Jan 85	182	***	Microsoft	SP	FE	Robot City	Nov 85	38	N/A	Byron Press	AD	MP
Bookworm: The Prince	Oct 85	156	**1/2	TBA	FP	FE	Robot City	Dec 85	278	**	Byron Press	AD	FE
Bookworm: The Prince	Dec 85	43	N/A	GT Interactive	AG	SP	Robot City Cup 1985	Nov 85	212	***	Electronic Arts	SP	FE
Bookworm: The Prince	Apr 85	30	N/A	Accolade	AG	MP	Savage Warriors	Sep 85	32	N/A	MicroPro	AG	MP
Bookworm: The Prince	May 85	105	****	Accolade	AG	FE	Savage Warriors	Oct 85	196	****	MicroPro	AG	FE
Bookworm: The Prince	Sep 85	22	N/A	Accolade	AG	FE	Scotchy Popen's Steam City	Mar 85	25	N/A	Digital Pictures	SP	MP
Bookworm: The Prince	Sep 85	226	**1/2	New World	SI	FE	Sea Wolf	Jan 85	64	N/A	SSI	SI	ST
Bookworm: The Prince	Jan 85	248	N/A	N/A	NR	CD	Sealed the Single Game	Dec 85	434	N/A	N/A	NA	CD
Bookworm: The Prince	Jan 85	200	N/A	Turnak Interactive	SI	MP	Savage Warriors	Jan 85	260	N/A	Wuque Entertainment	AG	MP
Bookworm: The Prince	Nov 85	164	****	Electronic Arts	AG	FE	Shanghai: Sport Moments	Sep 85	219	**1/2	Activision	ST	FE
Bookworm: The Prince	Sep 85	32	N/A	Kos	FP	FE	Shawhan	Nov 85	125	N/A	Legend	AD	SP
Bookworm: The Prince	Oct 85	176	**	Kos	FP	FE	Silent Hunter	Jul 85	128	N/A	SSI	SI	SP
Bookworm: The Prince	Oct 85	204	N/A	EA Sports	SP	SP	Silent Hunter	Nov 85	142	**	Emtron	AD	FE
Bookworm: The Prince	Feb 85	74	**1/2	Electronic Arts	AD	FE	Simple	Dec 85	338	****	Mud	ST	FE
Bookworm: The Prince	Feb 85	38	N/A	Electronic Arts	AD	SH	SimRunner	Apr 85	174	****1/2	Mud	SI	FE
Bookworm: The Prince	Apr 85	32	N/A	Electronic Arts	AD	SH	Six Feet Under	May 85	170	N/A	EA/G Software	SI	SS
Bookworm: The Prince	Aug 85	72	N/A	Electronic Arts	AD	SH	Supersnow 3000	Apr 85	24	N/A	US Gold	AG	FE

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					Type	Type					Type	Type	
Sigourney SGO	Jul 95	30	NA	US Gold	AC	MP	Star Trek: The Motion Picture	Nov 95	238	****	Comq-3 Sports	SP	RE
Star Trek: The Motion Picture	Aug 95	88	***1/2	US Gold	AC	RE	Tony La Russa III	Aug 95	130	****	Electronic Arts	SP	RE
Space Backo	Oct 95	30	NA	Hasbro/Ames	ST	RE	Top Gun	Aug 95	134	NA	Spectrum Holdings	SI	OP
Space Quest 6	Jun 95	25	NA	Serra De-Line	AD	RE	Tomcat	Nov 95	229	NA	Defiant Interactive	SI	OP
Space Quest 5	Oct 95	170	***	Serra De-Line	AD	RE	Tomb Raider	May 95	34	NA	Psygnosis	ST	RE
StarMaster for Windows	Nov 95	226	SR	Acad Entertainment	SP	RE	Tony Hawk	Dec 95	240	NA	EA GAMES	SI	OP
Star Trek: The Motion Picture	Apr 95	30	NA	Avion Hill	WG	MP	Transport System	Feb 95	25	NA	NA	ST	MP
Star Trek: The Motion Picture	May 95	148	****	Avion Hill	WG	RE	Transport System	Mar 95	146	****	MicroProse	ST	RE
Star Trek: The Motion Picture	Oct 95	262	NA	Avion Hill	WG	ST	Taj Tynt	Nov 95	386	NA	West	AC	SP
Star Trek: The Motion Picture	Jan 95	52	NA	Tele. Z/Gamesch	SI	ST	U.S. Army Fighters	Feb 95	154	****1/2	Electronic Arts	SI	RE
Star Trek: The Motion Picture	Jan 95	138	****	Serra & Schuster	GT	RE	Ultima 6: The False Prophet	Apr 95	30	NA	Origin	FP	SH
Star Trek: The Motion Picture	Nov 95	358	****	Serra & Schuster	GT	RE	Ultima 6: The False Prophet	Jun 95	80	NA	Origin	FP	SH
Star Trek: TNG: A Final Unity	Sep 95	338	****	Spectrum Holdings	AD	RE	Ultima 6: The False Prophet	Dec 95	244	NA	Origin	FP	SH
Star Trek: TNG: A Final Unity	Sep 95	338	NA	Spectrum Holdings	AD	SH	Ultima 6: The False Prophet 2	Dec 95	251	NA	Origin	FP	SH
Star Trek: TNG: A Final Unity	Oct 95	358	NA	Spectrum Holdings	AD	SH	Ultima 6: The False Prophet	Jan 95	58	NA	Origin	FP	SH
Star Trek: TNG: A Final Unity	Dec 95	254	NA	Spectrum Holdings	AD	SH	Ultima 6: The False Prophet	Apr 95	32	NA	Origin	FP	SH
Steel Panthers	Apr 95	54	NA	SSI	WG	RE	Ultima 6: The False Prophet	Jun 95	80	NA	Origin	FP	SH
Steel Panthers	Sep 95	201	NA	SSI	WG	CO	Ultima 6: The False Prophet	Aug 95	72	NA	Origin	FP	SH
Steel Panthers	Sep 95	206	NA	SSI	WG	SP	Ultima 6: The False Prophet	Oct 95	158	NA	Origin	FP	SH
Stone Prophet	Apr 95	72	NA	SSI	RP	SH	Ultima 6: The False Prophet	Oct 95	168	NA	Origin	FP	SH
Stone Prophet	Oct 95	254	NA	SSI	RP	SH	Ultima 6: The False Prophet	Oct 95	24	NA	MicroProse	AD	FE
Stone Prophet	Dec 95	164	NA	SSI	RP	SH	Ultima 6: The False Prophet	Jan 95	232	***	Access Software	AD	FE
Stonewall	Oct 95	28	NA	Interplay	RP	RE	Ultima 6: The False Prophet	Aug 95	178	NA	NA	NA	RE
Street Traffic	Feb 95	203	NA	Nemesis	SI	SP	Ultima 6: The False Prophet	Mar 95	152	*	Accolade	SP	FE
Street Traffic	Sep 95	101	NA	SSI/Mindscape	SI	SP	Ultima 6: The False Prophet	Jan 95	108	**	Mindscape	SI	FE
Submarine Simulations	Sep 95	287	NA	NA	SI	CO	Ultima 6: The False Prophet	Jan 95	262	NA	Insular Multimedia	ST	MP
Super Heroes	Dec 95	32	NA	Simon	SI	OT	Ultima 6: The False Prophet	Mar 95	22	NA	Interplay	SP	RE
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Superman II	Jul 95	58	***1/2	GT Interactive	AC	RE	Ultima 6: The False Prophet	Jun 95	262	NA	Virtual Visions, Inc.	SI	MP
T-Mat	Nov 95	31	NA	Alex	AC	RE	Ultima 6: The False Prophet	Feb 95	50	**	Argonaut Studios	AD	FE
Tank Commander	Feb 95	25	NA	Danmark	AC	RE	Ultima 6: The False Prophet	Mar 95	58	**	Interplay	AD	FE
Tank Commander	Jul 95	102	***1/2	Danmark	AC	RE	Ultima 6: The False Prophet	Jan 95	243	NA	Argonaut	AC	SS
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The Chase Engine	Sep 95	169	*	Worshofsky	AC	RE	Ultima 6: The False Prophet	Jul 95	137	NA	NA	WG	CO
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The Perfect General 2	Jul 95	30	NA	OSP	WG	MP	Ultima 6: The False Prophet	Apr 95	142	****1/2	Origin	SI	RE
The Perfect General 2	Aug 95	144	***	OSP	WG	RE	Ultima 6: The False Prophet	Dec 95	303	***1/2	Capstone	AC	RE
The Perfect General 2	Sep 95	230	NA	OSP	WG	ST	Ultima 6: The False Prophet	Nov 95	35	NA	Capstone	AC	MP
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The Pure Warzone	Jul 95	160	**	OSP	WG	MP	Ultima 6: The False Prophet	Aug 95	31	NA	More Studies	SP	MP
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Thunderzone	Nov 95	144	NA	SSI	RP	MP	Ultima 6: The False Prophet	Jul 95	142	****	MicroProse	ST	RE
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Web Sites For Gaming Goodies

Game Cheats, Utilities And Demos Are Just A Click Away

by Jeff James

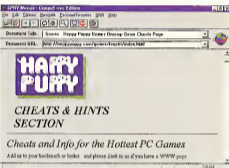
Over the past few months I've been getting a healthy number of e-mail messages from *CGW* readers imploring me to provide information on how to find game cheat codes, utilities and tips on the Internet. Although CompuServe, America Online and Genie offer robust libraries of game cheats and hacks, they don't do you much good if all you have is Internet access. Bowing to popular demand, I've decided to focus this month's "Gamer's Edge" column on Internet hot spots for game cheats and utilities.

LEARN THE WAYS OF THE WEB

If you have a Web browser like Mosaic, Netscape or Netcruiser, you can simply point and click your way to gaming fulfillment. Arguably the most fully-featured

game oriented spot on the web is Games Domain (<http://www.gamesdomain.co.uk/>), which is positively bursting with on-line content. Maintained by Dave Stanworth of the U.K., the Games Domain is a stacked library of game FAQs, demos, cheats, reviews and utilities. And if what you seek isn't available on the Games Domain, you'll almost surely find a link to someplace that does.

Another gaming web site of note is the

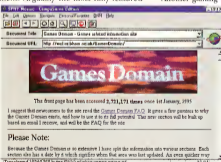


HERE, FIDO If your tail is dragging, Happy Puppy's cheat site might put the bounce back in your step.

Happy Puppy Games Onramp (<http://happy-puppy.com/games/link/index.html>), maintained by Sandra Woodruff and Jennifer Reitz. Although not as link-laden as Games Domain, this site is heavy on game demos, with dozens available for downloading. The cheats and tips area ([\[puppy.com/games/faqch/index.html\]\(http://happy-puppy.com/games/faqch/index.html\)\) does provide a good supply of game hints and tips, however, and the rest of the site features reviews of PC, Genesis and SNES games, game chat areas and other goodies. If you can't find what you're looking for, a free Lycos search engine is provided to point you in the right direction.](http://happy-</p>
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Another great site for downloading shareware and demos is Pacific Hi-Tech's Game Head Page (www.pht.com/gamehead/), busting thousands of programs available for download and lots more.

It may not have much in the way of cheat files and utilities, but Doom guru Hank Leukart's Web page (<http://www.primenet.com/~hleukart/>) is well worth a look. It offers a lively combination of links, tips, advice, game reviews and late-breaking news. In some cases, I've seen Hank print info on new game releases earlier than many printed gaming mags.



THE GAMES THAT REIGN ... are often in Games Domain. Dave Stanworth's Web site offers a wealth of game FAQs, demos, cheats, reviews and utilities.

As of this writing, Hank's site is currently under heavy construction, so don't be surprised if you're greeted with an "experiencing technical difficulties" message.

Computer Gaming World's own bus stop on the information superhighway is also chock full of fun (<http://www.zdnet.com/~gaming/>). You can head into the "Gamer's Edge" area and download



WIDE WORLD OF GAMING If 1,000 page issues aren't enough, you can check out even more of CGW on the Web.

the latest game cheats and tips, find a full on-line web directory of game manufacturers and vendors, and partake in some enjoyable debates in the discussion forums. You can also browse through the CGW article archives here, examining game reviews and strategy articles from issues past.

WHEN ALL ELSE FAILS, FTP IT!

If you don't happen to have a Web browser or access to the Web, all is not lost; as long as you have command line interface access to the Internet, you can check out the following popular FTP sites, which feature loads of game cheats, hints and tips. One of the best of these is the AvatarX FTP site (<ftp://ftp.net.com.com/pub/av/avatarx/>), which boasts dozens of shareware game cheats, trainers and other useful utilities. This site is busy, so you may have to be tenacious and try repeatedly to get in. Another busy but useful location for game cheats is the Romulus site (<ftp://ftp.uwp.edu/pub/msdos/romulus/>). Like Avatar, your best bet is to access this location during the weekend. Last and certainly not least, Macintosh gamers can check out one of the best on-line locations for Mac-specific cheats and utilities, located at the University of

Cheat of the Month Club

MechWarrior 2 Cheat Codes V1.1

Due to some email editing, the MechWarrior 2 cheat codes listed in the November Gamer's Edge (p. 376) were defective. We left out an important note about using the ALT, SHIFT and CTRL keys while typing in the code word. Also, under the section "Recruiting Hidden Units", the callsign listed in item #3—ENZO—should have read ENZO. We sentenced the freebirth cadet responsible for these errors to a Trial of Grievance against a BattleMaster, which shot his legs and arms off in short order, before stomping him to death. Now that's justice.

NOTE: To activate any of the codes listed, hold down the ALT, SHIFT and CTRL keys while typing in the code word.

BLOBB	Toggles invulnerability on/off
CHA	Toggles unlimited ammunition on/off
COLDNISER	Toggles heat tracking on/off
DEI	Prints the letters "E E I F" at the top of the screen
ODIGS	Displays info on and pictures of the MW2 programmers
ENOLAGAY	Onps the bomb; makes every enemy on the battlefield
FU*K	Prints "Freebirth vulgarity will not be tolerated!"
HANGAROUND	Allows you to linger on the battlefield after a mission has been completed
ICATHACKIT	Ends the current mission
IDKFA	Prints "This ain't Doom, Blub" then ends current mission
MEEPMEEP	Enables time compression key
MICHELIN	Displays the bounding spheres on Mechs and Mech units
NIGHTYMOUSE	Toggles infinite jumpjet juice on/off
SH*T	Prints "Freebirth vulgarity will not be tolerated!"
TINKERBELL	Provides a floating external camera
TLOFRONT	Switches the rear camera view to front view
UNMEEPMEEP	Disables time compression key
XRAY	Similar to enhanced imaging, but you can see through buildings and mountains
ZMAX	Enables time expansion

Recruiting Hidden Units

In MechWarrior 2, you can use three undocumented units by following this procedure:

1. Select Trials of Grievance from the main menu.
2. Select the star configuration option (the five-pointed star) for the Mechs in your group.
3. In the configuration screen, erase your current call sign and replace it with the word ENZO.
4. Return to the Mech lab, and you'll be able to examine two new Mechs and a suit of combat armor worn by clan soldiers (the Tarantula, Battle Master and the Elemental combat armor). The Elemental and the Tarantula can both be used in combat. Using the BattleMaster in combat will cause a program error, but this problem can be remedied by using Louis C. Hendricks' Battle Master utility (BTLMSTR.ZIP, described above) to patch the MW2 program files.

Michigan (<ftp://mac.archive.umich.edu/game/>).

Jeff James, CGW columnist and Associate Editor of *The Electronic Roundhouse*, is available on CompuServe at 74774.1635 and through the Internet at 74774.1635@compuserve.com.

ZDNet

To locate these files on-line, tune in to the CGW headquarters on ZiffNet. Files featured here can be downloaded from ZiffNet on CompuServe. On CompuServe, go to Computer Gaming World's own forum (GO GAMEWORLD), and search in the Gamer's Edge file library. On the Internet, visit the CGW web page (<http://www.zdnet.com/~gaming/>).

Simtelligence

A Glimpse Into The Minds Of HEXEN'S Monsters And MECHWARRIOR'S Mettle

by Paul C. Schuytema

EARLY ONE MORNING IN 1956, THE BODY OF MATHEMATICIAN ALAN MATHISON TURING WAS FOUND, RIDDLED WITH POISON. It is still unclear if Turing took his own life deliberately or accidentally ingested the substance that killed him. But in addition to this mystery, one of the first "computer scientists" left behind a seminal concept in artificial intelligence: the Turing Test.

FLESH AND BLOOD OR CHIPS AND BITS?

The Turing Test is a theoretical test to prove the existence of a "strong AI" entity. Strong AI refers to a piece of computer software which actually "thinks," which can process seemingly logical thoughts. The Turing Test is quite simple, really. You step into a small room which contains a computer terminal.

With this terminal, you can chat with the person in the other room—you can't see them or hear them, you can only communicate by typing (sound familiar?).

If you are unable to tell whether the person on the other end of the chat connection is a flesh and blood human or a computer, running a strong AI program, the software will pass the Turing Test.

Many researchers feel that strong AI is a theoretical concept only; that it is impossible to actually create a piece of software that processes information in any truly intelligent manner. The term "weak AI" applies to programs that may seem to think or simulate complex actions in a logical manner, but really don't seem to be as smart as a human. Expert systems, fuzzy logic and game AI are all examples of weak AI.

glance left then right. A mysterious flame flickers in a cage. You step up to investigate, and suddenly hear the tell-tale scraping sound of a door opening. A two-headed monster lumbers into the room, making a bee-line for you, growling with blood-lust, club raised high as it descends for the kill...

HEXEN, Raven software's latest release utilizing id's DOOM engine, allows us to venture into the gothic world of fantasy as a fighter, magician or cleric. Yet it isn't our persona that makes our adrenaline pump, but it is the slaving monsters we encounter. In the dark and flickering lights of the dungeon levels, we feel as if we have truly been beset upon by the legions of darkness.

On one hand, HEXEN is a technological tour-de-force, stretching the DOOM engine just about as far as it will go. On the other hand, it is a testament to the hard-

ness of the most basic of AI concepts. In no way are the monsters in HEXEN intelligent—yet they provide the player with the all-important illusion that they are real creatures, seemingly aware of the player's actions and efforts.

At the heart of HEXEN's monster AI is a simple "chase algorithm." An algorithm is a set of rules or directions that define some sort of activity, from calculating the



BEHIND DOOR NUMBER 1... Step closer to this caged pyro and you'll set off a trigger which will not only let a handful of beasts loose, but they'll come at you in full attack mode.

When we consider the computer opponents in a computer game, we are less concerned with their actual decision-making paths, or even whether they're strong or weak AI entities—we just want them to seem like real opponents and offer up some serious challenge.

HEXEN'S BRAINS

You walk into a dark room and cast a

area of a triangle to describing the way a simulated creature will act within a game. In *HEXEN*, the heart of the monster AI is a set of rules to instruct the various beasts to chase down the player, or more pre-

“We added the (invulnerable) dormant state to keep players from running around and destroying all of the monsters on a level first—they can’t get at dormant monsters until we want them to.”

—Michael Raymond-Judy,

HEXEN Game Design Manager

cisely, to get near enough to the player so that the monster may attack.

Programming monsters to chase players is a relatively simple algorithm. Essentially, the world of *HEXEN* cycles many times a second—in each cycle, dozens of things are calculated and resolved, such as input from the player, the cycle of an animated texture and the behavior of a monster, just to name a few. To pursue a player, the code that controls a particular monster calculates the location of the player in relation to the monster, and the monster is then instructed to move along the “crow’s path” towards the player. There really isn’t any sophisticated leading or predicting the player’s possible moves—it is a simple “move closer” algorithm.

A FINITE STATE OF AFFAIRS

While many of the earlier games (such as *BERSERKER*) relied solely on this “move closer” approach, *HEXEN* blends the simple with the advanced. By using a “Finite State Machine” (FSM) approach, the *HEXEN* AI can achieve much more functional sophistication. A Finite State Machine is a bundle of AI algorithms which are divided into various states—each state has its own rules, and there are also cer-

tain rules to switch from one state to another.

Think of some of the states in your own life, such as sleeping, exercising, driving and working. Each state has its own rules and behaviors—we generally don’t scream out in ecstasy at work, nor do we snore when we exercise. Behavior is usually a function of the state we’re in.

In *HEXEN*, there are several main monster states: dormant, ambush, normal, attacking and pain. The ambush state has been around since *DOOM*, and we all know it well—basically the “frozen Imp” state which allows us to creep up right behind an Imp and blow it to bits with a shotgun. The dormant and ambush states are, as far as behaviors are concerned, identical—essentially “do nothing.” What is different is the triggers that move the creatures out of these states. In ambush state, a monster is frozen, and will only spring to life if attacked or if you cross the monster’s line of sight. You can shoot your weapon, attack another monster, run around like a nut, and as long as you don’t violate those two rules, the monster will remain in the ambush state.

The dormant state, which is new to *HEXEN*, is like ambush—a sit and wait state—only a program trigger will awaken the monster. You can’t attack (the monster is invulnerable in dormant state) and you can’t disturb the line of sight, but if

you trip the program trigger, such as open a door or cross an invisible trigger region on the floor, then the monsters will spring to life.

“We added the dormant state,” says Michael Raymond-Judy, *HEXEN*’s game design manager, “to basically keep players from running around and destroying all of the monsters on a level first—they can’t get at dormant monsters until we want them to.”

“About 50 percent of the monsters begin the game in normal state,” he adds. “They wander around in a little circle waiting for something to happen.”

Monsters in normal state are the most aware of their environment. They will continue in their holding pattern until you cross their line of sight, you attack them, or they hear some activity. That can be the sound of an attack, or even the grunt you make when you jump down into a room.

Once you are detected, the monsters enter the attack state. This general state provides basic rules for chasing down the player, searching for doors, avoiding walls and all of the other “universal” monster personality traits. (For a graphic example of this, enter the map mode and type the map cheat twice, MAPSCO. You’ll see all of the monsters converging on you like sharks smelling blood.)

Beyond that, each type of monster has



FIREFLY This Arit will attempt to keep its distance from you as it prepares to burp up a fireball. Rush in close to force it into a melee attack (but watch out for that devilish lava).

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a unique "script" of actions while attacking the player. Afrits, for example, will immediately start shooting at the player, but will also try to move closer to or farther away from the player to achieve the optimal distance for their projectile attacks. Stalkers will attack, then disappear under the water. When submerged, they are invulnerable. The large sub-boss, the Dragon, has a preferred "flight path" and will stick to its path and not chase the player (simulating the dragon protecting its lair).

NO PAIN, NO GAIN

The pain state is one of the most interesting in HEXEN. If a monster takes a certain amount of damage within a given time span, it will fall into the pain state, which essentially immobilizes the creature. With a properly-timed attack, you can actually freeze a monster and simply blast away at it until it dies, without the threat of retaliation. Falter for an instant, though, and the creature will snap back into attack state and you're back in hot

water again.

The one spin on the pain state is the centaur, a monster which defies this state. When the pain state has been triggered, the centaur will simply raise and hide behind its shield, becoming invulnerable. When you see this happen, your attacks are worthless—pause for a moment until the centaur lowers its shield, and then blast away again.

Says Raven's Raymond-Judy, "When we started out, HEXEN was simply going to be HERETIC 2, but as we got into the project, we knew it was going to be a completely new game. It was like a snowball rolling down a hill, getting bigger and bigger—I think it got as big as it could get."

THE MIND OF A MECH

While HEXEN serves up an interesting blend of pure chase and Finite State Machine AI, that approach doesn't work very well when you're attempting to simulate a thinking human opponent in a "realistic" sim environment.

In Activision's MECHWARRIOR 2 (MW

2), the AI opponents are intended to appear as highly trained, highly skilled professional combatants. To simulate that, a different approach is needed. Instead of a Finite State Machine, we have an AI system which is goal-based. An AI pilot doesn't really live in a state, but rather seeks to execute a goal. You can think of these goals as states, if you like, since the flow of a mission can trigger certain events that

"Our AI pilots are far more savvy than a human would ever be—they could kill you in an instant if we didn't reign them in."

—John Spinale, Director of

MECHWARRIOR 2

MechWarrior 2 Expansion Pack AI Mission Table

ID	Action	Type	Target	Activation	Time	Priority	Critical	Audio	Text
0	Begin	Visible	seanstar3	(Initial)	"1"	None	Mandatory	None	"Drop Site Omega"
Explanation: Start at startpoint seanstar3. "Drop Site Omega"									
1	Destroy	Hidden	userstar	(\$ userstar 7)	"-1 0 0"	None	Optional	None	"Destroy userstar"
Explanation: Destroy user's Mech upon user's breaking of the bailchall (\$ userstar 7)									
2	Destroy	Hidden	seanstar3	(F userstar 7)	"-1 0 1"	None	Optional	None	"Destroy star 3"
Explanation: Destroy third Ghost Bear group upon Jaguar's breaking the bailchall (F userstar 7)									
3	Destroy	Hidden	seanstar2	(C 2)	"-1 0 0"	None	Optional	None	"Destroy star 2"
Explanation: Destroy 2nd Ghost Bear group after 3rd Ghost Bear group is destroyed (C 2)									
4	Destroy	Hidden	seanstar1	(C 3)	"-1 0 0"	None	Optional	None	"Destroy star 1"
Explanation: Destroy 1st group after 2nd group is destroyed (C 3)									
5	Destroy	Hidden	userstar	(C 4)	"-1 0 0"	None	Optional	None	"Destroy userstar"
Explanation: Destroy user's group after 1st Ghost Bear group has been destroyed (C 4)									
6	Shutdown	Hidden	seanstar3	(C 0)	"-1 0 0"	None	Optional	None	"Shutdown at start"
Explanation: Shutdown at start point when no other objectives are active (C 0)									

This is an example of Activision's proprietary scripting language which allows designers to set up the goals for a particular mission. This AI mission table, coming to us courtesy of game designer Chad Findley, describes the overarching mission goals for enemy star 3 in mission SEAN in Ghost Bear's Legacy, the new expansion pack for MechWarrior 2. The goals will be activated depending on what happens during the mission flow - for example, this star of mechs will seek out and attack the player's star once the 1st Ghost Bear group has been destroyed.



NOW TWIST AT THE WAIST This Stormcrow is utilizing torso rotation to get a better bead on you—definitely not the sign of a rookie pilot.

will switch an AI pilot from one goal to another (from a sentry goal to a defend base goal, for example). The chief difference between a state and a goal is that goals tend to be more fluid, more scripted and more complex.

Says MW 2 Director John Spinale, "When you dive into NETMACH, with eight players going at it, you can really get a sense of how good the AI in MechWarrior actually is. You can tell that our AI pilots in the missions are often a lot better mech pilots than most humans out there. In fact, our AI pilots are far more savvy than a human would ever be—they could kill you in an instant if we didn't reign them in."

In MechWarrior 2, the AI exists at two discrete levels: at the mission level and at the pilot level. Activision's AI programmers utilized a complex, proprietary scripting language to craft the actions and behavior algorithms of the individual pilots. Then, the mission designers would craft the goals for the individual pilots, as well as the triggers to get them to change goals for each mission.

"Looking at the individual opponents," said Spinale, "they obviously have to play as if they are intelligent entities, who also use certain strategies ... to attack you in an

interesting manner. To do that, we added a lot of unpredictability to what they do—like any human."

HOW THE ROOKIE CRUMBLES

The computer-controlled pilots span the spectrum from rookies to seasoned aces. There are six levels of piloting skill. A rookie is a true neophyte, never employing torso rotation or jump jets, and unable to take tactical advantage of the terrain.

"If you're behind a rookie," said Spinale, "you can probably just wait on him until he falls apart, whereas if you're behind an ace, the guy will jump jet over you and land behind you, guns blazing."

An ace also knows that if he's locked in a "Circle of Death" with you, he must stay until the bitter end, because if he breaks from the circle, he knows full well that you'll tag him from behind. The ace pilots are also very adept at torso-twists, variable speed maneuvers and using jets to make very tight turns.

While MW 2 doesn't tell you the skill level of the pilot directly, careful observation of their maneuvering techniques can easily let you know if you've got a rookie on your hands. When you do, go in close and tight and get on his tail—it should be

an easy kill.

The AI pilots process a whole myriad of changing variables. In HFXEN, the monsters simply need to know where you are—if they're in attack mode, then that's all the feedback they need. In MechWarrior 2, the AI must provide the illusion of being a real consultant, so the AI pilot is always aware of your distance, heading, relative angle and the type of mech that you're in. He also takes into account his own mech, the amount of ammo remaining and how badly he's hurt. All of this input streams constantly into the behavior algorithms, allowing the computer pilot to then determine the next appropriate move, based on the situational variable, pilot skill and the overriding mission goals.

TOO MANY BITS

This "data overload" can lead to some interesting situations. In Dynamix's ACES OVER EUROPE, rookie pilots often fell into a situation in which they froze at the controls and simply flew straight and level. If certain variables "fell into alignment," this state was coded to simulate a rookie freezing from the overwhelming nature of war.

There is no such "hard coding" in MechWarrior 2, but the over-abundance of situational variables can create a similar effect. If you have an opportunity to be two-on-one in a given mission, order your starbats to attack your target. Under the barrage of fire, you'll see the enemy AI pilot nearly freeze in his tracks as it continuously weighs the incoming variables and vacillates between the "fight or flight" options.

"That's a really cool side-effect," says Spinale. "When there's a lot of things happening, it really does simulate someone freaking out. Almost a bit of chaos theory."

After months of playing MechWarrior 2, Spinale confesses that, "the AI still surprises us, still does things which are absolutely unexpected." But if you think it's hard now, beware of the new module Activision's working on.

"Honestly, the people here aren't anywhere near-satisfied with the AI. That'll change when we release the add-on."

Oh, great. ☹

Plug 'n Pray

Some Configuration Headaches Remain Despite New Easy-To-Use Features

by Loyd Case

IF YOU BUY A PENTIUM SYSTEM THESE DAYS, IT ALMOST INVARIABLY COMES WITH SEVERAL PCI LOCAL bus slots for graphic cards, disk controllers and the like. In theory, the PCI slots are "plug and play"—you just add a PCI peripheral like a video card and the configuration is automatic. Well, it can be, but read on and see why my experiences with plug-and-play moved me to plug-and-pray!

WHERE WE'VE BEEN

Let's take a trip down memory lane. Back in 1984, the IBM PC-AT arrived on the scene. One of the rather arcane hardware architectural features was something called *hardware interrupts*.

SHORT CIRCUITS

Last year all the hype was steered toward full-motion video and the buzzword was MPEG. This year, you're going to hear about 3-D until you puke. 3-D audio, steroscopic 3-D (like the old 50s movies but better), 3-D rendering, real-time 3-D, and ultimately, 3-D games. At least with 3-D (and unlike full-motion video), we'll see some games benefiting from the latest round of hardware. To date, the hottest in-or-face 3-D hardware CGW editors have seen is Rendition's Verite chip running custom versions of *id Software's Quake*, and NASCAR Racer from *Papyrus Number Nine* announced the 9FX Raptor 3-D graphics accelerator card which will be among the first retail products to include the Verite chip. The most significant development, however, is that Creative Labs has just announced that they will be using the Rendition Verite chip on the PCI version of the 3-D Blaster. Both products should be available by the second quarter of 1996.

There are times when you want a particular piece of hardware to tap the computer's CPU on its virtual shoulder and ask it to suspend whatever it's doing at that moment and take care of some other need. Take, for example, typing. Since the computer can track character input faster than most people can type, it often does other things while you're typing. You wouldn't want the computer to lose the pithy prose you type, so every time you press a key on the keyboard, an *interrupt request* is generated.

Unfortunately, there are a limited number of *interrupt request lines* (usually referred to as *IRQs*) available on the PC architecture. Most of us have had to wrestle with IRQs when configuring sound cards.

WHERE WE'RE GOING

A couple of years ago, two things happened. Intel, along with a number of industry players, developed the PCI bus. Then Microsoft, along with Intel, developed Plug-and-Play (PnP). PnP is supposed to make life much easier for computer users. The theory is that you can plug a PnP-enabled card (for example, a PnP sound card) into the computer, and it will be configured automatically by the computer. (To fully enable the feature, you need to have a Plug-and-Play BIOS installed on the system.)

WHERE WE ARE NOW

The reality isn't quite so rosy, as I soon discovered. I just finished building a second system for my home. Since my system is often in pieces on the floor,

my family needed a computer they could rely on when they wanted to play games or do real work. Although I promised not to open the computer up unnecessarily, I couldn't resist popping in a network card so I could play multiplayer games. The PCI network card I happened to have was from SMC.

I couldn't get it to work, and SMC's own diagnostic program wouldn't recognize it was present. This was a puzzling state of affairs, since PCI cards were supposed to be self-configuring (that is, Plug-and-Play). I started cursing and grabbed another PCI Ethernet card from 3COM, but it wasn't recognized either. Next, I plugged in a 16-bit ISA Ethernet card. Although the diagnostics ran, I couldn't find a free interrupt that worked, even though I knew there had to be one available.

EUREKA!

Then it hit me. I have the most recent BIOS from AMI. I booted the computer and got into the BIOS setup program. The BIOS setup program is where you tell the computer what kind of hard disk you have (if it's an IDE drive), what floppies and so on. Many of them allow you to tweak all kinds of arcane parameters.

One of the things this particular incarnation of the AMI BIOS allowed me to do was to allocate IRQs to ISA cards or to PCI-PnP cards. In my rush to configure the system, I cleverly assigned all interrupts to ISA cards. Imagine my surprise when I turned on the computer—and got *no* video on the monitor.

What I'd done in my enthusiasm in



WIN 95 CLICK TIP

If you're running Windows 95, here's a tip that will save you time. Rather than hunting around for your programs, make a quick shortcut for your program groups. First, right-click the START button. A small pop-up menu will appear. Now click Explorer. The Explorer will run, and you'll be looking at the contents of your START menu. The START menu is really just a special folder inside the Windows 95 directory. One of the folders in the START menu folder is the PROGRAMS folder. Right-click the PROGRAMS folder, hold down the mouse button and drag the PROGRAM folder to the desktop. You'll then be presented with a set of options. Select "Create a Shortcut Here." Now you can just double-click the new Programs folder on your desktop to find all your program groups.

assigning all interrupts to ISA cards was to *take away* all interrupts from my PCI slots. This meant that my PCI video card wouldn't work. Now I was really in trouble.

Fortunately, a quick perusal of the motherboard manual revealed a jumper setting that, when powered on, would reset the system BIOS to a default setting. This time, I carefully allocated PCI-PnP and ISA interrupts, popped one of the PCI Ethernet cards back into the computer, and everything is now working smoothly.

THE MORE THINGS CHANGE...

This little tale illustrates a key point. Any new technology, even one calculated to make life easier, has a learning curve. I was comfortable in the

world of ISA slots, IRQs and being able to willy-nilly assign them to any card. In the more automated new age of Plug-and-Play, I had to unlearn my old ways and learn something new. Someday, all peripherals will be PCI, and new computers will only have PCI slots. At that point, the problem of manually having to share interrupts will go away.

So when you buy one of those nifty Plug-and-Play sound cards, or modems, be aware that your system BIOS may need to be tweaked to work with the card. But if I had a choice of adjusting a BIOS parameter or dealing with jumper settings and IRQs, I'd much rather deal with the BIOS. Progress may come haltingly, but it's still progress. Amen. ☺

THE PARTS DEPT.

DIAMOND PUSHES 3-D GRAPHICS AND DIGITAL AUDIO TO THE 'EDGE'

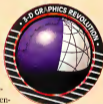
by Loyd Case

Consider the Swiss Army knife; equipped with a multitude of blades, screwdrivers, tools and toothpicks, it excels at nothing, but once you've carried one around for awhile, it's hard to live without.

The Diamond EDGE multimedia accelerator is a high-technology Swiss Army knife. It's hydra-headed nature is due to a special new chipset from NVIDIA. The NVIDIA technology delivers 3-D acceleration with perspective-corrected texture maps; generates digital audio; delivers 2-D graphics acceleration for fast Windows performance; and the EDGE even has wavetable synthesis (although the wavetable sounds reside on the hard disk). Finally, there's a digital joystick port that will also support existing analog joysticks. It's also the first example of something we'll see more often in the coming year, because the EDGE is a Windows 95-only product—no Windows 3.1

drivers, no OS/2 drivers, and DOS performance is mediocre at best. For example, using 3-D Bench, the EDGE only generates a meager 58.8 frames per second (fps) on a 133 MHz Pentium; the Matrox MILLENIUM screams along at 125 fps.

All this seems negative, but in its native environment, the EDGE does have an edge. The card will come with a couple of very interesting games, which only begin to scratch the surface of its capabilities. One of the games is NASCAR RACING. This is not your DOS version; it is a fully Windows 95-compliant version of NASCAR, tuned for the Diamond EDGE 3-D. To put the card through its paces, I turned on all of the game's options—all textures, all graphics, 10 cars visible ahead, 8 cars visible behind and digital mixing of audio from eight differ-



ent vehicles. On top of this, the NASCAR that ships with the EDGE uses 16-bit color (that's over 65,000 colors) and runs at 640x480 pixels.

I was blown away. There was only one noticeable performance glitch—an occasional momentary hesitation when a new audio sound loaded. NASCAR ran more smoothly than anything I've seen it on, including the "optimized" version that ships with the Matrox MILLENIUM. I even won a race for the first time ever, although I can't attribute this one to Diamond.

The EDGE's 3-D feature list is extensive, including (catch your breath): fast polygon rendering, quadratic texture mapping (for perspective correction), lighting effects including: diffusion, specular highlights, reflection maps and alpha blending (transparency).

THE PARTS DEPT.

The other title is Sega's arcade 3-D action game **VIRTUA FIGHTER**. You know something is different when you pick up a genuine Sega game pad and plug it into the special connector that's supplied with the EDGE. **VIRTUA FIGHTER** runs at high resolution, and appears to be 16-bit color (or perhaps very good 8-bit color; I wasn't quite sure). And it performed just like you'd want the arcade game to perform. The controls were excellent and the 3-D animation was smooth and fluid.

The EDGE is a solid performer with digital audio, as well. Although the speakers popped when I powered up the system, there was no audible noise or hiss at very loud volumes. MIDI music, however, is more questionable. Despite a generous amount of wavetable samples that come with the card (6 MB of samples can be stored on systems with 16 MB or more of RAM), the MIDI sounds were uninspiring and flat, although at least the instruments sounded correct.

If you want to run DOS games, be ad-

vised that the EDGE has relatively slow DOS graphics performance compared with other PCI graphics cards (such as the **HERCULES SLING-RAY**). Additionally, there is no support for digital audio (i.e.,



SOUND compatibility) with your legacy games using the EDGE, although you can load a special driver for the MIDI interface. In other words, you might need to keep your old sound card for digital audio on old DOS games.

Overall, this card will be most useful when more Windows 95 games ship. Right now, the EDGE is probably not the best choice for the hard-core gamer who

will still be running mostly DOS games for the next year. Diamond is working with a number of game developers to deliver EDGE support in future games, but the jury is still out. The wild card is Windows 95 Game SDK, a set of software tools for game developers that will enable them to take advantage of products like the EDGE.

With the EDGE, Diamond fires the first salvo of game-oriented 3-D acceleration, with the added bonus of fast Windows performance and good digital audio. As more companies ship products in the coming year, time and the marketplace will determine whether the EDGE's Swiss Army approach will win out, or whether dedicated-function products will continue to be the norm. It'll be fun to watch.

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1 What is the highest level of education that you completed? (Check one only)

- 01 Some high school or less
02 Graduated High School
03 Some College or Technical school
04 Graduated College
05 Post Graduate school

2 Computer currently owned by

- 01 IBM compatible (and standard)
02 Macintosh
03 Amiga
04 Other
05 None

3 If/when, why/level? (Check one only)

- 01 Never/PC
02 Purchase (self)
03 Gift
04 Rent
05 Borrow

4 Do you plan to plan to buy in next 6 months? (Check one only)

- 01 Yes
02 Plan to buy (6 months)

5 How often do you usually buy computer games? (Check one only)

- 01 Once a week
02 Once every two to three weeks
03 Once a month
04 Once every two to three months
05 Once every four to six months
06 Once a year

6 Where are you most likely to purchase games? (Check all that apply)

- 01 Microcomputer/casualty store 04 Gasoline store chain
02 Consumer electronics store 05 Used items vendor
03 Mass merchandising store 06 Mail order

7 What is your (past or in-house) favorite type of game? (Check one or more only)

- | | Yes/1 | Somewhat 2 | Other 3 |
|------------------|-------|------------|---------|
| 01 Strategy | | | |
| 02 Action | | | |
| 03 Role Playing | | | |
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1. What is the highest level of education that you completed? (Check one only)

- 01 Some high school or less
- 02 Graduated High School
- 03 Some College or Technical school
- 04 Graduated College
- 05 Post-Graduate school

2. Computer ownership used to:

- 01 Check out (not used)
- 02 I still remember (still standard)
- 03 Macintosh
- 04 Amiga
- 05 Dedicated game machine
- 06 None

3. If listed, what level? (Check one only)

- 01 I never PC
- 02 Problem (500)
- 03 486
- 04 386
- 05 286

4. Do you ever (or plan to buy or rent & install) a CD-ROM? (Check one only)

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- 02 Plan to buy (6 months)

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- 02 Once every two to three weeks
- 03 Once a month
- 04 Once every two to three months
- 05 Once every four to six months
- 06 Once a year

6. Where are you most likely to purchase games? (Check all that apply)

- 01 Independent computer store
- 02 Computer store chain
- 03 Consumer electronics store
- 04 Direct from vendor
- 05 Mass merchandising store
- 06 Mail order

7. What is your total office (in household) favorite type of game? (Check one or two)

- | | Favorite | Other 1 | Other 2 |
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| 02 Sim/Strategy | | | |
| 03 Role Playing | | | |
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Minimum Requirements: OS - DOS 5.0, Mem - 640, Video - VGA,
CD-ROM - 2x, Hard Disk - 5MB, Sound - Sound Blaster & 1604 Input - Mouse

Hall Of Fame

Welcome to the Cooperstown of Computer Games.

Here, raised upon pedestals, you'll find the games that broke the records, established the benchmarks, and held gamers in delighted trances for hours untold.

HIGHLIGHTS



ULTIMA VI ORIGIN SYSTEMS, 1990

The world of Britannia was no longer so vibrant by *ULTIMA V*, leaving some to wonder if Lord British was jaded with his creation. *ULTIMA VI*, then, was a bit of a shock, replacing the tired Apple II graphics with a new three-quarter-screen VGA perspective. The world was large, the quests numerous. The central theme was ostensibly the elimination of the gargoyle menace, but the storyline was darker than usual, with moral choices abounding in the quintessential *ULTIMA* tradition. At various times, your character was called upon to make sacrifices, conduct diplomacy, and fight racial prejudice without betraying your friends. Conversations were more involved than in previous games of the series, but the new six-button interface made the action flow more smoothly. Perhaps the best thing about *ULTIMA VI* was that it showed that Lord British and Co. were still willing to take chances, and their continued enthusiasm for Britannia showed in the quality of the story-telling.



ULTIMA UNDERWORLD ORIGIN SYSTEMS, 1992

For years, smooth-scrolling first-person 3-D gameplay was exclusively the province of driving, flying and space combat games. Then along came *ULTIMA UNDERWORLD: THE STYGIAN Abyss*. While there were first-person games before *UNDERWORLD*, none could match the convincing look of its environment, composed of dungeon walls "painted" with texture-mapped graphics. *UNDERWORLD*'s innovative interface enabled movement through those corridors, not frame by frame, but with the environment smoothly recalculated and redrawn according to your input. The combat (always a must for real RPGs) was clever as well: a two-step process entailed pulling a weapon back and then releasing it, with the severity of the blow dependent on the interval between the strokes. Despite its ground-breaking technology, the game was designed for ease of use; even the auto-map feature let you input your own notes. All in all, a distinguished incarnation of the most celebrated role-playing system yet designed for the computer.

FALCON 3.0 (Spectrum HoloByte, 1991)

GUNSHIP (MicroProse, 1989)

HARPOON (Three-Sixty Pacific, 1989)

KING'S QUEST V (Sierra On-Line, 1990)

LEMMINGS (Psygnosis, 1991)

LINKS 386 PRO (Access Software, 1992)

M-1 TANK PLATOON (MicroProse, 1989)

RAILROAD TYCOON (MicroProse, 1990)

RED BARON (Dynamix, 1990)

SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION (MicroProse, 1991)

THEIR FINEST HOUR (LucasArts, 1989)

THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND (LucasArts, 1990)

ULTIMA VI (Origin Systems, 1990)

ULTIMA UNDERWORLD (Origin Systems, 1992)

WING COMMANDER I & II (Origin Systems, 1990-91)

WOLFENSTEIN 3-D (id Software, 1992)

INDUSTRY PRIOR TO 1989

BATTLE CRESS (Interplay Productions, 1988)

CRESSMASTER (The Software Toolworks, 1986)

DUNGEON MASTER (FTL Software, 1987)

EARL WEAVER BASEBALL (Electronic Arts, 1986)

EMPIRE (Interstel, 1978)

F-19 STEALTH FIGHTER (MicroProse, 1988)

GETTYSBURG: THE TURNING POINT (SSI, 1986)

KAMPFENRUF (Strategic Simulations, 1985)

MECH BRIGADE (Strategic Simulations, 1985)

MOODY & MAJIC (New World Computing, 1986)

M.U.L.E. (Electronic Arts, 1983)

PIRATES (MicroProse, 1987)

SOCITY (Maxis, 1987)

STARFLIGHT (Electronic Arts, 1986)

THE BARD'S TALE (Electronic Arts, 1985)

ULTIMA III (Origin Systems, 1983)

ULTIMA IV (Origin Systems, 1985)

WAR IN RUSSIA (Strategic Simulations, 1984)

WASTELAND (Interplay Productions, 1986)

WIZARDRY (Sir-Tech Software, 1981)

ZORK (Infocom, 1981)

TOP ADVENTURE GAMES

RANK	GAME	GENRE	PRICE	ESRB
1	Day of the Tentacle	Adventure	9.97	ES
2	Full Throttle	Adventure	9.44	ES
3	Subliminal Message	Adventure	9.42	ES
4	Sam & Max Hit The Road	Adventure	9.33	ES
5	Wendell & Schreiber	Adventure	9.28	ES
6	Robonauts	Adventure	9.12	ES
7	Exhibition	Adventure	8.99	ES
8	Welder & Killing Moon	Adventure	8.04	ES
9	Phantom Express	Adventure	8.02	ES
10	Legend of Nayndra 3	Adventure	8.04	ES



TOP ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

RANK	GAME	GENRE	PRICE	ESRB
1	Strategic Art Remaster	Adventure	8.44	ES
2	Lord of Lore	Adventure	8.25	ES
3	Might & Magic: Clouds of Xeen	Adventure	8.07	ES
4	Wizard's Stone Prophet	Adventure	8.38	ES
5	Arx: The Elder Scrolls	Adventure	8.83	ES
6	Mail	Adventure	8.64	ES
7	Pentapolis: The City of the Gods	Adventure	8.26	ES
8	Dark Sun	Adventure	8.23	ES
9	Ironblast!	Adventure	8.16	ES
10	Thunderage	Adventure	7.85	ES



TOP SIMULATION GAMES

RANK	GAME	GENRE	PRICE	ESRB
1	MASPAR Racing	Racing	16.01	ES
2	U.S. Marine Fighters	Adventure	10.00	ES
3	U.S. Navy Fighters	Adventure	9.50	ES
4	Wings of Glory	Adventure	9.56	ES
5	Flight Unlimited	Adventure	9.51	ES
6	Looking Glass	Adventure	9.43	ES
7	Indy Car Racing	Racing	9.38	ES
8	Academy of Art	Adventure	9.31	ES
9	Wendell vs. Schreiber	Adventure	9.25	ES
10	Hornet	Adventure	8.84	ES



TOP STRATEGY GAMES

RANK	GAME	GENRE	PRICE	ESRB
1	X-COM	Adventure	10.37	ES
2	Master of Deceit	Adventure	10.20	ES
3	Warlords II	Adventure	9.55	ES
4	Jagged Alliances	Adventure	9.81	ES
5	Master of Magic	Adventure	9.66	ES
6	Warcraft	Adventure	9.64	ES
7	Sim City 2000	Adventure	9.51	ES
8	X-COM: Terror from the Deep	Adventure	9.38	ES
9	March of the Titans	Adventure	9.66	ES
10	USA: Patriots	Adventure	9.00	ES



TOP 100 GAMES

RANK	GAME	GENRE	PRICE	ESRB
31	Wing Commander 3	Adventure	10.57	ES
32	Panzer General	Adventure	10.46	ES
33	X-COM	Adventure	10.37	ES
4	TIE Fighter	Adventure	10.25	ES
5	ODM	Adventure	10.24	ES
6	Master of Deceit	Adventure	10.20	ES
7	March of the Titans	Adventure	10.07	ES
8	MASPAR Racing	Racing	16.01	ES
9	U.S. Marine Fighters	Adventure	10.00	ES
10	Warlords II	Adventure	9.55	ES
11	Day of the Tentacle	Adventure	9.87	ES
12	NBA Live '95	Adventure	9.86	ES
13	Jagged Alliances	Adventure	9.81	ES
14	Dark Force	Adventure	9.77	ES
15	Dark Sun	Adventure	9.78	ES
16	Master of Magic	Adventure	9.66	ES
17	Front Page Sports Football Pro	Adventure	9.64	ES
18	Warcraft	Adventure	9.64	ES
19	Rise of the West	Adventure	9.63	ES
20	U.S. Navy Fighters	Adventure	9.50	ES
21	V for Victory: Market Garden	Adventure	9.58	ES
22	Wings of Glory	Adventure	9.56	ES
23	Virtual Pool	Adventure	9.52	ES
24	Sim City 2000	Adventure	9.51	ES
25	Flight Unlimited	Adventure	9.51	ES
26	NHL Hockey	Adventure	9.51	ES
27	MicroProse	Adventure	9.49	ES
28	MicroProse	Adventure	9.48	ES
29	MicroProse	Adventure	9.44	ES
30	Strategic Art Remaster	Adventure	8.44	ES
31	Full Throttle	Adventure	9.42	ES
32	Wine in the Sun	Adventure	9.43	ES
33	Indy Car Racing	Racing	9.42	ES
34	Academy of Art	Adventure	9.42	ES
35	Stalingrad	Adventure	9.38	ES
36	X-COM: Terror from the Deep	Adventure	9.38	ES
37	Academy of Art	Adventure	9.38	ES
38	Operation Crusader	Adventure	9.31	ES
39	Flight Commander 2	Adventure	9.31	ES
40	Wendell vs. Schreiber	Adventure	9.25	ES
41	Sam & Max Hit The Road	Adventure	9.33	ES
42	Wendell & Schreiber	Adventure	9.33	ES
43	Lord of Lore	Adventure	9.28	ES
44	Flight Commander	Adventure	9.25	ES
45	Space Block	Adventure	9.25	ES
46	Privateer	Adventure	9.19	ES
47	Subliminal	Adventure	9.14	ES
48	Exhibition	Adventure	9.12	ES
49	March of the Titans	Adventure	9.66	ES
50	USA: Patriots	Adventure	9.00	ES



TOP WARGAMES

Rank	Game	Score
1	Private General	10.46
2	Rise of the Wind	9.83
3	These-Silly Pacific	9.58
4	War in Russia	9.44
5	Stratigist	9.38
6	Operation Crusader	9.35
7	Avanki Hill	9.31
8	Flight Commander 2	9.07
9	V for Victory: Gold Java Sward	9.00
10	HPS Simulations	8.97



TOP ACTION GAMES

Rank	Game	Score
1	Wing Commander 3	10.57
2	THE Flighter	10.26
3	DOOM	10.24
4	MechWarrior 2	10.07
5	00B4 II	9.77
6	Duch Forces	9.70
7	Virtual Pool	9.52
8	The Most Far Spad	9.51
9	Mage Carpet	9.48
10	System Shock	9.19



TOP SPORTS GAMES

Rank	Game	Score
1	NBA Live '95	9.86
2	Electronic Arts	9.64
3	Dynasty	9.64
4	Front Page Sports Football 95	9.64
5	Sports	9.49
6	Electronic Arts	9.49
7	MIL Hockey	9.31
8	Electronic Arts	9.31
9	NBA Year Golf 495	8.78
10	SS1	8.76
11	Tony La Russa Baseball II	8.76
12	Front Page Sports Baseball	8.70
13	MacBall IV	8.70
14	Accade	8.12
15	SS1	8.12
16	MicroProse	7.95
17	Ultimate Football '95	7.95



You've read our take on the latest games, now here's a chance to see what your fellow gamers think. The *CGW* Top 100 is a monthly tally of game ratings provided by our readers via the *CGW* Poll ballot found in each issue. Approximately 50 games are ranked each month, and the results are added to the aggregate results from past months. This historical database serves as a terrific reference for what you, the gamers, feel are the best plays in gaming.

51	Might & Magic: Claws of Xaos	RP	9.07
52	V for Victory: Gold Java Sward	WG	9.07
53	Under A Killing Moon	AD	9.04
54	Phantasmagoria	AD	8.92
55	Tanks	WG	9.00
56	VGA Planets	ST	9.00
57	Ravnokar: Stars Prophecy	SS1	8.96
58	Tygers on the Prowl	WG	8.97
59	The Broadest Peak	00P	8.96
60	Clash of Steel	SS1	8.96
61	Verdict General II	WG	8.95
62	Legend of Kyrandia 3	AD	8.94
63	Transport Tycoon	ST	8.93
64	PGA Year High 495	WG	8.93
65	Descent	AC	8.86
66	Incredible Tunes	ST	8.86
67	Incredible Machine 2	ST	8.86
68	Karnak	ST	8.84
69	Arms: The Elder Scrolls	RP	8.83
70	Carriers at War II	WG	8.82
71	Sart City	SS1	8.80
72	Karpon II	WG	8.78
73	Tony La Russa Baseball II	SS1	8.77
74	Crucibles of War Construction Kit	WG	8.77
75	Front Page Sports Baseball	SSP	8.76
76	Myri	AD	8.75
77	Smights Khan II	WG	8.74
78	Dracul Unleashed	AD	8.74
79	LEAD	WG	8.72
80	Star Trek TNG: First Encounter	AD	8.72
81	Baseball IV	SSP	8.70
82	MIB:28	SSP	8.64
83	W40	RP	8.64
84	King's Quest VII	AD	8.64
85	Barial In Tunes	AD	8.62
86	Superbowls of Babylon	AD	8.62
87	FX Fighter	AC	8.62
88	1992 Pacific Air War Gold	SSP	8.61
89	Nagary's Gambit	ST	8.54
90	Rules of Engagement 2	SSP	8.52
91	The Horde	AC/ST	8.50
92	Death Ride	AD	8.50
93	Star Trek: Judgment Rites	AD	8.49
94	The Last Whings	AC	8.46
95	1992 Pacific Air War	AC	8.45
96	MacProse	SSP	8.45
97	Dark Legions	SSP	8.43
98	Legends of the Hidden	AC	8.42
99	Apocalypse	SSP	8.40
100	Star City CD-ROM	SSP	8.40

Games an unnumbered line have scores equal to the line above. * Top game of type. Best deal = Best Game, AD = Adventure, RP = Role Playing, SS = Strategy, WG = Wargame, ST = Strategy, SS = Sports

The Computer World Poll

A MONTHLY SURVEY OF THE READERS OF COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

P A T C H E S

Apache Update: Addresses the problems with the preferences screen and the problems people are having with Invincible mode. This patch *does not* address the modem problems. 10/24/95

Battleground: Ardennes Windows 95 Update: Fixes disappearing buttons on front end. 10/17/95

Buried in Time: Includes new 16-bit Windows executables, fixes the exploding wall problem in Chateau Galliard and the Alien Hallway lockup; portions have also been enhanced for better performance. 10/11/95

Comanche V2.01 Update: Maintenance update, addresses modem compatibility issues. If used in multiplayer configuration, must be used by all Comanche players. 10/25/95

Comanche-Warwell Warewell V1.01 Update: Maintenance update, addresses modem compatibility issues. If used in multiplayer configuration, must be used by all players. 10/25/95

Dawn Patrol: Includes new SVGA drivers for Trident video cards, as well as an updated flight model. 10/4/95

Dungeon Master 2 Sound Fix: Patches both the demo and the retail version. 7/29/95

Flight Commander 2 V1.04 update for IBM PC: Updates any previous version of Flight Commander 2. 9/18/95

Computer game programs have grown so massive and the number of hardware configurations has become so huge that incompatibilities and glitches are frustratingly common. Software fixes, or "patches," for buggy programs have become a necessary evil until we reach the golden age of standardized platforms and bug-free programs.

ZDNet These patches can usually be downloaded from the major on-line networks (CompServe, GEnie, ZiffNet) and Computer Gaming World's Web Site (<http://www.zdnet.com/~gaming>), but can also be obtained from individual software publisher's BBSes or direct from the publisher with proof of purchase. *Red indicates new files.*

Flight Commander 2 v1.04 Update: Fixes some reported errors. 10/11/95

Flight Unlimited V2.0: Contains 2 physics fixes, 2 video fixes, fixes a couple of controller bugs, a mouse driver problem, and adds total energy compensation to the Grub's variometer. 8/30/95

Harporn 2 V1.01 PowerMach Updater: Fixes some reported problems. 10/26/95

Heroes of Might and Magic V1.2 Update: Fixes some problems with connecting via modem and some random crash problems. 10/24/95

Lords of Midnight Update: Provides multiple fixes to Donark's RPG strategy game. 9/5/95

MechWarrior 2 Joystick Driver Update: Fixes many of the controller problems users have experienced. 10/1/95

MechWarrior 2 VFX Patch: Native patch for Forte Technologies' VFX1 VR helmet. 11/1/95.

Panthers in the Shadows V1.12 Update: Fixes all known problems with the

release version and adds several new features. 10/17/95

Riddle of Master Lu Update: Removes the 100-room limitation which causes the "Fatal Error" and others near the end of the game. This patch will work with your current saved games. 10/27/95

SimCity 2000 V1.2 Update (Macintosh): This Power PC update only works with version 1.0 or the 68K V1.1. 8/29/95

SinTower for Windows V1.1: Fixes several reported errors. 9/28/95

Stalingrad Update V1.85: Fixes reported problems. PC and Macintosh versions available. 8/25/95

Steel Panthers V1.1 Update: Corrects several reported bugs. 10/23/95

Tigers on the Prowl V1.25: Fixes all known problems and improves some AI functions; may be used to upgrade any previous version of TOP. 10/19/95

Ultimate Football '95 CD Update: Corrects the "CD not found" problem. 10/19/95

Virtual Pool IRQ Update: Allows any version of Virtual Pool to use IRQ 10 and above. 11/1/95

Warlords II V1.0.7: Fixes multiple problems. 8/28/95

Publisher BBS Numbers

Many of these patches are available directly from the publishers' bulletin board systems. Call with your modem parity settings at N=8-1.

Accolade (408) 296-8800

Apege (508) 368-7036

Bethesda (301) 990-7552

Blizzard (714) 556-4602

Broderbund (415) 883-5889

Capstone (305) 374-6572

Creative Labs (405) 742-6660

id Software (508) 368-4137

Impressions (617) 252-2042

InterPlay (714) 252-2822

LucasArts (415) 257-3070

Maxis (510) 254-3869

MicroProse (416) 785-1841

Microsoft (206) 936-6735

NovoLogic (818) 774-9528

Origin (512) 328-8402

Papyrus (617) 576-7472

Sierra Online (205) 644-0112

Spectrum ByteByte (510) 522-8500

SSI (408) 739-6137 or (408) 739-6623

Virgin Interactive (714) 833-3305

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Circle Number Service #100

What's The Deal With... Used Games?

by Martin E. Cirulis



A COUPLE OF WEEKS AGO, I RECEIVED THE FOLLOWING LETTER AND IT MADE ME THINK; for all the rabid fervor with which we anticipate the latest new game, nobody seems to be talking about the passé or just plain played-out games that gather dust on our shelves—like so many sad-eyed teddy bears from a long-forgotten childhood...

Dear Mr. Cirulis,

I just got off the phone with (A used game store that shall remain nameless) and was immediately overcome with anger so now I'm writing you. "Why?" you ask. Well, because they only offered me \$7.00 for the CD-ROM version of DESCENT which I paid a full \$60.00 for! (I hated DESCENT!) Another store wasn't much better! It might not seem like much to you but I'm only 13 years of age and if anyone knows money doesn't grow on trees, it is me!

Very Sincerely Yours,
Ray Koren

Well, Ray, though I wish I was rich and famous enough to think that \$60.00 is nothing, I'm afraid I still know exactly how you feel. Software these days is far from cheap, and taking a big hit for a game that amuses you for about 15 seconds can ruin your whole gaming month. While I don't hate DESCENT (it's great on a network), it's not like I sat there playing DOOM a couple of years ago and said to myself, "Hey—what this game needs to be is more disorienting and have a time limit!" In the future, you might want to try and find the shareware version or at least a demo of any game with a high price tag,

no matter how good people say it is.

Of course, this advice does you little good now, as you stare balefully at that expensive little box on your desk and think about how it dropped in value nearly ten-fold the moment you cracked the shrink-wrap, when all that nasty oxygen rushed in to spoil the CD. It probably won't help, but believe me, I've been there myself. One of the most unpleasant consumer experiences of my life occurred a couple of years ago, just before I started reviewing for this fine magazine. I was young and naive in the ways of the computer game biz, and I decided to investigate the wonderful realm of "Buy/Sell Software." I think I was trying to get rid of THE LOST ADMIRAL and some other, lesser game. Now, it was only six months or so past the peak of these titles, but even so, the clerk treated me like a freezer salesman in Siberia and tried bloody hard to make me feel grateful that he was considering giving me \$5.00 for the pair. I'd like to say that I stormed out—but, being a Canadian, I merely gritted my teeth politely and considered writing his store a stern letter while I bartered a used copy of BATTLECHESS II out of him.

This little experience permanently soured me on most used software joints (as has yours, I would imagine), especially when I discovered, after doing a little leg-work, that while they were giving peanuts to desperate gamers, the usual markup when the product was re-wrapped was in the neighborhood of 300%. But what's a gamer to do? You pay big bucks, and even if the game is great, sooner or later you will be finished with it—and what then?

Light-refracting drink coasters for all your friends at Christmas?

If there was a fair answer you'd be the second to know, Ray, but I'm afraid that the truth is that you're probably never going to get even half your money back. On the other hand, there are a couple of ways to get some kind of consumer satisfaction, while keeping somebody in an ill-fitting suit from taking advantage of your gaming disappointment. The most obvious is to try and treat your games like hockey cards: there's always somebody around who wants to trade. Check around at school, or get your parents to help you put an ad in the local buy/sell paper. Somebody could want your copy of DESCENT far more than their FULL THROTTLE.

My current favorite mode of game recycling is to put them up for auction at local SF or Gaming conventions—like Dragonflight, in Seattle every summer. They will sell off your game for you, in open bidding, for a small cut. To be honest, you probably won't get much more than ten or twenty bucks for your trouble—but at least a fellow gamer, not to mention the convention, is directly benefiting, and you're spared the horror of coming by the store the next day to see your hard-bought copy of DESCENT on sale again for \$30. And hey! While you're there, not only will you meet other computer gamers, but maybe you can pick up a good deal on some used titles yourself.

I'm sorry I don't have an answer that will get all your money back, Ray, but hopefully something I've said will make you feel better. Take care and don't let the weasels get you down. ☺





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BioForge™ Plus

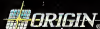
An enhanced version of the original *BioForge* adventure, discovery, betrayal and revenge, plus extra missions that continue into space! This groundbreaking ORIGIN Interactive Movie weaves hands-on combat and intrigue to spell-bind audiences.

Wing Commander IV: The Price of Freedom™

Wing Commander IV: The Price of Freedom is the sequel to *Wing Commander III*, the world's best-selling interactive movie. More than a space-flight simulation, it plunges you into an action-packed movie – complete with Hollywood stars and cinematic

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