

The #1 Computer Game Magazine

Computer Gaming

World



MARCH 1996
NO. 140

THE NEW
LOOK OF
COMPUTER
GAMING WORLD
The #1 Computer Game Magazine

Blades & Bullets

Test Flying
Interactive
Magic's Hind



HOT REVIEWS

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Computer Gaming

World

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FEATURES

50 Cover Story: 1996 Flight Sims Aim High

From the earliest biplanes to the latest high-tech modern jets, the newest flight sims are all jockeying for air time. Denny Atkin hops in the virtual CGW stealth fighter to return with classified shots and information for your eyes only.

62 Cover Story: Mil Mi-24 Hind

The AH-64 Apache may epitomize agility and electronics, but its Soviet counterpart uses brute force. Take this test flight with Interactive Magic's new missile-heavy helicopter sim and see how they fly behind what's left of the Iron Curtain.

66 CivNet

Sid Meier's classic CIVILIZATION goes multiplayer, and the CGW editors vie for world domination—only for research purposes, you understand.



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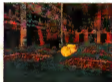
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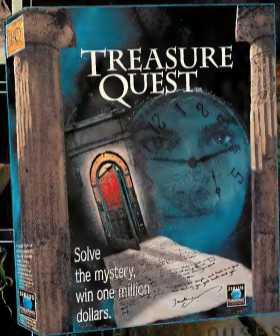
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Denny Atkin, CGW's Features Editor and resident simulations fanatic, is a veteran computer gamer and former editorial staffer at Computer and GAMING. His passion for flight sims paid off in October 1994, when the Air Force took him for a ride in an F-15D. After pulling a

cool 7 BGs and even manning the Eagle's controls, Denny returned to Earth where he continues to walk on clouds and keep his experience quiet to avoid "I hate you" comments from fellow sim fans. When asked what he'd like to do next, he answers with a mischievous grin, "after that, anything else is gray." He would like to go to space someday, though some might claim he's already there.



Jeff James, CGW action games columnist, is a longtime contributor to the magazine. His affinity for action games, such as Quake, Duke 3D and Doomwars Jax, is matched by his admis-

sion for strategy and wargaming classics like X-COM and Panzer Generals. This schizophrenic combination of game preferences results in Jeff (and his aging-Generation X reflexes) being regularly lauded by steely-eyed eight-year-olds during bouts of Morrow Kowar 3 at the local arcade.



Martin Cirulis, "a grumpy old gamer" by his own admission, hails from Vancouver, Canada. Since discovering computer gaming on a TRS-80, he has retired four generations of

computer systems. At one time he was indoctrinated in the black art of programming, but turned his back on it in the name of Science Fiction literature, which he continues to write when he isn't knee-deep in game reviews. His game design motto: "If there ain't no dice, there ain't no game."



Arinn Dembo was born in 1970, after attending Woodstock during the second trimester of her mother's pregnancy (draw your own conclusion). She was best thrown out of a court-

room at the tender age of four weeks, when the judge felt she asserted an undue influence on the jury. As a result of a youth spent in pool halls, pinball alleys and video arcades, she is qualified to review games, smoke cigars and exercise all the other privileges of a tattooed lady.



Christopher Breen has played Mac games so long that he's developed the ability to convert monitor emissions into fructose, which lengthens his playing time while cutting down on

food costs. Co-author of the Macintosh Bible Guide to Games from Peachpit Press and contributing editor to MacUser magazine, Breen believes that following the Tao of Apple will lead to his appointment as Secretary of the Interior someday in the meantime he is still able to communicate with PC users.



Eddie Malstrom's effect on CGW has been singularly monumental. As Art Director (or Alcohol Director, depending on the circumstances), Eddie is the chief architect of the magazine's redesign, the CGW Web site and the cover

CD-ROM. Before joining the staff last year, Eddie designed CD-ROM Today, PC Gamer and The Net magazines. Although he spends most of his time with Quark, Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator, he also enjoys playing action and golf games on the computer, and when he fires all the electron beams, he plays with his baby daughter, Rachel.

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This Month's Hot Picks and Features...

This month, we've coordinated the contents of the CD with the magazine. Once you've read the flight sim round-up feature and gathered some useful tips, you can download the Su-27 Flanker scenario and watch how our expert flies the mission. (Remember, you'll



need a commercial copy of Su-27 in order to use the scenario and view the mission.) If you don't have Su-27, you can still practice takeoffs and landings in FormGen's

entry-level flight sim, **BLACK KNIGHT**. After your warm up, you can log on to America Online and play **WARBORN** in real-time head-to-head combat with other air warriors—all from the "CG" ROM.

Also on the CD-ROM, you'll find interactive demos of **SSF's Ace of Aces**, **Flight Pace Sports Football**

96 by Sierra On-Line, and **Maxis' FullThrottle Premium**. As usual, we've also included product demos—some interactive, some merely teasers—from our advertisers.

How Do I Use It?

Our CD is Windows 3.1 and



Windows 95 compatible. If you have Windows 95, installation is a breeze—our CD is Autoplay enabled. Just "lock 'n' load" and it will start automatically. Otherwise, boot your computer in Windows 3.1, pop the CD into your drive, select **RUN** in the Program Manager's menu and type **D:\RUN-1ME** (where D is the letter of your CD-ROM drive) to run it straight from the CD. To create a Computer Gaming World program group on your Windows desktop, type **O=INSTALL**. If you've installed one of our CDs in the past, the new installation will use the previous icon group. After installation, navigate by pointing and clicking just as you would in any other Windows program.

How Do I Get The Su-27 Scenario?

To copy the **SU-27 FLANKER** scenario, click on its icon in the **CGW** Extra main screen and follow the instructions. Remember, you must

have a copy of the game in order to employ the scenario.

How Do I Get The Demo Files?

To access the featured demos, click on **EDITORS' HOT DEMO PICKS**, then click on the title you want to see and follow the instructions. To get product demos, click on **PRODUCT DEMOS** and go to either **Action/Adventure** to view **TREASURE QUEST**, **With Honor: The Squad**, **FLIGHT! PARK II**, and **CHIEF 2**; **Strategy/Simulation** to preview **Sentinel**, **StarFurios**, **Jet Fighter II**, and **Sierra Raveoff**; or **Classics/Sports** to see

HOYLE CLASSIC GAMES, **HARDBALL 5**, and **NCAA CHAMPIONSHIP BASKETBALL**.

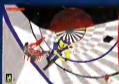
How Do I Get The Patch Files?

Click on **PATCHES** from the **MAIN MENU**, then read the text window for instructions on copying the files to your hard drive. Follow the instructions for any files on the CD and you're set.

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How Do We Classify Games?

Action/ArCADE (AC): The emphasis is on hand-eye coordination and reflexes, usually emphasizing fast play over story or strategy.

Adventure (AD): Games where you control an alter ego and move through a storyline or sequence of events, where puzzle-solving takes precedence over conversation and combat.

Classics/Puzzles (CP): Classics are old stand-bys and parlor games that appeal to many different types of gamer. Examples include Backgammon, bridge, chess, Monopoly, parcheesi, Reversi, and Solitaire. Puzzle games are computer games which emphasize spatial relationships, word games and/or problem-solving without requiring gamers to follow a storyline. Examples would be Shanghai, Tetris, and Zaxxon.

Role-Playing (RP): RPGs are a subset of adventure games, but stress character development, often through improving stats or other attributes. Conversations with non-player characters (NPCs) and tactical

combat are generally more important than in Adventure games. Finally, the game world tends to be large, and the plot less linear, often with some quests/lines outside the main storyline.

Simulations (S): Highly realistic games from a first-person perspective: you may drive a realistically simulated race car, fly a military aircraft with a meticulous physics model, or swoop through a detailed sci-fi environment. Usually polygon-filled technology is used to build the simulated world on the fly.

Sports (SP): The sports game category is a broad genre which includes action (NBA Live) and strategy games (Football Pro) based on sports.

Strategy (ST): Problem-solving, short- and long-range planning are the keys here. These games almost always emphasize resource and risk management. This genre includes conflict-based sci-fi and fantasy games (X-COM, Quicksilver, MOO), as well as "pure" strategy games and "software toys" such as Sid Meier's Wargames (WG). A subset of strategy games, these recreate his-

torical conflicts from a command perspective. They may be tactical, operational, or strategic, and stress anything from logistics and tempo to morale and leadership. They may be simple (PACER GENERAL, EVRMC I) to incredibly detailed and complex (PACIFIC WOLF).

What Is Your Reviews Policy?

1) We only review from the final copy of the game. Though it has become popular among PC gaming magazines to review from late beta copies, we feel that the reader is best served by having the reviewer look at the same copy of a game that the readers will find on the shelves. While we recognize that this causes some delay in coverage, we believe the reader is better served by such caution.

2) We expect our reviewers to finish the game. We want our readers to be assured that we do not review based on immediate or early impressions of a game. Our reviewers give a game ample opportunity to show its quality. In some cases, bugs make it impossible to finish a game, but we identify situations where that has occurred.

3) We make every effort to match the reviewer to the game. We take into consideration the preferences, background and possible biases of the reviewer and, where possible, we find people with actual life experience or special backgrounds that match a game. We believe this policy enhances both the credibility of the review and the enjoyment of gameplay when the real world and the game world are competently compared.

4) We do not accept free travel from software or hardware companies. We believe such gifts have a tacit assumption of coverage attached to them. We will only cover such events/launches as we believe will benefit our readers.

HOW DO WE RATE?



Outstanding: The rare game that gets it all right. The graphics, sound, and gameplay come together to form a transcendent Gaming Experience. Our strongest buying recommendation.



Very Good: A high-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 or genre.



Average: A mixed bag. Can be a game that reaches for the stars, but falls short in significant areas. Can also be a game that does what it does well, but lacks flair or originality.



Weak: A game with serious problems. Usually buggy, seriously lacking in play value, or just a poorly conceived game design—and you will want to think long and hard before buying it.



Abysmal: The rare game that gets it all wrong. This is reserved for those products so buggy, incomplete or useless that you wonder why they were ever released.

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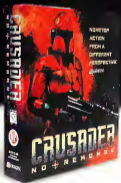
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Do Nice Guys Always Finish Last?

The Health of the Entertainment Software Industry

As one of the "old guys" in the computer game business, I'm often asked my perspective on the health of specific companies, the heartbeat of the industry, and my predictions for the future. I figure that's not bad for someone who predicted *Myst* was a pretty little toy that would do slightly better than break-even, and though I loved the original *SeaCryer*, felt that the total market for the game had to be less than 10,000 rabid strategy gamers like myself.

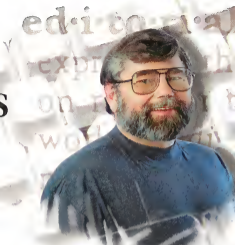
Of course, they're probably thinking of the number of times I got it right. Modesty would preclude a recitation of my "bullseye" hits and honesty would merely allow that I sit in a privileged position. Anyone who listens and observes from my seat can look smarter than they are. People tell me facts and rumors. Then, my conspiracy buff mind assembles those truths and half-truths into an amazing web of industry intrigue. I bounce the wild stuff off my colleagues and they ask me questions so that I have to defend my assertions. This surgically removes the most improbable

material from my deductions and enables us to distill a potent brew that is usually surprisingly close to the truth.

For example, it didn't take too much evidence to deduce that 1995 was going to be a tough year for Acclaim Entertainment. The console game market was already going soft and the company had just lost its exclusive relationship with Williams, the coin-op company who brought us the original *Mom'n Kneaz* and *NSA Jam*. Add to that the fact that this company had made its bones on side-scrolling, fighting games and platform games on the console machines while the market was

turning to the personal computer platform to fill in revenue gaps until a next-generation machine became dominant. The future didn't look bright, even though many financial analysts were still looking at the glory days of NK and saying Acclaim was unstoppable. It shouldn't be any surprise that Acclaim experienced the price drop over 1995 that is described in this month's *READ ME* section. Indeed, it surprises us that it didn't drop more.

It also didn't take too much evidence to figure Spectrum HoloByte



“ They thought the software industry was the same as the toy industry, forgetting the most vital market statistic—computer gamers are adults. ”

was going to have a tough year. The venture capitalists who had helped Spectrum remove itself from a messy entanglement with the late Robert Maxwell's house of cards managed to fill the software maker's management with a lot of execu-

tives who didn't (or don't) understand software development! They thought the software industry was the same as the toy industry, forgetting the most vital market statistic: unignorable—computer gamers are adults, while toys are largely targeted toward a younger market (Nerf weapons and a few other exceptions to the contrary). This inevitably resulted in two costly and fairly predictable results: 1) detecting or decimated design teams which led to 2) delayed and poorly received products (need we spell out *Across the River*, *Falcon 4*, *Magic: The Gathering*, and *Top Gun*?) Their *STING* product has done well, but not enough to stem the tide of quarterly losses. No wonder you'll see the losses reported in *READ ME*.

Then, there was Atari—the one-time reigning monarch of the video game market. Without enough Jaguar developers, Atari's hope for a next-generation machine has not really captured the market. Without that market dominance, the company finds itself talking back on old stand-bys. They have brought back former Tengen (*Atari Games*) executive Ted Hoff from Fox Interactive to

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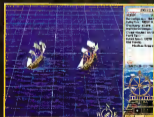
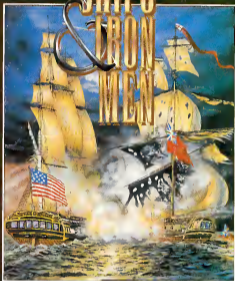
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create Atari Interactive, a division they hope to build on the back of their classic coin-op and console games. We know there is incremental revenue to be gleaned from these old shovelware packages, but we don't know if there is enough to fund a new division. (Apparently, this assertion was

correct, since Hoff had left Atari Interactive by press time and the future of both the division and Atari itself was

in doubt.) It's really too bad for Atari that their strategic partner/investor, Time Warner, hasn't started to shift some of their assets to the cable television business. That's a new market where Atari could feasibly have an edge.

The other major disappointment in stock price was Creative Technology, makers of the SoundBlaster sound card. This company has experienced phenomenal growth relative to the sound card revolution, and its product line has become very much a de facto standard. Yet, it was almost inevitable that the sound card market would falter due to the company's previous success in penetrating the market, and that it would go through a period where research and development expenditures would outstrip profit expectations. The company has

weathered such a period, and now Creative hopes to duplicate in the 3-D graphic accelerator card market what it accomplished in the sound card market. If so, it

could reverse this performance in the next year.

On the up side, no one would have thought it bold to suggest that Broderbund would continue to ride its careful and focused product strategy into a near 30 percent gain in stock

price or that Electronic Arts, the market leader in sports games on most platforms and parent of two of the hottest subsidiaries in game publishing (Origin and Bullfrog), would continue its aggressive growth pattern. EA's willingness to shift from platform to platform in order to maximize profit potential and its willingness to undertake promising ventures (like its recent James alliance and anticipated multiplayer web projects) means we'll see EA as a player for a long time.

The biggest surprises were probably Activision and Sierra. Yet, the latter has benefited from: finally shipping some of its main titles which were using up development money; divesting itself of its unprofitable INN game network; and acquiring publishers like Impressions and Papyrus to fill out "holes" in the Sierra product line. Activision has largely turned around because of one big hit, *MechWarrior 2*. Just shipping this megahit transformed investors into believers who could suddenly see *SPYGLASS*, *ZORK NEMESIS* and *MUPPET TREASURE ISLAND* landing Activision into a welcome sea of black ink filled with dollar "sine" waves.

Add to this picture the new emphasis on quality at Mindscape/SSI (now part of foreign-owned Pearson Plc) and the hypergrowth at Interplay Productions (with its MCA backing). Suddenly, the future looks pretty bright for the computer game business. Note that the Hollywood companies haven't come to dominate the market (or even be very forceful players) and that 1995 was pretty good, indeed, to most of the companies in our business that have been here for 10 years or more. Sometimes, the good guys do win. Personally, I'd like to see revenue outperform stock price in 1996. ☺



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LETTER OF THE MONTH

HEROIC OBSERVATIONS

As a subscriber for years (and years), please keep up the good work. Your refusal to sugar coat game reviews continues to make the statement that you are an editorial publication and not merely an outlet for advertisers.

I wanted to make two unrelated comments. The first is a caveat to prospective purchasers of Creative Labs AWE 32. It is not "backwards" compatible to earlier Sound Blaster games/cards. I have been extremely disappointed at how many of my recent purchases lock up or produce no sound on my new computer. When I called Creative Labs for help, they told me my system was too fast! I loaned the same games to a friend who, at my suggestion, purchased the SB Pro with his Pentium 133 instead of the SB AWE32 card and the games work fine. Creative Labs is earning a reputation for letting its users work out their own problems.

The second is on Jason Kapalka's review of *Heroes of Might & Magic*. (This game loaded and ran immediately. Thank you, New World, for writing the AWE 32 into your compatibility list.) The graphics are outstanding and the animation clever and subtle—facial expressions change appropriately during combat.) Jason is right on with his evaluation that the game has reduced replayability and slight shortness in the manual's information. A number of important game aspects must be discovered by the player. His five-star rating was a bit high, but that's what makes the world a different place.

With about 150 hours of playtime on *Heroes*, I would like to expand on a few aspects. The slow Trolls he mentioned are actually missile units and would never lose to archers one on one. Dwarves or Gnomes would have been a better example than Trolls. Also, castles don't always start with two troop types; sometimes more, sometimes less. Leaders can sometimes be randomized in battle, so there is a possibility for "queers."

Game-wise, there are a few small glitches—such as gamemaps with inaccessible

cal skill can overcome the suspiciously rapid development of the computer and its ability to crank out high level troops from new castles. Jason is probably right on with his suggestion that the computer starts with more resources than its opponent—thus giving it the ability to grow quickly. Further, the computer never attempts to pick up an artifact protected by assassins and has an uncanny ability to proceed directly to your strongholds. Other questionable activity has occurred. Consequently, except for the tutorial scenario, only scenarios classified as LARGE offer any reasonable chance of winning.

The campaign feature is an excellent plus. Unfortunately, I am making my last attempt to complete a full campaign this weekend. The last campaign scenario, thus far, has been impossible due to the computer's ability to develop so quickly.

New World has an excellent value game which could be improved with a "Deity, can I play too?" selection, a random map generator, and (as could any game) improved AI—especially from the strategic standpoint.

R. Jessor
Marietta, GA

*Hmm, 150+ hours and it's not a five-star game? Wow! Makes one wonder how many hours you would spend on a "real" five star game! Still, we have some good news for you: New World is so pleased at how *Heroes of Might & Magic* has been received that they are working on an expanded version. In addition to the random map generator, an upcoming sequel will feature a construction set for making your own maps and campaigns.*



resources and one especially interesting area that permits your group to sneak past the ghosts on the way into a castle, but not on the way out! Until one learns to closely scrutinize areas, resources can be obscured by map features. In combat, the icon showing which spell your troop has been hit with can be covered by a nearby companion. However, my biggest complaint with the game is the computer cheats which have rendered most scenarios unwinable (read unplayable). As a calibrator, I completed two PANZER GENERAL campaigns with 100% Major victories except for a Minor victory in the American invasion. So, there's my perspective when I say that *Heroes' AI* is good. However, no amount of human tacti-

BILLIONTHS AND BILLIONTHS OF SECONDS

I'd like to make an erratum to the article "Mother, What a Boast!" (December, 1995). On p. 393, col. 3, 1st paragraph, he mentioned "8 nanosecond," and spelled out "eight millionths of a second." It should read "billionths of a second" because nano is a prefix for 10⁹, or a billionth times a specified time. Thus, in a nanosecond circuitry, a circuit processes pulses or waveforms with rise and fall measured in billionths of a second or less.

Gene M. Janssen
Hayward CA

PROTECTION RACKET

One of the aspects of CCW that I like the most is its honest ratings of games. (Some of the other magazines seem not to want to offend anyone and talk about each new game like it is the "greatest.") I do have, however, a problem with your game reviews when you say "Protection



None (CD must be in drive)." To me, this is a contradiction in terms. If the program checks for a specific CD in the drive, then it uses a Key Disk protection. This is the same protection as many 1980s games used and that consumers found so annoying.

Kenneth Bolland
Montgo, Ca.

As we've noted before, sometimes this key disk protection and sometimes, it isn't. Sometimes, as in the case of *Quiver*, Kenneth D. Tice (BASIC WRITER), the CD must be in the drive because the movie segments

DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES



Actual SVGA gameplay screen shot.

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are played off the CD. At other times, the CD must be in the drive because the program looks for the CD as verification. We understand that the latter is a serious inconvenience when you're gone to all the trouble of copying an entire CD to your hard drive. Yet, we think we are providing the information you need to avoid such egregious copy protection when we tell you whether it needs the CD to work or not. As we've stated before, it's not a good use of our time to study the directory structure and use all of the multiple installation procedures in a program to determine whether this is copy protection or merely a sufficient conservation of hard disk space. We merely observe whether it requires the CD in the drive or it doesn't.

MULTIPLAYER/ MULTICOPIES

If you review a game that has multiplayer capability, would you please let us know if a separate copy of the game must be bought for each player to play? **COMMAND AND CONQUER**, **WARCRAFT**, and **WARCRAFT 2** was not a problem, as they allowed you to play multiplayer with only one person leaving the game. My roommate and I have our computers hooked up in a modem, and really like playing multiplayer games, but do not like buying two copies of the same game!

Also, I was thinking of buying a sports game, and cannot decide on whether to get **JOHN MARDON FOOTBALL '96**, or **NHL '96**. I like football and ice hockey equally well. I just want the better one.

Bleke Rongstad
Pawcatuck, FL 32514

We are *not* and *already* do. If you look to the Base Information provided with our 6 review, you'll see a topic called, "Protection." If the prod-



uct requires you to have multiple copies, as opposed to using the "spawning" technology of **WARCRAFT**, it will say (as does the information provided with our **CONQUER** review) "one CD required per player". As for which sports game to buy, most of us would opt for **NHL '96**. It is clearly the winner in the hockey category, while some football fans would argue that **FOOTBALL SPORTS FOOTBALL: PRO** is still the game of choice.

YOU REALLY LOVE US!

I just wanted to take the time and tell you what an excellent gaming magazine you have! I just recently started a subscription and wanted to let you know I am thoroughly pleased. In the past I have read other computer gaming magazines and none of them come close to the professionalism and the outstanding information your magazine offers. Keep up the good work and thank you for going the extra mile that my money's worth.

James Cooney
Whittington DE.

NO VGA VAPORWARE

I have just finished reading the article "The Fire Between The Stars" in your Jan '96 issue. I have to admit I found the article, over all, pretty good with a little exception. There were several references to **VGA Planets 4.0** and "hating" that it is vaporware, and was expected to be out in 1995. If the author had taken the time to check in on

Tim Wiseman's **BBS**, the all games vga-planets usenet group and for the AOL forum area, he would have learned **VCAP** in 1995 was dedicated to the development of **WINPLAN** (planets 3.5). A new windows-driven interface, this is a prelude to 4.0. It was also a year that saw the development and release of the **NEW 32 HOST** program for planets that greatly expanded the platform of **VCAP**.

The expansion has allowed "books" in the host program that allow outside programmers to create expansion modules that run within the host, so that people can create new and exciting features to this beloved game (it has been in your top 50 forever). With the release of the new **HOST** and **WINPLAN** came the release of some add-on software by Don & Dave (I am Don). We added five new modules to **VCAP** that have proven very popular and have extended the playability and life of **VCAP** a great deal. Working with Tim, I also created a complete user manual. A huge 129-page manual for the game. And a quarterly newsletter dedicated to the **VCAP** Players. All of which have been well received and have enhanced the game itself and the amount of enjoyment that can be gained from it.

As a contributor to **VCA PLANETS 4.0**, I can tell you it is well into development now that **WINPLAN** was put to bed. I have already designed over 15 **NEW** ones to be used in the new 4.0 system. 4.0 is not vaporware. Code is being written and I have written requirement documents for it myself.

Dave Kilgusworth
Durham, CA

Frankly, we have always been supporters of **VCA PLANETS**. Not only did we commit two strategy articles to it in addition to the review, but these "out of print" articles are now back in print on our web page and on our electronic edition on **COMPUSERVE**. Interchange editor of **Computer Gaming World**. Unfortunately, not only did we not receive a copy of **WINPLAN** prior to the article, we still haven't received one. If we had received a copy of **WINPLAN**, we would have reviewed it. It is something our readers would have wanted to know about. We print your letter to provide information and regret the confusion.

The Credit Department

Thanks to Pascal Ode, Meylan, France, for last month's tip on **Steel Partners** (Allen Emrich, page 208). If you'd like to swap **SP** tips with Ode, you can contact him by e-mail at 100257.1375@compuserve.com or visit his Web site at <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/POde>.

We welcome your gameplay tips, and will credit you with them in the **CG Tips** section of each column. Please mark your tips "CG Tips" and direct them to one of the addresses below.


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Consumer Electronics Show Offerings Emphasize "4X" Gaming

Gamers who revel in the traditional four "4X"es of gaming should love the upcoming crop of strategy games covering the gamut from the ancients to space conquest. No

Wonders of the World, and military units) and Avalon Hill's just-released *Advanced Civilization* for control of the "ancients" segment to 4X gaming. (For the review on *Advanced Civilization*, see issue #139, pg. 210.)



MOB RULE New World's *Chaos Overlords* lets gamers become the godfathers and good guys of a dark future.

If you take exploitation too far, colonies may revolt against you and become new opponents. See our preview in issue #135, pg. 96.

New World Computing takes a different approach to the 4X concept with a game about

gang warfare in a dark near future. *Chaos Overlords* is a multi-player game that allows you to build up a gang, bribe cops, run contraband and wipe out your enemies with impunity. (For more information, see last month's *Hands On*, pg. 45.)

Interplay's contender in this category doesn't go back so far in time. *Conquests of the New World* (CNW) will allow gamers to explore random worlds; build 3-D colonies, exploit local economies, and exterminate rival empires in software or multi-player mode.



DECEASED looks like a solid multi-player gametest, with elements of *SimCity*, *Utopia*, and *Metal Laros*.

fewer than five companies stepped up to the plate in the classic 4X category at this year's Consumer Electronics Show.

Sierra, using the design team from *Civision II*, is developing *The Rise and Rule of Ancient Empires*. In addition to great graphics, it will have a robust diplomatic elements, cultural distinctions for each civilization, and a fast play rate—games are expected to average around two hours. *The Rise and Rule of Ancient Empires* is expected to challenge *Sierra's Civilization II* from MicroProse (due out later this year and featuring new technologies, city improvements,

ON THE SHELF

Here's a quick look at the hottest products on store shelves, as

COMMODORE 64 15 PACK



Take a trip back to the beginning of the computer game heyday with Activision's *Commodore 64 15 Pack*. If you have goose-bump memories of the words "LOGON PLEASE" on a Hack'n's blue screen, or if you fondly recall achieving that



car-dodging zen state in *GREAT AMERICA CROSS COUNTRY ROAD RACE*.

well as the ones which may not survive through the winter chill.

this 15 gameography for Windows 95 should be right up your alley. *The 15 Pack* also includes *ACADAZ*, *Tor Fuel EXAMINER*, *Geometric* and *Zork: Reborn*. Activision's C-64 emulator is spelt on, making the walk down memory lane surprisingly enjoyable. Unlike the Atari Action Packs, some of these games (like *Hacker's*) age well. —G. Jones
Activision (800) 477-3650, **Win 95 CD**
Reader Service 301

TOTAL DISTORTION

TORL Distortion's challenging gameplay requires "total immersion" to stay afloat. One part 19-person adventure game



In the space-conquest arena, Blizzard's *Pox Imperia II* will allow up to 16 players to compete via IPX or over the Internet using KALI. *Pox Imperia II* is a real-time space combat game that lets you delegate orders to artificial admirals when you can't oversee everything. It is expected to compete with MicroProse's

Master of Orion II (pre-viewed in issue #138, pg. 296).

Accolade's *Orblock* posits a planet where multiple races (read players) are engaged in a very high-stakes game. Having previously annihilated a habitable planet in their zeal to develop it, the races agree to accord the cur-

rent planet to the culture which develops it most efficiently. With military exploits, economic manipulation, double-dealing and fast-moving tactical decisions, gamers will strive to make sure that their race wins the right to colonize the entire planet. —*Johnny L. Wilson*

PLAYING LATELY?

This month, Warcraft II takes over as most-played game, while the original X-Com returns for its 17th month on the chart. Be sure to send in your feedback card, so we know what games you are losing the most sleep over.

READERS' TOP 10

	Last Month	Months On Chart
1. Warcraft II (Blizzard)	1	1
2. Steel Panthers (SSI)	1	3
3. Mechwarrior 2 (Activision)	4	5
4. Command & Conquer (Westwood)	2	4
5. Crusader: No Remorse (Orign)	3	2
6. Heroes of Might and Magic (New World Computing)	6	3
7. Stonekeep (Interplay)	5	2
8. Panzer General (SSI)	8	14
9. Anvil of Dawn (New World)	—	1
10. X-Com: UFO Defense (MicroProse)	—	17

Top 10 Downloads From



These are the 10 most downloaded game-related files from the HappyPuppy Web site (HappyPuppy.com). This includes demo versions of games and shareware. Results reflect the first three weeks in January, 1998 and are PC versions only.

Title	Description	Publisher
1. Beavis & Butt-head's Hooky Loogie (Win 95)	Arcade/Action	Wicon
2. Descent 2	Free Flight Shooter	Interplay
3. Mortal Kombat 3	Side-View Martial Arts	GT Interactive
4. Dogz Shareware	Customized by	Vision
5. Thor's Hammer	3-D Graphical Adventure	MVP
6. Need for Speed	Arcade Racing	EA
7. Hexen	3-D Corridor Shooter	id Software
8. Apollo's	Point-Click/Action Strategy	Atari
9. Ice and Fire	Win 95 Action/Adventure	Zombie
10. Indy Car Racing 2	Racing Simulation	Playrix



and two parts: marketing strategy sim, *Distortion* will evoke memories of the days when tasks were simple and "big-time" metal ruled MTV. As an aspiring video producer, you spend your inheritance on a device that enables travel through the dimensions of pop culture. This risky investment leaves you stranded and nearly broke in the "Distortion Dimension," where you must glean interesting footage to incorporate into marketable videos. To survive, you'll need to cultivate diligent market research, employ deft showboating skills, and thoroughly manage all your resources. —*K. Ranter*

Pop Rocket, (415) 731-8912, IBM CD-ROM
Reader Service # 302

EIGER LABS, HEADON DSYD

Tired of playing computer opponents? Want to simultaneously trash and laud your human opponent without hitting your neck to hold the phone? Eiger Labs has just the ticket, a dual speech and data modem designed for gamers called the HeadOn DSYD. Eiger says the HeadOn is compatible with several dozen game files, including *Doom II*, *Heretic*, *Descent*, and *One Must Fall*, to name a few.



In DSYD mode, the modem runs at 14.4 Kbps, splitting bandwidth approximately

in half for voice and data. The HeadOn ships with a hands-free headset, leaving you free to hurl insults while wreaking havoc. We're going to dig into this one, and will let you know next issue what we find. —*D. Salvatore*
Eiger Labs, Inc. (408) 774-3456, IBM PC
Reader Service # 303

EASTERN MIND: THE LOST SOULS OF TONG NOU

Eastern Mind is an unsettling and convoluted descent into the mind of artist Osamu Sato. Sato created the island of Tong Nou by combining dark recesses of his own personality with tenets of eastern philosophy, rendering it all as the contents of his disembodied head. You must retrieve your soul from Tong Nou by dying nine times and being reincarnated

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wavetable audio engine, vicious full-motion digital video, and an advanced digital game port, that will leave you running for cover. Plus, two Sega Saturn controller ports for multiplayer

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Circle Reader Service #79



Taking Stock Of 1995

The Winners And Losers Of Interactive Entertainment

With the rapid growth in interactive entertainment, many investors might think that "there's gold in them games." The

truth is, computer game companies are just as likely to post big losses as big earnings, as we discovered from their 1995 financial reports.

It is true that computer software is one of the fastest growing segments of the stock market, and it continues to outperform the market overall. In 1994, the Standard & Poors' 500 index declined 1.5 percent, while the Computer Software & Services Index rose 17.9 percent. Similarly,

through October of 1995, the software market saw a 48 percent increase compared to the S&P index which gained only 27 percent. According to PC Data of Reston, VA, computer games account for nearly 22 percent of the total revenue in this market.

With the help of Davis Skaggs investment Management (San Francisco, CA), we found that nearly all of the major game producers/distributors were either big winners or big losers last year, with the exception of Sanctuary Woods which reported almost "normal" returns (see Johnny Wilson's Editorial, page 20, for related information).

Although it's still operating in the red, Activision logged the biggest turn-around

with a 120 percent stock price increase over last year, most of which is attributable to MechWarrior 2's success. Microsoft and Broderbund were the big earnings per share winners, thanks to the diversity of their product lines, brand recognition and "evergreen" product upgrades, which, according to Broderbund's marketing promotions manager, Eric Winkler, "offsets the hit-driven entertainment market."

So, if diversity is the answer, what's the secret of Sierra's success? Well, according to the Standard & Poors' stock reports, "strategic acquisitions will continue to bolster the company's product line and programming capabilities." —*W Anderson*

Company	Symbol	\$ per share 10/30/94	\$ per share 12/29/95	% Change in 1995	Change per share '95	Cashflow per share '95	Earnings per share '94	Cashflow per share '94
Activision	ACTV	14.30	32.30	125.9%	0.95	0.00	1.00	0.50
Activision	ATV	5.00	7.00	40.0%	0.11	0.25	0.37	0.32
Bentley	BENT	1.00	1.50	50.0%	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Broderbund Software	BRSD	48.75	60.75	24.7%	1.72	1.13	0.50	0.10
Broderbund	BRD	48.75	57.00	16.7%	0.61	0.37	0.10	0.00
Electronic Arts	EART	19.25	20.25	5.2%	0.07	0.65	0.6	0.74
Electronic Arts	EAT	19.25	20.25	5.2%	0.07	0.71	0.31	0.00
Hasbro	HASB	30.10	31.75	5.5%	0.22	0.00	0.00	0.00
Hasbro	HAS	30.10	31.75	5.5%	0.22	0.00	0.00	0.00
Microsoft	MSFT	34.10	39.75	16.6%	0.52	0.00	0.00	0.00
Microsoft	MSF	34.10	39.75	16.6%	0.52	0.00	0.00	0.00
Sierra	SIERRA	19.10	26.75	40.1%	0.54	0.24	0.10	0.00
Sierra	SIA	19.10	26.75	40.1%	0.54	0.24	0.10	0.00

All figures obtained from America Online. ¹ 1995 first half results not available. ² Declared over Operating Costs. Offered by America Online's Share Reporting.



ed into various aspects of Sale's consciousness. When navigating through Tong Niu's sinking, surreal landscape with a standard point-and-click interface, you encounter dozens of quirky characters and paradoxical situations. Unfortunately, the process of death and rebirth perpetually sidetracks you from completing tasks and finding clues, making gameplay frustrating. —*K. Hunter*

Sony Imagesoft, (510)449-2333, **IBM/Mac CD-ROM**

Reader Service # 304

GRAND PRIX MANAGER

Interested in the business of Formula 1 racing? Ed Grabowski (designer of Air Bucks) lets you hire a crew, seek out sponsorships, design a car from the ground up, sign service contracts with parts, fuel, and tire providers, and manage the strategy



of competing on a Formula 1 race circuit. The game offers incredible detail for control junkies, but race fans may find themselves a little frustrated by being limited to a blimp's-eye view of extremely small cars while watching/ managing each race. The overhead course views are like the diagrams you'd expect to see in Autocourse, the annual for Grand Prix racing. In short, Grand Prix Manager is flawed, but interesting. —*J. Wilson*

Spectrum HaloByte (510) 522-1164, **IBM CD-ROM**

Reader Service #305

MECHWARRIOR 2: PENTIUM EDITION

The first thing I did with the Win 95 version of

New Golf Games Will Club It Out With Links

Three new golf games are going after a chunk of the green long dominated by Access' Links line of computer golf titles. Grolier's new Greg Norman's Ultimate Challenge Golf should be among the most graphically impressive. It incorporates photo-realistic course terrain using Intel's 3DR technology, as well as radar photography for realistic-looking courses. Ultimate Challenge Golf uses the now-standard power meter to simulate the on-screen golfer's swing.

Newcomer Headgate, however, takes a different approach. Demonstrated at the recent Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, the new The Golf Club (working title) uses physics-based algorithms to calculate ball bounce, spin and roll. You control a 3-D golfer who twists, swings, hooks and slices according to your mouse movement. As the 3-D golfer moves,

you can adjust the smoothness and speed of the swing, as well as the address of the ball, with the smoothness and speed of your mouse. Clicking the mouse determines the timing for actual contact with the ball. Designed and programmed by Vance Cook, designer of Access' World Class Leader Board (Links' ancestor), and one of the project leaders on the



Headgate's The Golf Club uses a full 3-D model of the golfer, and his swing is controlled by your mouse, offering a new feel to computer golf games.

Links products, The Golf Club has an entirely different feel than previous golf games.

Interplay Productions takes a third approach with its VR Golf '96.

This simulation, appearing first on the Sony PlayStation, then migrating to the PC, will use motion-capture technology to let you control the swings and movement of the on-screen golfers. VR Golf '96 will use the traditional swing meter metaphor, along with 3-D technology from their VR Sports series that allows you to see multiple views of your shots simultaneously via a split-screen. This requires true 3-D scenery throughout, so the team abandoned photographic matte techniques and customary two-and-a-half dimensional art tricks in favor of a full 360-degree virtual environment.

Different tastes will dictate whether gamers will opt for the faster playing speed expected from the VR Golf '96 approach or the more satisfying interface metaphor for The Golf Club. One factor which seems certain is that the appearance of these new cutting-edge golf simulators should provide new incentive for Access to finish their next-generation Links product.—
J. Wilson

►Something Wicked This Way Comes

There's a new system in town from Zephyr Computer that may be in your future. It's a Pentium 166 MHz rig completely tricked out for gaming. It steps with a Sound Blaster 16 sound card, Sony speakers (yes, and a sub woofer too), a Logitech Windows Extreme joystick, and your choice of 17-inch monitors. We only had time to give it a quick look, but its CPU performance is about 71 percent faster than a Gateway 2000 P5-133 in WinBench CPUMark tests. In the April issue we'll put it through its paces and tell you what we find.—
Dave Sakavore
Zephyr: 800-448-8806



MechWarrior 2 was to set up a Trial of Grievance. Then I noticed 1024x768 mode wasn't available. My Pentium lives, breathes, and dreams 1024x768, so I was left with an ugly title box in the middle of my screen. Then there was the frequent popping-up of annoying dialog boxes, explaining how to adjust options and giving me useless bits of clan lore. After running this gauntlet of annoyance, I entered

batle. There I was, running full speed, torso twisted, about to bite into a tasty piece of Summoner back armor, when everything froze. I waited. I pounded the controls. Nothing. I attempted to task switch. That was when I realized that not only had the universe frozen, but Win 95 had decided to join it. And to think, I almost gave away my DDS version.—
Greg Fortune

Advice: (800) 477-3652, **Win 95 CD**
Hyper Space # 306

HYPER 3-D PINBALL

This new pinball title is a flash from the past so realistic, you'll be tempted to push the keyboard and nudge your monitor. Virgin does an excellent job of capturing the excitement and intensity of the pinball arcade games of yore. There are six tables in all, each with its own character, music and surprises.



Hyper 3-D Pinball mastery requires deft hand-eye coordination. You control the game with the right and left shift buttons on the keyboard, which mimic the feel of the old pinball machine flippers. Keyboard controls even allow you to virtually nudge the table left, right and bump it forward to keep your ball in play—but be careful, it still hits!—
J. Andersson
Virgin Interactive, 800-874-6607, **PC CD-ROM**
Reader service #307

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DOWN AGAIN



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10 new weapons, 30 new levels.

Toggle floodlights, afterburner speed doubler.

Twice the 360-degree insanity.

You're going down.

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DESCENT II

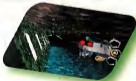
DESCENT II



Parallax
Software



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New "guidebot" ally leads you through levels. • Toggle beam floodlights that turn on and off. • Afterburner that doubles your speed.

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Download the 3-level demo at
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DTP2

30 new robot enemies with advanced artificial intelligence. They learn your moves, react and kill. • 100mm and 3-player network play with player controlled surveillance cameras.

TERROR T.R.A.X.: TRACK OF THE VAMPIRE

You would expect something better from a part owner of TSR and the heir to one of the greatest science fiction characters of all time (Buck



Rogers) This digital equivalent of a "Choose Your Own Adventure" book has a maximum of two choices every few minutes. You don't maneuver your on-screen character, you don't decide what to search, and you don't decide what dialogue to use. You simply sit back to watch bad acting and poor cinematography until you get to an intervention point where you can do "A" or "B." The set-up is pretty clever. The player commands a top-secret rescue squad dealing with the supernatural, but the execution is so poor that it makes *T.R.A.X.* look like a mas terpiece. —J. Wilson

3 Prong Plug, (800)285-4534, **IBM CD-ROM**
Reader Service # 308

TIE FIGHTER COLLECTOR'S CD

Darth Vader has just left the building. This excellent LucasArts collection bundles the original 5 star *Tie Fighter* space simulator, the *Defender* or *the Empire* campaign add-on disk, and an entirely new campaign addition: *Enemies of the Empire*.



TIE *Fighter* was an excellent space combat game, and the *Defender* campaign strongly supplemented the title. The CD updates it all with VGA combat graphics, voice mission briefings and a new spacecraft to fly. The new *Enemies of the Empire* campaign will provide *Tie Fighter* veterans with the challenge of a lifetime. If you've never played *Tie Fighter*, the *Tie Collector's CD* is a must buy. If you already own *Tie Fighter*, the \$15 rebate still makes it worthwhile. —E. Chew
LucasArts Entertainment, (800) STARWARS, **IBM 486-66 CD**
Reader Service #309

THIS MEANS WAR

With an interface similar to *Command and Conquer*, the real time action in this wargame will appeal to gamers who just wanna have fun. You compete with other warlords for domi-



nation of post-apocalypse Earth, planning attack and defense strategies while simultaneously building up your infrastructure. Fortunately, it's not all explosions, the challenge of budgeting resources to create a productive base depends on using mineral sources effectively, controlling population size and creating specialists. Also, if you spend too much time looking after the home turf, your soldiers will march Luddite-like to their destruction. —K. Hunter
MicroProse (408) 771-3151, **IBM CD-ROM**
Reader Service # 310

TOSHIBA 3701

The 3701 proudly continues Toshiba's tradition of shipping high performance, very reliable, but ultimately unexciting CD-ROM drives. The 3701 sorely lacks amenities, with the sole concession to usability being its slightly flimsy, but effective caddyless tray. Toshiba touts this as a "6.7x" drive, with a 1 MB per second transfer rate and a 130 millisecond access time. It scored a 690 on the WinBench 95's CD-ROM WinMark, which is 10 percent faster than the competition. Be warned, installa-



tion is somewhat challenging, and may best be performed by someone with technical savvy with SCSI devices. —L. Case
The Benjamin Group, Inc. (714) 753-0755
Reader Service # 311

GROLIER SCIENCE FICTION MULTIMEDIA ENCYCLOPEDIA

Most reference works on CD are lame, pale copies of their pulp brethren. This, however, is something special. If isn't as fully interactive as you might wish, but it cleverly uses hotlinks, photos and sound bites to place your favorite (and not-so-favorite) SF authors into perspective. The commentaries, from Peter Nichols and John Clute, are even-handed, lucid and even entertaining. Every major literary work, from H.G. Wells (and below) to the vicissitudes of



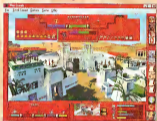
SF's New Age movement and beyond, are keenly examined. All in all, Grolier did a nice job balancing respect with valid criticisms of hundreds of science-fiction works, from books to film, TV and even comics. This collection is an indispensable reference for serious SF scholars, die-hard fans, or those who think that all science-fiction begins and ends with *Star Wars* and *Star Trek*. —T. Coleman

Grolier Electronic Publishing, (203) 797-3530,
IBM CD-ROM
Reader Service # 312

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They Kicked Some Butt.



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D PC Demo available at participating retailers.

3-5-96

SIGHTINGS

Here's an early look at the space invaders that will be vying for room on your hard drive. Some of these games are still months

away, and they aren't even playable yet, but at least you can see what they look like, and get an idea what their intentions are.

Command & Conquer: Red Alert

This sequel to Virgin/Westwood Studio's blockbuster *Command & Conquer* is actually its historical prequel.

This is C&C's version of World War II, and it's what the designers promise, it will be a significant step forward for the C&C line.

In this alternative history, the Nats never came to power

and World War II is a battle between the Allied and Soviet forces. *Red Alert* also adds some background to the *Command & Conquer* universe; you'll see how the GDI was formed and witness the first rearing

of the NOD Brotherhood's ugly head.

There are so many new features in *Red Alert*

that we only have room for a short list: new units of spies, guard dogs, medic units and lightning-appearing Tesla coils; three "sides" to choose from (Russian, and Northern or Southern Allied commands); complete warfare over air, land and sea; improved control of



troops, such as ordering units to stay in formation; six player multiplayer; double-sized maps; and the promise of enhanced AI. If the designers can deliver, *Red Alert* could set a new standard for real-time strategy games.

MissionForce: Cyberstorm

MechWarrior and *EarthSiege* took the giant robots of strategy game lore and moved them into the world of 3-D simulations. Now *MissionForce: Cyberstorm*

from the Dynamix division of Sierra moves them back onto the hex grids. Along with battle-field strategies and weapons upgrades, you'll also have to manage your bio-engineered Hero drivers, keeping them in the action without burning them out. Gamers who loved the classic *BattleMech* on the Amiga should dig this strategy fest.



Toonstruck

Chrisopher Lloyd's comical exploits combined with hilarious, car-



toon-quality animations and an absolutely bizarre world makes *Toonstruck* an adventure game unlike any we've seen. Gamers help Drew Blanc (played by Lloyd) escape a zany cartoon world of his own making—sub-conscious thought can really be

a pain! The bizarre world is filled with the saccharin-sweet characters he's been forced to draw for 10 years, as well as sick, darker characters that lurk in the corners of his mind. Cartoon fans will see many of their favorite animated characters—from Pen & Stimpfy to the old Warner Bros. stars ("Eh, what's up Doc?"). The designers pay homage to virtually everyone on the book. The all-over-the-board humor is delicious, shifting from the dry to the slapstick to the cruel and sadistic.

Third Reich

Complex, quirky and nearly a way of life, the grand daddy of WWII European wargames should finally hit an IBM-compatible shore near you soon—with the board game systems intact. The AI has been rebuilt, so that the nightmare computer opponents of previous *Third Reich* games should, thankfully, be missing in action. If you wondered where all the hard-

core wargames have gone, look no further.



Hands On

These are the games in development we've actually spent some time playing. They represent some of the most interesting titles in the Pipeline, and they are complete enough to actually tell how they're going to play. Most should be released soon.

▶Total Mayhem

Just like the greasy '70s disco-funk that has returned to the airwaves, computer games from a previous generation are also making a comeback. Domark is following suit with its real-time action-strategy title, *TotM: MvMvMvM*.

The game's high-res 3-D graphics and isometric perspective are reminiscent of *Command & Conquer: No Remorse*. And although the version we saw wasn't quite as sharp-looking

One thing is certain—the pace of the game will be nothing less than frenetic. At times we wondered if it might be too fast; it was rather discouraging to break our squad apart, only to have the troopers instantly killed simply because we couldn't instruct them fast enough.

The advantages that this title has over *Command & Conquer* are that your troops gain experience through combat, and after each mission you can outfit your team with new weapons, armor and supplies. Another



as *Origin's* breakthrough action game, *TotM: MvMvMvM* still looks mighty fine.

The game's premise: You command an elite squadron of robotic freedom fighters, duking it out with the Interplanetary Resource Control's 65 different enemy robots over 3-D terrains. Simple!

TotM: MvMvMvM could be described as a real-time version of *X-COM*. You maneuver your squadron around the map as an individual or in a group, and supply them with ammunition, med-kits, etc.

bonus is network play, which, if Domark gets it right, will allow up to eight players to duke it out over pre-designed multi-player levels.

There will be 20 missions in the game, and a flexible level editor will let you create new missions to your hearts' content.

What's old is new again, I guess. I wonder if this means my huge collection of *Commodore 64* games will be worth something someday...

—George Jones
Domark, (415) 513-8529

PC CD-ROM

▶Z

Z is a real-time strategy game that combines *Command & Conquer* style warfare with elements of fast action games.

You assume the corn, com-

flag and the *Command & Conquer* elements, *Z* also throws in a foul-mouthed, mechanical general who either berates or salutes you after each mission, and a pair of Beavis and Butt-head-like delivery boys who tarry your army between scenarios. Humorous, fast-paced and crowded with dismembered body parts and debris, *Z* promises to be a very stressful and challenging strategy title that ups the ante on



manding a group of soldiers and maneuvering from planet to planet while waging war on your adversaries. You won't have to bother with building or harvesting anything here. Instead, the objective is more like capture-the-flag.

Here's how it works: each territory is comprised of a dozen or so squares. In each square is a flag and either a robot production or vehicle production plant. The side that touches the flag first controls the square and its attendant production facility. To win each scenario, you must destroy your enemy's beginning strong hold. But to do that, you'll need a good-sized army, which in turn requires a healthy production base. Thus, the game becomes a race to see who can control the most squares, then quickly degenerates to a hard-hitting melee as you attempt to wrest control of each square from your enemy.

Aside from capturing the

real-time wargaming.

—Eliot Chin

Virgin Interactive, (800) 874-4607

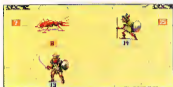
PC CD-ROM

▶FANTASY GENERAL

Parzen-heads who found *ALLEGRO GENERAL*

lacking may find *FANTASY GENERAL's* fantastical campaigns more to their liking. The wonderfully aggressive AI from *Phoenex GENERAL* is back for renewed human-bashing. This time supported by beastly grunts—Orc shock troops, Goblin Light Infantry, Bronzemen and Werewolves, to name but a few. Quick play is everything; rarely do you have more than 15 units per side in a battle. The "over-strength" units of *PG* are gone, but each unit is rated for melee, skirmish, defense, spellcasting,

Hands On



armor and ability to resist magic. Damage in combat is split between deaths, which cannot be healed during a battle, and wounds, which can.

Combat has a nice medieval fantasy feel due to the use of skirmishers, which are weak but effective against slow moving troops. The siege machines—which include not only catapults, but the aptly named Disease Throwers—are much like artillery in *Puzzle General*, except they support units on offense. Defensive fire support is provided by Eli Archers, and the hit-and-run tactics of the Undead Cavalry would impress even Genghis Khan's finest. Add Balloon Men Bombardiers, Green Dragons and Roc Knights for fighter support, with a healthy mix of Magic spells and items, and you have the biggest potential for a run-away wargame hit since... well, *Puzzle General*—especially since FG's campaign mode is very reminiscent of its storied predecessor.

—Tory Coleman

Strategic Simulations, Inc., (800) 245-4525

PC CD-ROM

►Qin: Tomb of the Middle Kingdom

Journey to 21st century Xian, the resting place of China's first emperor, Qin Shi Huangdi. Huangdi was a tyrant who built an elaborate tomb for himself, guarded by thousands of terra-cotta soldiers and booty trapped with crossbows and ingenious traps. Inside lies a treasure, hidden and guarded for thou-

sands of years.

In QIN, you stumble into the entrance of the Emperor's tomb. You must find the treasure within and return to the outside, all amidst the backdrop of civil war. Other forces are also after the treasures of the Qin tomb, and if they find it first an awful fate awaits. But finding the treasure won't be easy. The tomb's traps are still lethal and challenging even after thousands of years of dormancy.

While recent adventure games have taken a turn toward unnecessary puzzles, the designers of QIN have made a serious attempt to integrate the puzzles into the adventure. But even though they have succeeded in making most puzzles quite challenging, some still seem a bit frivolous. As for accuracy, some puzzles are



obviously fictitious—I doubt you'd find puzzles based on Chinese characters in a real tomb, where even the village idiots could figure them out.

QIN does have beautiful graphics and a decent story line, but movement in the game is far from ideal. In the pre-release version, movement was often stilted and limited to 90 degree turns. Hopefully, the designers will be able to take care of this before the game's release.

On a brighter note, I give QIN high marks for its realism and attention to visual detail. The designers also deserve credit for including ancient Chinese characters, Mandarin voices, a soundtrack of Chinese music, and a detailed encyclopedia of Chinese history and anthropology.—E-Not! Chou

Time Warner (212) 522-4643

PC CD-ROM

PIPELINE

Estimated release dates based on the latest information from developers

GAME NAME, COMPANY	RELEASE DATE
PAQSD DeathKeep SSI	5/95
Afterlife LucasArts	Spring 98
Age of Billies SSI	7/95
Alexander the Great SSI	Summer 98
Alien Trilogy Acclaim	4/95
Azrael's Tear Mindscape	6/98
C&C: Red Alert Westwood/Virgin	5/95
Callahan's Saboteur Legend	9/95
Chaos Overlords New World	3/95
Chessmaster 5000 Mindscape	4/95
Conquest of the New World Interplay	4/95
Daggerfall Bethesda	Q1/96
Dungeon Keeper Bullfrog/EA	3/95
Earthlog II Sierra	3/98
Fantasy General SSI	3/95
Guardians of Oasillyn Virgin	Q2/95
History of the World Avalon Hill	8/95
Invulnerables Bullfrog/EA	Summer 98
Jagged Alliance Gold	Summer 95
Lighthouse Sierra	6/95
Magic of Xanth Legend	Fall 95
Magic the Gathering MicroProse	Summer 98
Master of Orion 2 MicroProse	Q2/95
MegaRace 2 Mindscape	4/98
Medal Lords New World	Spring 95
Micro League Baseball 98 MicroLeague	6/95
Mission Force CyberStorm Sierra OnLine	Spring 96
Misty Python & Holy Grail 7th Level	Summer 98
Over the Reich Avalon Hill	5/95
Pandora Directive Access	3/95
Pax Imperia II Blizzard	Q1/96
Panzerblitz Avalon Hill	3/93
Qin Time Warner	5/95
Realms of Arkania 3 Sir Tech	3/95
Return to Kronor 7th Level	6/95
Ripper Tale 2	Spring 98
Robert E. Lee Sierra	6/95
Sid Meier's Civilization II MicroProse	3/95
Space Bucks Impressions/Sierra	3/95
Spycraft Activision	Q1/96
Star Fleet Academy Interplay	Summer 96
Star Trader Mindscape	6/98
Super Heroes MicroProse	Q2/95
Terra Nova Virgin	3/95
The Dame Was Laided Philips	4/95
The Lost Blitzkrieg SSG	Q1/98
Theme Hospital Bullfrog/EA	4/95
Third Reich Avalon Hill	6/95
Threshold Mindscape	5/95
Timelapse GTE Entertainment	8/95
ToonsRuck Virgin	Q3/95
Total Mayhem Domark	5/95
X-Com 3: The Apocalypse MicroProse	Fall 95
VR Soccer Interplay	3/95
Z Virgin	Q2/95
Wizardry Gold Sir Tech	3/95
1943 European Air War MicroProse	Q2/95
10th Planet Bethesda	9/95



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ceilings and Floors.

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- Edit your own levels



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Circle Reader Service #142

AIM HIGH

The Mad Scramble Of 1996 Flight Sims Gives You Several Ways To Achieve Tone

BY DENNY ATKIN

The coming year promises the heaviest air action since Operation Desert Storm, but this time most of it will be taking place in virtual airspace. Modern jet simulations are set to rule the skies, with historical sims popping up for occasional border skirmishes. We fired up the radars and sent out recon drones to bring you this intelligence report on incoming aircraft ranging from Apaches to X-planes.



THE F-16S COMETH

The Lockheed F-16 Fighting Falcon has been a favorite choice of sim developers, and for good reason. A superb close-range dogfighter, the F-16 is also an adept strike aircraft, capable of carrying up to 12,000 pounds of air-to-air and air-to-mud weaponry. Likewise, the F-16 is a natural choice for flight sims, since the plane's flexibility lets designers send gamers on a wide variety of missions.

IRAQ-ING UP KILLS

A squadron of F-16 sims is flying onto shelves over the course of this year, aiming to usurp *FALCON 3.0*'s long-standing status as the king of serious flight simulations. First on the block should be *BACK TO BAGHDAD*, from newcomer Military Simulations, Inc. This simulation of a hypothetical Second Gulf War straps you into the cockpit of an F-16C Block 50 and sends you on over 60 missions into Iraq, many of which duplicate missions flown in Operation Desert Storm.

MSI's design specifications indicate that this is one of the most ambitious attempts at exactly duplicating a plane's systems (and its flight environment) yet. The sim is set to model nine modes of the F-16's APG-68 radar system, and you'll need to learn to manage details such as antenna elevation and azimuth to get a lock on the enemy. If you're a real stickler for realism, you can even dig out that old Hercules monochrome video card and monitor from the attic, stick it in your Pentium system, and use the second monitor as a dedicated radar display.

A full 6 DOF (degrees of freedom) flight model is promised, along with detailed terrain based on the same French satellite imagery used



BAGHDAD SHUFFLE Actual satellite imagery of Iraq lends authenticity to *Back to Baghdad*'s missions.

by General Schwartzkopf prior to the Gulf War. If the usual load of Mavericks, Sidewinders, AMRAAMS, and iron bombs doesn't seem to be giving Saddam a bad enough day, you can also drop the B-61 tactical nuclear weapon. If the designers live up to most of their stated goals, *Back to Baghdad* will make *FALCON 3.0* look like a novice's sim. If all this wasn't enough, MSI is also promising to release a version with Internet play later in 1996, with support for over 50 players per session.

FRONT LINE FALCON

Next in the pattern is *F-16 Fighting Falcon*, from the team of Digital Integration and Interactive Magic. This isn't Digital Integration's first try at an F-16 simulation. The company's *F-16 COMBAT FLIGHT*—released over five years ago for the Amiga, Atari ST, and EGA PC—was a standard-setter for its time. *F-16 Fighting Falcon* is slated to continue that tradition of realism and sophistication. The design document we examined indicated that DI's simulating just about every control in the F-16's cockpit except the air-conditioning knob. If you're not a sim ace yet, don't despair. A free-for-all arcade mode is promised as well.

The product was originally slated for release this spring, but DI decided to put its resources into finishing *Hero* first, so look for it this fall. The extra time will be spent revamping the ground-shading graphics engine used in *AMCHE* and *Hero*, adding texture mapping and other enhancements. Resolutions up to 800x600 will be supported, so *F-16 Fighting Falcon* should look good and feel good.

Mission structure looks similar to that of *AMCHE* and *Hero*, with training missions, single missions, network play, and a campaign mode. Expect a dramatically enhanced version of the mission planner found in *TORWOOD* as well.



RE-ENGINEED FALCON Digital Integration is replacing *F-16 Fighting Falcon*'s Amiga-style terrain engine, shown here, with a new texture-mapped design.

Mission structure looks similar to that of *AMCHE* and *Hero*, with training missions, single missions, network play, and a campaign mode. Expect a dramatically enhanced version of the mission planner found in *TORWOOD* as well.

VAPOR BIRO

But what of the game that everyone's been waiting for, Spectrum Hobby's *FALCON 4.0*? Don't hold your breath on this one, folks. Although Spectrum Hobbybyte treated the press to a sneak-peek at this sequel to 1991's *FALCON 3.0* way back in late 1994, nowadays the company won't say anything about it other than it's expected to ship late this year.

At the preview, we saw preliminary work on a more detailed terrain engine, much-improved aircraft models, and a 3-D base environment that players would work in between missions. However, this was well over a year-and-a-half ago, and most of that development team has moved on to other projects or other companies. With Spectrum's silence on the title and *Tor Gun* still not shipping at press time, we'll be surprised to see *FALCON 4.0* this year.

FUTURE FIGHTERS

There are plenty of doomsmen who predict worldwide chaos or even Armageddon in the year 2000. If it doesn't happen, they can at least turn to the profusion of upcoming sims that simulate major conflicts at the end of the Millennium.

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This must be the entrance to the Scar. Let's see what lies beyond that insane cliff...



What a great old water mill! I wonder if it still works...



What kind of name is "Janmyrth"? I hope this dude doesn't cast some ugly spell my way.



Finally! The entrance to the fabled Land of Roots.



Right on! I could get cool weaponry, armor, artifacts, spells, or even a silver key to unlock doors out of this deal. Oooh, it's the "Potion of Healing"! That could come in handy down the road.

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"Mothers hold your children; children hold your tongue. For here you sleep and for the ... you go."

What the devil is he talking about? I thought those know-it-all talking ornaments were supposed to give clues, not riddle me to death.



How does this fit the Laughing Skull of Thunderous Might? I'm outta here.



This old geyser is the Land of Root's caretaker. Tried to frighten me off my quest by warning me about all the nasty things that will happen to me in this dungeon. Not a chance, pops.



Can Fungus Man withstand my Ash and Clinders spell blast? I didn't think so.



The wind is blowing me around like crazy... How do they expect me to get past this spike trap if I can't even control my movement?



What's going on here... nobody told me about this. Wait a second, what's his name? Was telling the truth? The fate of the whole quest hinges on my next move...



It's a tree sprite. Looks like she'll guide me to my next adventure beyond the Scar and into the legendary Reed Plane. Maybe it can wait until tomorrow... maybe not.

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PLANE JANE'S

ADVANCED TACTICAL FIGHTERS, the first in EA/Origin's new Jane's Combat Simulations line, drops you into three frighteningly viable conflicts. One features the U.S. backing the Egyptian government after an Islamic military takeover, while another has the U.S. defending Belgium and The Netherlands after those countries refuse to join a trade embargo against the French. There's also a Russian scenario, a follow-up to the USNF campaign. This one teams U.S. forces with the Siberian Freedom Party in combat over Vladivostok as it attempts to dethrone the hard-line Russian government.



HARRIER CARRIER *Force Recon* takes 2 straps you into the cockpit of both AH-66 Harriers, shown here, and AH-1W SuperCobras. *Jeopardies*

ATF's calling card is its unique cadre of aircraft, all based on data acquired through EA's alliance with Jane's, a publisher respected as the world authority on military information. You'll fly missions in advanced planes like the Lockheed F-117A Nighthawk stealth fighter, the Northrop B-2 Spirit stealth

bomber, and the Dassault Rafale. However, ATF doesn't stop with the present. It also presents combat versions of a number of the Grumman X-29 FSW (forward-swept wing) research aircraft and the Rockwell-Messerschmitt X-31 thrust-vectoring test plane. Finally, there's the F-32 Ghost Hawk, based on Lockheed's proposal for the ASTOVL (Advanced Short Take-Off, Vertical Landing) strike fighter competition. These latter aircraft offer performance advantages that change the rules of air-to-air combat. The X-31's thrust vectoring, for example, allows you to point its nose up to 60 degrees off the current direction of travel, so you can keep your opponent in your sights no matter how maneuverable he is.

ATF is based on an updated version of the simulation engine used in U.S. Navy Fighters and Marine Fighters, so you can expect similar single-mission and campaign offerings. One enhancement, though, promises to make this a whole new ball game—network support. The

version currently in testing supports up to eight network players, as well as modem and direct serial play (Modem play may be dropped before the product ships.) Designer Brent Iverson says net play is based around single missions rather than a campaign, since few players are able to get together long enough to play a network campaign. Cooperative and competitive play are supported, with any mix of players on each side. Canned missions aren't just of the simple head-to-head variety—strike, dogfighting, intercept, escort, and anti-spb are among the mission types available

Perhaps most enticing is the ability to fly any plane in the sim in net mode. These include everything from F-4D Phantom and Q-5 Fantan fighters to C-6 transports, a variety of bombers, and the Aurora spy plane. You'll also be able to import planes from USNF and Marine Fighters. You might pit two players in advanced X-31s against six opponents flying relatively primitive Mirage IIIs, or you can relive Vietnam by matching four F-4Ds against four MiG-21s.

MISSION CRITICAL

Another turn-of-the-century sim, *JetFighter III*, looks set to surpass even Ocean's *EF2000* in terrain detail and accuracy. At the recent Consumer Electronics Show, Mission Studios dropped me into an ejection seat and let me fly the new hi-res beta version. I was left slack-jawed. The version I previewed for the December, 1995 issue was one of the best-looking VGA sims I'd seen, but the addition of 640x480 SVGA graphics moves JF III to the head of the graphics pack. The terrain accuracy is so good that we were able to look at a real map of Chile and pinpoint our exact location. The hilly terrain should make for some interesting dogfight situations.

After training around San Francisco, you'll sail to Cuba and attempt to stop the Cuban military from assisting Columbian drug cartels. Once you've put a stop to this nefarious alliance, you'll be deployed to Chile, where you're charged with heading off an Argentinian invasion. Ranging from relatively flat land to the towering Andes mountains to the icy Antarctic Peninsula, the Chilean terrain gives many opportunities for Mission to show off its new scenery engine. The virtual cockpit looks much better than the version we examined back in the December issue. SVGA makes a huge difference in instrument readability.

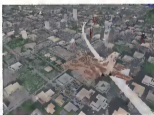
JF III should please all but the most die-hard of sim fans. Other than the use of the land-based F-22 as a carrier plane (a transgression committed by a surprising number of recent simulations), Mission is only sacrificing accuracy in areas where it benefits gameplay. Originally slated for a January release, at press time Mission was shooting for an April ship date.

HARRIER TIMES

Domark is also sending virtual pilots to Cuba—this time to combat an upcoming hard-line Communist resurgence—with *Force Recon*'s *Force Recon* 2. The new GSF16 simulation engine will feature 65,000-color texture-mapped graphics at resolutions up to 1024x768, as well as support for

the new 3-D graphics cards.

FR2 is notable as one of the first sims to promise to realistically model both aircraft and helicopters. Pilots will be able to fly both the AH-66 Harrier jump jet and the AH-1W SuperCobra. Domark's Bryan Walker is working with Scott Warren, Chief Flight Test Engineer for the Harrier 2, + project for McDonnell Douglas, to develop the Harrier's flight model. Along with network and head-to-head modem play, there's also a campaign mode where one player can direct ground and air assets using a real-time strategic interface, then



SMOKIN' A missile curves off in the distance as the *JetFighter III* F-22 enters urban combat. *Jeopardies*



BARON DOWN The pilot of this Red Bull Air Race biplane will be painting a British roundel on the side of his plane when he gets home.

By an aircraft in support of these movements.

CLEARED FOR TAKEOFF

There are a number of other sims still in the embryonic stage; we probably won't see these until 1997. The folks at Looking Glass Technologies are finally granting the wish of all flight junkies: tons armed aircraft. The company's goal is to build a combat simulation with graphics and flight models as impressive as those in its fresh man aerobic simulation. To this end, they've put together a design team that includes, among other pilots, a former F-16 driver who's flown missions over Bosnia. This sim won't see the light of day until mid-1997, and at this early stage of development, LGT is interested in finding out what you want to see in it. Pop over to <http://www.glass.com> and answer the online survey.

Other projects still in the rumor stage: Reliable sources say the second Jane's Combat Simulations product from the Andy Hollis team at Origin will be a highly accurate F-22 Lightning II simulation. (Yep, no carrier ops here!) Ocean is currently in the planning stage for the sequel to EF2000, code-named TFX3. Dynamix has had a test pilot style jet simulation planned for a while, but that's been put on the back burner in favor of the company's Tigre helicopter sim.

HISTORY LESSONS

Simulations seem to come in phases: Modern jets will rule the shelves for a while, then the World War II piston-engine era will resurface. At the moment the historical sim category is in hibernation, at least as far as single-player flying goes. With only a couple of releases in each World War category this year, real sim pilots, who don't use missiles, won't be faced with much decision-making stress.

BARON VON SEQUEL

Sierra's Dynamix division is working on one of the most anticipated sequels in flight simulation history: Red Baron II is the follow-up to Dynamix's classic 1991 sim, a title so good versions can still be found on store shelves five years later. With such high standards to follow, could Red Baron II possibly live up to its predecessor?

I was able to fly an early version of this biplane sim, and I don't think this update will disappoint. This Win 95 simulator sports fast graphics,

with texture-mapped rolling European landscapes and beautifully camouflaged aircraft. Realistic flight models (as you'd expect when one of the key team members is Gary Slotlmyer, one of the driving forces behind Spectrum Holobyte's Falcon 3.0) drive the 42 simulated planes, 22 of which are flyable by the player.

A rich combat environment will include other aircraft flying on independent missions, so you may be faced with decisions such as "do I fly the assigned mission, or attack that group of bombers that seems to be heading toward my airbase?" Similar to the campaign generator in EF2000, missions are created by a dynamic generator, so you won't find yourself flying a canned series as you advance your pilot through the ranks. Modern and Network play have been added to this version, and if some performance issues are addressable, Dynamix may be able to support up to 16 players. Look for a full-fledged preview in next month's CG.

BATTLES OVER BRITAIN

MicroProse's 1943: The European Air War takes the successful 1942: The Pacific Air War engine and reworks it as a simulation of the aerial battles against Nazi forces. Like its predecessor, the year means little: the simulation actually starts with the Battle of Britain and ends in 1945 after VE Day.

Starter Sims

If your prior experiences with flight sims have generally involved smacking into runways and mountains at mach speed, don't give up. Some new sims are targeted at the casual gamer who just wants to get up into the skies and shoot something.

If you've seen the movie, you have all the preparation you need to play Spectrum Holobyte's long-delayed Top Gun: Fire At Will. You'll take on the role of Maverick in this F-14 Tomcat simulation, which, although simplified, features a realistic, deadly assortment of opponent aircraft. Heavy radio traffic—both from other planes and Goose, your back-seater—will help guide you through your missions. Although instrumentation and radar have been simplified, the flight physics are pretty good, and you'll find Top Gun is a good transition into more realistic simulations.

On the even simpler side is Sierra/Dynamix's Sleaz Thunder: A-10 Revenge. This game bridges the gaps between 3-D arcade shooters and more realistic flight

sims. Forget the typical tactical situations

here—this ain't the Air Force, this is Hollywood. You're a mercenary tasked with eliminating Columbian Drug traffickers, aggressive Middle East terrorists, and—get this—North Korean forces who are risking war in an effort to kidnap an international film star. The A-10's flight model here is extremely simple; you won't see much difference over the five-year-old original here. The combat universe is small, and the sharp graphics and rock-and-roll soundtrack highlight Sleaz Thunder's emphasis on game over simulation.



A-10 ATTACK Sleaz Thunder: A-10 Revenge is more about action than accuracy.

You'll be able to fly for the British, American, or German air forces on a variety of missions, including bomber interception, escort, ground support, and fighter sweeps. Twenty different flyable aircraft are included, and MicroProse plans to use feedback from 1942:PMW to provide better gameplay.

The biggest difference here is the addition of a squadron career. You'll be able to choose a starting level, from wingman to group leader,



SIGHTSEEING RIDES *Apache* Loxodon will feature near-flight Unrealized-quality terrain. And guess too!

and work your way through the ranks. At each level of command you'll gain more control over the group, eventually being given complete control over pilot roster, aircraft armament, and so on. The gameplay will also change just by the nature of the European air war. Missions are more oriented toward strategic bombing, and bomber escort or attack missions will require new strategies. Also, much of your combat will be over populated—and often hostile—lands, rather than empty ocean. Both head-to-head and cooperative missions are supported using modem or network links.

DUEL REDUX

Jaeger Software has started work on *Fighter Duel 2*, an update that addresses many of the complaints about the company's freshman PC product. *Fighter Duel 1* is superb if you have access to a human opponent, but can quickly fall flat if you're playing alone. *FD2* will feature a series of mission scenarios which should keep things interesting during solo play. The combat has moved inland, and you'll now be able to battle over something more interesting than a huge expanse of blue water. More planes will be featured, and they won't all use *FD's* P-51 instrument panel. This Win 95 sim will allow network play (cooperative and antagonistic) in addition to modem links.

Piston jocks will also be able to check out solo versions of Domark's *Confirmed Kill*, and Kesmai's *Am Warfare 2*; see the sidebar "Going Solo" for details. Finally, Dynamix is said to be planning a *Battle of Britain* simulation sometime after the release of *Red Baron II*.

BLADE RUNNERS

Helicopter sims are growing in popularity, and the Apache is as ubiquitous a target for simulation in this genre as the F-16 is over in the

fixed-wing arena. The next chopper sim on the block is *Interactive Magic* and *Digital Integration's Havo*, the sequel to last year's hit *Apache*. See the preview that follows this feature for full details.

HELLO THERE

Next up after *Havo* will be *AH-64D Loxodon*, an Apache simulation from EA/Origin's *Jane's Combat Simulations* line. Designer Andy Hollis says that in addition to the plentitude of *Jane's* reference material, his team has access to the design documentation and operator manuals for the Longbow Apache—which he finds rather amazing considering the Longbow isn't even in full production yet.

The game can be played in VGA and SVGA, and will offer texture-mapped, rolling terrain. Hollis says the texture-mapped objects are stunningly detailed, and "we put in lots of gratuitous ways to look at this stuff, since you're usually flying over it at high speed or blowing it up." The flight engine is completely new—there's no refleshed *Street Commander* code here.

Hollis and his team have been consulting with an Apache Training Brigade at Ft. Hood, Texas, and a group of three pilots has been visiting Origin on a regular basis to help with flight modeling. He claims there's a certain realistic buoyancy to the helicopter's movement that he's never experienced in a sim before.

Although the product is slated to come with a manual that's several hundred pages long, you probably won't need it. *Loxodon* will feature interactive tutorial missions with an instructor's voice guiding you. Once you're up to speed, you can fly historical missions based on actual Apache missions in Panama and the Persian Gulf, as well as a fictional series of missions in the Ukraine. There's also a non-linear campaign mode. The terrain for all these actions is based on U.S. Geological Service digital elevation map data. The most welcome aspect of the terrain engine is the addition of treelines in addition to the usual valleys and ridges—for once, standard helicopter pop-up attacks will be effective.

Going Solo

Generally, sims are designed first as stand-alone games, and then network and modem play is added as a bonus value, but a few companies are taking their networked sims on solo flights. *Interactive Magic* and Kesmai are teaming up to create a boxed version of *Am Warfare 2*. This one promises to offer a lot more standalone playability than the old *Konami SVGA Am Warfare*, as it will sport a wide variety of offensive and defensive missions. See last month's *Simulations* column for full details.

Domark plans a standalone release of *Confirmed Kill* a few months after the online version goes live this summer. The company is working with a group that's done military-spec sims on this one, and "exceedingly realistic flight modeling" is promised. Among the promised features are a mission editor, virtual cockpits with a podlock view, 3-D graphics card support, and voice-transmission capability.

There's also a chance we could see a standalone version of *IGI's Windows*, the multiplayer sim covered in this month's *Simulations* column, from Graphic Simulations.

IT'S COMING

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▶ FLIGHT SIM ROUNDUP

An add-on disk slated for fall release will add new missions, multi-player support, a Windows 95-native engine, and hardware support for 3-D graphics.

ROTOR REGISTRATION

Development of a third Apache simulation, simply named AH-64A, is being spearheaded by Domark's Bryan Walker, a former AH-64 pilot who flew in Desert Storm. Walker's experience isn't just going to aid the hardware accuracy of AH-64A—his team also plans to add a human element. Each pilot will have a set of personality traits that will govern his performance over the course of a deployment—battlefield events and the quality of your leadership will affect crew cohesion. You may even have to shuffle crews around when pilots don't get along, or charm the supply officer into slipping your boys some nonstandard "morale boosters."

Stated to use the same 64,000 color graphics engine as *Flying Nightmares 2*, AH-64A will draw on Walker's experience as an Apache driver to make sure that the flight model, weapons performance, and combat tactics are as accurate as possible. Perhaps most exciting is Domark's new networking code, which should allow connectivity between AH-64A, *Flying Nightmares 2*, and (oddly enough) *Convexio Kill*.



▶ **ROTOR SCOOTER** Information from Jane's and input from a real Apache Training Brigade could make *Apache* look like the most realistic whirly sim yet.

Flying Naked

Civilian sims are set to experience a resurgence late in the year, thanks to a flight sim industry that's had more mergers than the airlines in recent months. Microsoft purchased BAQ, the Bruce Artwick Organization responsible for coding *Fuzzi Simulator 5.1* and a wide variety of add-ons, in late 1995. Look for the software giant to step up its simulation efforts in coming months.

Meanwhile, Sierra has purchased the flight simulation business of SubLogic, the company that pioneered personal computer flight simulation over 15 years ago. Sierra plans to combine the realism of SubLogic's flight models and aircraft systems with the Dynamix 3Space terrain technology to create a new recreational flying sim that may take on *Fuzzi Simulator*. Look for five aircraft, including an amphibian and an aerobatic stunt plane.

Looking Glass Technologies will be releasing a Windows 95 version of *Fuzzi Simulator*, featuring five new airport areas to fly from. An inexpensive upgrade will be available for purchasers of the DOS version. Next up from LGT is a general aviation sim that takes the graphics and flight model detail of *Fuzzi Simulator* and adds visual and instrument navigation, scenarios, and a combat-game-style mission structure. Reliable sources say that along with the typical general aviation aircraft, LGT plans to sneak a P-51 Mustang into the sim as well.

VERTICAL MARKETING

Also in the works for chopper fans are the aforementioned *Flying Nightmares 2*, which will feature the Bell AH-1W SuperCobra, and Dynamix's first helicopter simulation. Bucking the Apache trend, the Dynamix effort will simulate the Eurocopter Tigre, a joint French and German design built for anti-tank and battlefield support operations.

Approach Pattern

Simulation	Producer	Genre	Expected Release *	OS	Network play?	Modem play?	Top Complexity **
1943 European Air War	MicroProse	WW II	Summer	DOS	yes	yes	Advanced
Advanced School of Guns	FAWent's	Modern Jet	Second quarter	DOS	yes	no/yes	Intermediate
AH-64A	Domark	Helicopter	First quarter '97	Win 95	yes	yes	Advanced
AH-64D Lookzoo	Looking Glass's	Helicopter	Second quarter	DOS	no/yes	no/yes	Intermediate
Air Warrior 2	Interactive Magic	WW II/ Korea	Third quarter	Win 95	yes	yes	Advanced
Back to Backzoo	Millar Studios/3DO, Ltd.	Modern Jet	Second quarter	DOS	no/yes	no/yes	Intermediate
Confirmed Kill	Domark	WW II/ Korea	Third quarter	Win 95	yes	yes	Advanced
F-16 Fighting Falcon	Interactive Magic	Modern Jet	Third quarter	Win 95	yes	yes	Advanced
Falcon 4.0	Spectrum HoloByte	Modern Jet	Fourth quarter	Win 95	yes	yes	Advanced
Flying Aces 2	Looking Glass's	WW I	Fourth quarter	Win 95	yes	yes	Advanced
Flying Nightmares 2	Domark	Jet/Helicopter	Fourth quarter	Win 95	yes	yes	Advanced
Fuzzi	Interactive Magic	Helicopter	Second quarter	DOS	yes	yes	Advanced
JetFighter III	Mission Studios	Modern Jet	Second quarter	DOS	no	no	Intermediate
Red Baron II	Sierra/Dynamix	WW I	Third quarter	Win 95	yes	yes	Advanced
Silent Thunder: A-10	Sierra/Dynamix	Modern Jet	Imminent	Win 95	no	no	Beginner
Spyplane: Ace of War	Spectrum HoloByte	Modern Jet	Third quarter	DOS	yes	yes	Intermediate

* Release dates are often—usually, actually—subject to change

** All of these offer simplified beginner options as well

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HIND SIGHT

Digital Integration And I-Magic Make A Cool Mil

BY DENNY ATKIN



There are faster helicopters, there are more powerful helicopters, and there are certainly stealthier helicopters. But you won't find a meaner looking helicopter than the Mi-24 Hind. This attack helicopter started life as a heavily armed assault troop transport, but ended up serving as the Soviet Union's primary gunship, and was a common sight wherever the Eastern Bloc military projected its power. While the United States' AH-64 Apache relies on a combination of speed, agility, and sophisticated electronics for a battlefield advantage, the Mi-24 Hind holds its own using brute force. Heavy armor and big missiles made it a feared sight in Afghanistan, and throughout the Soviet bloc.

Today, the Hind remains in service in the air forces of around 20 nations, and thanks to the efforts of Digital Integration and Interactive Magic, it will soon be appearing on PC screens as well. Hind is the companies' sequel to last year's successful *Anchore* helicopter simulation. It's based on the same simulation engine as *Anchore*, so much of what you'll find here is familiar. However, the Hind's mission and capabilities are different enough to give this simulation a fresh feel.

BLADE RUNNER

The Hind is a much larger helicopter than the Apache, and isn't nearly as agile. An older design, the helicopter also doesn't have the

Apache's auto-stabilization system, so its pilots must deal with control cross-coupling. Hind features three flight models: Arcade, designed to be extremely easy to fly; Realistic, designed to simulate as closely as possible the Hind's real flight characteristics; and Simplified, which is identical to realistic mode but with control cross-coupling removed. Don't let the cross-coupling scare you, though. Although the Hind isn't as easy to fly as the Apache, a tight control system on the real Hind absorbs oscillation in all three axes, stabilizing the aircraft in a level attitude and making it easier to hold course in forward flight and while hovering. The Alpha version I evaluated only had the Arcade flight model active, but given DI's record with sims like *Anchore* and *Torpedo*, Hind's realistic model shouldn't disappoint.

The Hind's 12.7mm four-banded Gatling-type cannon fires 4,000 to 5,000 rounds per minute, but doesn't pack as much punch as the 30mm cannon on the Apache. It has plenty of power for air-to-air use or against lightly armored ground targets, but for main battle tanks you'll need to rely on pylon-mounted missiles. No problem there, though. With rails for four AT-6 Spiral anti-tank missiles, along with four pylons capable of carrying more anti-tank missiles, 80mm rocket pods, grenade launchers, napalm bombs, and even mine-laying equipment, the Hind is anything but under armed.

The Hind's avionics suite isn't as sophisticated as the Apache's, but it does have a HUD, low-light level TV displays, laser designator, and a threat-warning system called the Natasha Device that analyzes an approaching missile's signature and warns the crew of the missile type, bearing, and range using an audible female voice.

COMBAT ROCK

Hind's menu structure will be familiar to any *Anchore* flyer. Quickstart is an arcade-style scenario which drops you right into the heart of a battle, complete with a missile locked on target. This mode features a simplified, arcade-style flight model, as well as a scoring mechanism



▶ **NIL SPICE** The Mi-24 Hind presents an intimidating profile.



ON THE CHOPPER BLOCK A South Korean tank gets tanked by a Spiral missile.

and a top-10 vanity board. If you've had a really bad day and you just want to blast things, Quickstart Invincible sets you up in a similar situation, but with unlimited fuel and weaponry, and none of that annoying ground fire. Once you get a basic feel for chopper combat in the arcade mode, Training mode will show you how you're supposed to fly the thing.

Once you get the hang of things, you can fly a series of single missions, or take a shot at the campaign. Although the campaign missions are pre-scripted, the mission sequence depends on your performance. Before a mission and you get dropped a stiff level, excel and you'll move up. Unless your piloting is robotically consistent, you'll be able to play the campaign a number of times before the missions repeat.

Because the Hind can carry many things the Apache can't—including bombs and troops—you'll find a wider variety of missions here. You may be tasked with crossing enemy lines and dropping troops into a hot spot, or you might be sent on Medic missions. Anti-ship and anti-sub missions should surface in this sim, as well as traditional escort, recon, point-attack, and search-and-destroy missions.

The action takes place in three locales. You'll fly against the Mujahideen in Afghanistan, taking on well-armed guerrilla troops as well as Pakistani Air Force F-16s. The Korean theater puts you in the middle of a North Korean incursion into South Korea in a raid to alleviate a chronic food shortage. Securing food supplies is a unique goal for a flight sim; despite your humanitarian intentions, a well-armed force that includes Apache Longbows will try to send you packing for home. Finally, the Kazakhstan scenario pits you against a rebellious breakaway republic using mostly ex-Soviet technology—including Hinds.

ROTOR CLUB

According to DI, the network play quirks encountered in Apache have been worked out, and Hino should comfortably support up to 16 players. There are also a number of two-player missions, playable using network, serial, or modem connections. Combat pits the players against each other; Pilot/Gunner mode puts one pilot at the flight controls and the second in the gunner position; and Leader/Wingman is a cooperative mode where two Hinds fly together. The Korean theater is shared with Apache, and the two sims can be tied together for head-to-head or

network play.

While network play has been fine-tuned, the SVGA graphics engine is essentially the same as found in Apache. The Gouraud-shaded polygon graphics look really nice; while the lack of texture mapping means you don't get the "you are there" feeling you get in EF2000, the realistic palette and smoothing effects give a much less computerish effect than Su-27 Flare. Thankfully, it appears that DI is modeling the Russian-style instruments realistically, but rendering the displays with English characters instead of Cyrillic (at least, in the preliminary version I flew).

The terrain looks good, but suffers from one major flaw that also plagued Apache: there are only a few scattered trees. This means you can't pop up from behind foliage to execute your attacks. (You can, however, use buildings and hills for pop-up attacks.)



DEATH ON RAILS A train meets an unfortunate end during a supply interdiction mission.

There was no sound in the Alpha version, but DI says the all-digital sound will include English speech read by someone with a Russian accent to add atmosphere.

At first glance, Hino looks very much like a slight modification of Apache. But with the differences in mission profiles and helicopter handling, it's a new personality hiding behind that familiar face. **S**

Mil mi-24 Hind

The Mi-24, NATO code-named Hind, was designed in the early 1970s as a heavily armed assault transport for a squad of ground troops. Although current designs are used as offensive gunships, all Hind models retain the troop transport capability. The troop-carrying capabilities necessitate a wide silhouette that's uncharacteristic of a gunship, but heavy armor, IR jammers, exhaust suppressors, and flare dispensers aid combat effectiveness.

Along with the usual air-to-ground ordnance, the Hind-E (Mi-24W) model added the capability to carry AA-8 Aphid air-to-air missiles. In the Iran-Iraq war, an Iranian F-4 Phantom fell victim to a Hind, but the Hind used a Spiral anti-tank missile to down the jet.

The oddest variant is perhaps the Hind-G, first identified in operation at Chernobyl. Instead of wingtip weapon pylons, it sports "clutching hand" mechanisms on lengthened pylons. It's believed that this model is designed for NBC (nuclear/biological/chemical) warfare.

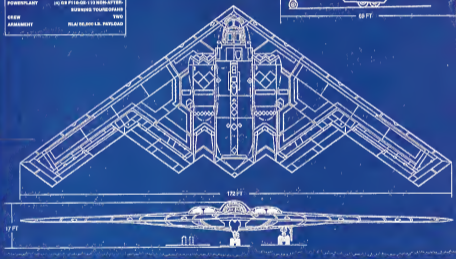
- ▶Crew 2
- ▶Passengers 8, or 4 stretchers
- ▶Weapons payload 5,290 lb
- ▶Length 57 ft 5 in
- ▶Height 21 ft 4 in
- ▶Rotor diameter 55 ft 9 in
- ▶Maximum speed 199 mph
- ▶Hovering ceiling 7,200 feet
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Manifest Destiny

*Building New Civilizations Online With
SID MEIER'S CIVNET*

by Terry Coleman

On the surface, what could go wrong? One of the greatest games ever designed for the computer, *Civilization*, gets a facelift: new interface, better AI, SVGA graphics and, finally, multiplayer human play. More than any thing, when I play *CivNet*, I am reminded of another MicroProse masterpiece: Not Sid Meier's *Civilization*, so much as *Master of Magic*. This is not to say that *CivNet* crashes at the time, or that the design is unpolished, as with *MOM*, but rather, that *CivNet* lacks that final bit of polish so essential to a truly finished, professional product.

Oddly enough, the game plays remarkably well—solitaire. The computer opponents are improved, the bay of advisors—military, science, and so on—actually give reasonable advice on how to discover the mysterious secrets of plastics, create steel for those huge battleships, and so forth. When the action gets too frantic, you can actually turn city management over to the computer (with some restrictions) and concentrate on the Big Picture instead of just micro-managing your *CivHeart* out.

But no one buys a game like *CivNet* to play only against the computer, regardless of how much better that computer opponent might be than in the original game. And for many, the thrill of competing against other human *CivMeisters* is somewhat diminished when they find that the hotseat option reveals all of the other Human Civilizations at any time! Then again, the installation doesn't stop there: TCP/IP works fine for Internet and Network play—once you have the inevitable MicroProse patch—but IPX and NetBIOS seem doomed to failure (we had numerous crashes in every IPX-based session we attempted). Why? Obviously, most gamers will play through TCP/IP over the Net, but if the main reason for this game is multiplayer human play, how could MicroProse not wait until these net play bugs in particular were ironed out?

THE PLAY'S THE THING

If, however, you are able to get your multiplayer game up and running, the game is still Sid Meier's *Civilization*, in all its glory. Despite some who may dislike the newer interface (see Johnny Wilson's comments), it functions quite well from either keyboard or mouse input,

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 System Requirements:
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 better, Windows 3.1 or
 Win 95, 8-MB RAM,
 SWSX graphics, 2 x
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 drive space, 100%
 Supports Windows
 something going
 outside
 of Players: 1-7, with
 network, hotseat and
 internet play
 Protection: None (one
 CD-ROM per player)
 Designer: Mark
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 Original Design: Sid
 Meier
 Publisher: MicroProse
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and having multiple windows of reports all immediately accessible helps keep the sheer amount of information from becoming overwhelming. The depth of strategy—balancing world exploration, trade, economics, constructing Wonders of the World, fighting wars, all while keeping your citizens content—is enhanced by having to play against much craftier humans. And the thrill of building, say, the Great Wall right out from under one of your adversaries is very nearly worth the price of the game all by itself.

Even so, as much fun as all this can potentially generate for would-be world conquerors, it falls short of the all-time classic status of its storied progenitor. For example, game balance in the original *Civ* was due to infamous "cheats" that helped the computer stay in the game against a human with, quite simply, more brainpower. Since human leaders should theoretically be on a more even footing, they don't get



WINDOWS TO THE WORLD Having several charts and maps open at once can make it easier to manage forces and production in *CivNet*.

the cheats that would help keep them in the game. Thus, certain advances in the game—most notably the Pyramids—give humans who secure such technology advantages they rarely lose. It's disheartening to play a game for 10 hours when you have virtually no chance to come from behind and win.

And there is the small matter that, unlike other popular multi-player online games such as *Warcraft II*, a full game of *CivNet* (even playing at "blitz" speed) can take upwards of 25 hours to complete. In fairness, *CivNet* has a lot more scope than these other strategy games, but this is still a game

that must be played over a number of sessions to be finished. In that sense, it's the Monopoly of the '90s, as you tend to give the victory to whomever has the most hotels—or, Wonders of the World—at the end of a long session of play. Initially, MicroProse was planning to do scenarios that could be completed in an (admittedly long) evening. Guess

Building A Better World For Democracy

After founding Washington in 4000 B.C., the Americans, led by the noble (but tough) Jorge of Jones, built their first militia unit. Never a country to sit back in a defensive posture, our newly-formed military force was immediately sent forth into the wilderness. By the time the second militia unit had been built, the first troop had discovered a few ancient tribes and gained the knowledge these wise people had developed.

But soon afterwards, tragedy struck. A barbarian settlement was accidentally disturbed, and refused our offer of friendship. Like a swarm of bees, the uncouth hordes swept over our first military unit and eliminated it. Angered, our proud militia took revenge on the heathens, as we quickly trained more troops due to the emergency.

Later, our newly-invented cavalry scouting unit chanced upon the Egyptians. Knowing a weak civilization when they saw it, they quickly took Thebes for the glory of our great civilization! Soon afterwards, the puny Greek civilization was steamrolled. "Nothing," proclaimed Jorge of Jones, "will halt our expansion. We will not rest until America rules the world, so that all people may be safe and free."

By 1 A.D. the Americans had well over 700,000 citizens, 4 thriving cities and, in classic American style, no money. But nothing would stop them, except the Managing Editor. Or a crash. —George Jones

My Return To Civilization

The Luddites modus operandi was to found a city, build one military unit, and convert to building settlers in order to expand as soon as possible. I was gambling that I was far apart from the other civilizations at this point and, early in the game, things looked positive. I established Washland atop a Forest square and next to a body of water where I had a Fish resource. I built one militia unit and sent him scouting while I built my first additional settlers. Unfortunately two turns away from the completion of the settler unit, a potential enemy appeared. I immediately bought a Phalanx unit and chased the Chinese aggressor out of sacred Luddite territory. We were able to establish an alliance, but on two separate occasions, he forced me to convert from settler development to purchase a military unit.

I don't like the Mac-like interface. Indeed, it cost me severely when a trine full of military units ended up the turn in a sea square that was non-adjacent to a coastal shore. On such an occasion, the ship and all aboard are lost. Then, before I could recover from my interface problem, Denny the Yellow Scourge moved in behind me and destroyed my city (yes, one city—my original plan went by the wayside when I kept having to convert settlers to military units to stave off his incursions).

Re-entering the game as a new civilization, I inadvertently wiped out George's civilization. *CivNet* doesn't feature any error-trapping for new errors into the game so if the new player accidentally chooses a color that is already in play, it can wipe out the other player. However, once we figured out what was wrong and re-started, my position was still untenable. I started anew with a basic city, waited five turns for a militia unit and was immediately destroyed by, you guessed it, Denny the Yellow Pill. Maybe I need to write a new book—*Sid Meier's Civilization or The Peril of the East*. —Johnny Wilson

Peaceful Majesty

The Hittites began calmly enough, until they ran into the surly German empire. Although warfare is distasteful to our peace-loving society, we were forced to rid the world of the militaristic menace. Afterwards, we secured our borders and began forging cities to last the millennia (three of the top five cities were Hittite), filled with the Lighthouse of Leizpig, The Gardens of Uk, The Oracle of Nom, and other great works which were nearing completion. Oddly enough, the human-controlled barbarians posed the greatest threat to our Empire. When we met the Chinese, we attempted to trade with them, and established a small settlement (not realizing that they considered this their sole continent). Rather than communicate with us, the savages annihilated our settlement, and had the gall to accuse us—the benevolent Hittites!—of encroaching upon their lands. For now, we will make peace—until the citizens of our land are no longer so forgiving. (Do I feel a new government coming on?)—Jury Coleman

The Reign Of The Great Ruler Denny Ise Tong Of The Chinese

The isolation of the Chinese people ended in the year 3480 BC, when one of our scouting armies met with an odd race that called themselves the Luddites. Initial contact seemed beneficial for both our peoples, as we traded knowledge of our ceremonial burial practices for instruction in horseback riding. Indeed, the trade did benefit both of our peoples, as once our mounted armies invaded their city, they would have many dead to bury. The Luddite city, Wasteland, was unfortunately placed on a thin stretch of land that our armies needed to cross in order to expand our empire and make room for our growing nation. The Luddites grew nervous about our alliance, but I assured them that our armies were simply passing by. As I sailed with my Tirores, however, I ran across the Luddites, sailing to the west. Could they have loaded their armies on the ship, leaving their city defenses weak? I massed my armies to the north, invading Wasteland. Success! It was beyond my dreams—the Luddites had left their city completely undefended! The continent was mine, and I was free to expand. All was uneventful until the year 1260, when our people encountered the Americans. I'd heard of their power, so I decided that an alliance with them, against the Hittites, would be the wisest course of action. For now, at least. But once my people build the empire a bit more...—Denny Akkin

10 Steps To A More Stable Civilization

1. If you are new to Civ, play solo until you can give the computer a good fight at World level. If Human-controlled Civilizations are so crafty that they leave your inexperienced Civ too far behind in the first hour of play, the remainder of the game isn't much fun.
2. Forget hot-seat play. For parties, You Don't Know Jack is a lot more fun, with less hassle.
3. Set your net game up with TCP/IP rather than IPX or NetBIOS for greater stability.
4. Even if you think you have WinG drivers installed already (whether Win 3.1 or Win 95) don't take a chance. Go through the entire Setup for CivNet when you first install the game; it's worth the extra time to make sure your drivers are compatible with those that MicroProse requires.
5. Need some tactical tips? I could recommend a certain strategy guide by two CGW editors (Civilization, Or Rome Or 640K A Day, by Johnny Wilson and Alan Emrich, Prima Publishing), but that would be a shameless plug.
6. Sequential play is still the best way to learn the game when playing solo. Turn-based play is in all gamers' DNA (even if they don't want to admit it).
7. Parallel turns are the only way to go for network/Internet play. I hate waiting for people to move when my clock is running on the Internet. With parallel turns, if I finish before my adversaries/friends, I can better tweak my cities, without twiddling my thumbs.
8. Allowing two minutes per turn results in focused, lively play. The howls (and messages) from invertebrate micro-managers when the turn ends too soon are half the fun of the game. If it gets too frantic, let the computer run some of your less important cities on autopilot while you catch your breath.
9. Play at Prince level. While King level sounds tempting for macho CivNats, they will soon lament the additional Barbarians, which are such a nuisance as to slow play considerably. Having four content citizens per city, rather than three, makes it much easier to increase your empire's size. This means finding other Human Civs earlier.
10. No human gets the Pyramids. Any CivLeader in our group who breaks this meets a most timely demise (as soon as we find his/her Civilization), simply because the advantage of switching governments effortlessly is too great early in the game for other Human Civs to overcome.



those were lost in the shuffle to get the game released by a certain date.

CITIZENS IN UNREST

If you long for an updated version of Civ, or if you never played the original, and want to see what the fuss is about, CivNet is actually worth the frustration. But don't kid yourself: until you get

the patch and figure out the network quirks, you'll probably be playing CivNet more against the computer civilizations than versus those of your friends. With Sid Meier's Civ2000 due this summer, you have to wonder if the hassles are worth it. ☹

APPEAL: Anyone who enjoys a deep, fulfilling strategy game, and who can deal with the bugs and hassles of setting up a network/Internet game. (Get the patch.)

MPROS: A much-needed upgrade to one of the great strategy games of all time. The one complaint of Civ players—no human opponents—is now finally taken care of. Sort of.

CONS: Poor IPX and NetBIOS support, crashes consistently without the patch.

I'M AMERICAN & I'M OK: If George sleeps all night while Denny works all day, he may find that even his strong Civ can fall prey to the hungry Chinese.



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Circle Reader Service #105

When Plug & Play Isn't So Simple

DOS Games Will Bring A Plug & Play Device To Its Knees

Several weeks ago, I confronted some of the problems I had with setting up a new Pentium system with a plug-and-play BIOS. Since then, I've wrestled with several plug-and-play systems and have learned more than I ever thought necessary. After all, the very moniker "plug-and-play" should mean

that I don't have to know anything about my system, right? Just put the card in and go, right? Sure.

A big part of the problem is the PC architecture itself, which has 36 hardware interrupts, only a handful of which are available to peripheral cards. A hardware interrupt, or IRQ, is a circuit that, when activated, "interrupts" the computer to tell it about some urgent business—when you press a key on the keyboard, for example.

Another annoyance is that some older games are limited to certain IRQs for

audio features. For example, a number of games assume that your sound card will be at IRQ 9 or lower. The laziness of game programmers is partly to blame, but that laziness is reinforced by the de facto SOUND BLASTER standard, which normally uses either IRQ 5 or IRQ 7 (with IRQ 9 relegated to MIDI music synthesis). This caused great headaches for cards such as the Creative ULTRASOUND series, which would default to IRQ 11.

“ Plug & Play only works with Win 95 or some other PnP-capable operating system and only with Windows apps. ”

THIS IS PROGRESS?

Okay, so along come plug-and-play (PnP) cards for the PC. No switches to set, no IRQs to remember, these cards are self-configuring. End of problem? Er, not quite. Prepare this:

You rip open the box for the new PnP AWE-32 card from Creative Labs. You know this card has wide support from the game industry, and in a pinch, you can always use it as a stock SOUND BLASTER card. When you boot into Windows 95, the card configures itself, and you have sweet-sounding audio from Windows. You are one happy camper.

You pull down a DOS game CD, boot to the DOS prompt, pop in the CD and run the game. Uh-oh. No sound. Well, you did just install a new sound card. You run the game's setup utility. The sound

by midsummer

Also on the radar screen, there's a new specification for CD-ROM discs and drives called DVD (Digitally Versatile Disc). And despite the dopey name, DVD has backing from large CD-ROM drive players like Sony and NEC, and will greatly increase disc capacity and throughput. Storage capacity can range from 4.7 to 17 GB, and throughput is being initially rated at around 1.4 MB/sec. DVD will be compatible with all current CD-ROM formats (data and audio), and drives supporting the larger capacities will read lower capacity discs as well.

LAB NOTES

Sometime this spring, Creative Labs will be shipping the PCI version of the 3D BLASTER (see review on page 80). However, the PCI version will use a different chip, the Rendition Verité chip. The Verité is likely to be a hot prospect; the boys at id (the Doom dudes) have picked the Verité as the first supported accelerator for their upcoming new release, Quake. Number Nine will also be shipping a Verité-based board.

The folks at Hercules will also be delivering 3-D gear soon, but their card will be based on S3's new Virge chip. It's looking like the 3-D market will be heating up

card autodetect fails. You manually set every IRQ you can think of, but still no sound.

Scratching your head, you start up Windows 95 again, bring up the device manager and discover that your new PnP audio card is set to IRQ 15. Huh?

You try to change it, only to get the message, "this parameter cannot be changed." You contemplate grabbing a shotgun and ending your computer's life on the spot.

This actually happened to me. During the process of getting the PnP AWE-32 to work, I uncovered a number of interesting facts:

First, if you have a PnP BIOS in your computer—most newer PCI motherboards, 486 and Pentiums, do—then you need to root around in your BIOS setup program. Usually, and I emphasize the word "usually," you can uncover a section of the BIOS setup program that allows you to manually configure which IRQs are allotted to PnP and which you can still manually control. If you're clever about it, you can assign only interrupts which are accessible by all games to PnP. Piece of cake, right?

Okay, now what happens when you have two or even three PnP cards?

Some BIOSes allow you to allocate specific IRQs to specific slots. Then you can count the slots and plug the PnP card into the right slot. Of course, there are some BIOSes that give you little or no manual control over the IRQ.

ICU WILL SEE YOU THROUGH

Hey, I thought this was supposed to be easier, I hear you cry. Actually, it is, as long

as you remain in Windows 95 or some other PnP-aware operating system and only run Windows applications. The hitches are those pesky older DOS games that we all love to play.

There is a solution, however. It's called the "ISA configuration utility" or ICU for short.

“ Hey, I thought this was supposed to be easier, I hear you cry... The hitches are those pesky older DOS games that we all love to play. ”

Those of you have used systems with EISA (extended ISA) architecture systems will immediately recognize the ICU. It's a program that you run that allows you to manually configure your system. You can assign resources to individual slots and cards, tell the system what's in each slot, and so on. These programs are usually easier to use than the more arcane setup programs that configure BIOS settings. There is a minor catch: you have to load a device driver in order to use these manually assigned PnP settings. The good news is that the driver only takes up 2 KB of RAM.

It works pretty well, too. The Gateway P333X system we looked at in the January issue came bundled with a PnP Ensoniq SOUNDSCAPE card. The P333X came with the device driver installed in the Windows 95 boot setup, so when we went to the DOS prompt, we had no problems running DOS games, especially those games that directly supported the SOUNDSCAPE board.

The ICU is the only solution, by the way, for those older computers which do not have a PnP BIOS. You can obtain Intel's ICU on their BBS at (505) 264-7999.

For added flexibility, some card makers allow you to disable PnP and retain manual control of the card settings from the beginning. Two interesting examples are the U.S. Robotics SPORTSTER 28.8 KB PnP modem and the 3COM 3C509B network card. The SPORTSTER modem actually has a jumper that enables or disables PnP (PnP is enabled by default.) The 3C509B ethernet card has a software installation program that lets you enable or disable PnP.

TOMORROW AND TOMORROW...

Eventually, software will catch up with the new hardware. Eventually, we'll all be running Windows 95 on our Pentium Pro Plus 500 MHz systems in dazzling, high-resolution true color with Dolby THX quality sound. Eventually.

Until all the software catches up, however, it's wise to arm yourself with a little knowledge, so that when you try to run the original version of Doom on your pure PnP system, you can get it to work, out of the box. Now that's plug-and-play. ☺

STIPS!

If you've recently installed Windows 95, and it's behaving poorly—such as a low refresh rate and slow graphics performance—it's likely that Windows 95 only installed the 16-bit version of the graphics driver for your card. To install the 32-bit virtual device driver (known as a

VxD), insert your Windows 95 CD. Then go to your desktop, click the right mouse button and bring up the display properties window. Click on the settings tab, press the "Change" button under "Display Type" and then click on have disk. Now browse the directory on the CD named "drivers." Under drivers is another folder, "display." Find your vendor name and see if the driver will load.

(Note the Matrox drivers are for the older MGA line, not the Millennium.) If the driver doesn't load, or you don't see your board's driver on the Win95 install CD, visit your vendor's BBS or Web page to see if they have an updated driver available. I'll be talking more in a future column about getting the right graphics driver to max out your Windows 95 performance. —L. Case



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Stick It In Your Ear

If You're Still Using Those Featherweight Freebies That Came With Your Computer, You Should Hear What You've Been Missing

By Ron Talbot

I still remember the first time I experienced sound while playing a computer game. I had been steadfastly refusing to add a sound card to my then-bulking 386-20. It was primarily a game rig and I was feeling guilty about the amount of money I was spending on it. I was a hard-core RPC gamer at the time and I viewed sound as an expensive luxury. A friend had to practically be in a chair to force me to listen to that flat Ad Lib card. By dawn the next morning I was hooked.

Came the Red Baron, Wing Commander and even theSSI gold box games come alive with the simple addition of audio. Once you can both see and hear the action in a game, it becomes ever so easy to completely lose yourself in it. That wonderful state of total absorption, the delirium of reality forgotten, hits us

back over and over again.

Good sound adds enormously to the overall enjoyment of any game. Why spend thousands of dollars on a fast processor, tons of memory, and a monitor fit for a football stadium, only to add \$20 tin can speakers as an afterthought? A good game rig is a pretty hefty investment, but a good set of speakers might well be the key ingredient to cranking your gaming pleasure. In this survey, we'll take a look at six speaker systems currently on the market, and I'll give you some pointers on how to choose a system that's right for you.

Why Can't I Use My Stereo System?

You might be asking yourself just how do these speaker systems stand up to your typical home stereo system. Why can't I just run a cable to my amp and save myself a few dollars? Good question. Actually, this is how I have functioned for the past six years. I have an average quality amp and pretty good speakers. As I evaluated the featured units, I also evaluated my stereo system, and it did very well in all areas except depth, owing to a lack of surround technology. The table in this article shows how it fared relative to these other systems. Basically, if you have a reasonable or better stereo system close to your computer you might as well use it unless you want to harness some of the newer "3-D" technologies. But if you've decided that you want a dedicated audio system for your gaming machine, then figure out first how much you're willing to pay for good gaming audio, check out the reviews below, and use the guidelines to also evaluate the wide range of multimedia speakers out there.

AEROSPACE



TWO FROGS AND A SIX-PACK

AEROSPACE SPEAKERS AND SUB-WOOFER

They're cute, they should be green, and they less like a snake. This system consists of two small streamlined speakers hooked up to a sub-woofer. The speakers are controlled by a cable remote for both power and volume. The sub-woofer has power and volume controls mounted on the front panel as well as an overall volume control for the entire system. The speakers connect with a hard-wired cable, making replacement and positioning difficult. Since these two products are bought separately, you are burdened with two power bricks, those large, heavy power supplies that irritatingly cover two or more outlets.

The Aerospace system provides reasonable quality gaming sound, with especially high marks for the beefy sub-woofer. The

THE GAME'S THE THING!

I'm not an audiophile. I'm a gamer. So rather than delve into a ton of technical minutiae about frequency response and harmonic distortion, I'm going to focus on how these systems sounded cranking out some gaming audio. To that end, I listened to each of these speaker systems while playing *MIDI WARRIOR 2* and *Wing Commander III*. My game rig has a SoundBlaster 16 with an Audiomouse Diamond MIDI daughterboard. To round out my evaluation, I also listened to them playing CD-audio-based vocal and instrumental music tracks to see how they fared.

AC5500

sounded strangely fake and didn't blend well with the speakers. And while it fared much better playing traditional music, there was noticeable hiss.

This unit might be a better fit for doing audio production work, but given its steep price, and the review's focus on gaming audio, I can't give it a strong recommendation.

\$399.00 list, Altec-Lansing

Technologies, Inc. Allentown, PA, (800) 648-6663, email:

75961351@CompuServe.com

IN OFFRANCE OF PHYSICS!

CAMBRIDGE SOUNDWORKS

A collection of seeming contradictions, the SoundWorks entrants of your standard L/R speaker plus sub-woofer configuration. The speakers are amazingly small 3.5-inch cubes. The only other speaker I have seen this small went for sale for \$10 at K-Mart.

Believe me, these little guys produce amazing sound. This is the system of choice for those of you who are "space-challenged." There's good cabling, and craftsmanship with a minor glitch, the volume control is on the cable between the computer and the sub-woofer (by accessibility). Unfortunately, this cable is not long enough to reach desk level if both the CPU and sub-woofer are on the floor.

Strangely enough, SoundWorks gives good blood-stirring game sound, but sounded flat and muddy when tested with CD-audio music. A solid choice for your game rig, especially if you're in cramped quarters.

\$219.99 list, Cambridge SoundWorks, Cambridge, MA, (800) FOUR-FIVE, www.hifi.com.

IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED...

LABTECH LCS-2612 SPEAKERS AND SUB-WOOFER

Spatializer 3D technology is this system's one strong point. Consisting of the standard two speaker/sub-woofer configuration, the satellites come with handy brackets that allow them to hang on each side of your monitor like elephant ears. The sub-woofer comes with convenient front panel

CAMBRIDGE SOUNDWORKS



controls. The craftsmanship was average and cabling was definitely sub-standard with thin, hard-wired speaker wires.

The sound was sure markable until you turned on the Spatializer. The depth of sound provided by this feature is noticeable. But despite the imposed sonic range, the Labtechs had the loudest hiss of any in this review. All in all, I wasn't very impressed. Be careful, these are quite often standard equipment in bundled computer systems.

\$199.99 list, Labtech Enterprises, Inc., Vancouver, WA, (360) 596-2100, www.labtech.com

SV-725SW

give an almost perfect blend of strong Mech stamping bass without being obviously distracting. This would be a good low-cost option if it weren't for the hiss. The speakers, while providing reasonable sound generate noticeable hiss that could be heard over the noise of my hard drives. This hiss, mostly generated by the unit's power amplifier, is a pretty common problem that can be extremely distracting.

\$129.95 list, Internet Accessories, Hunt Valley, MD, (410) 785-5661, www.internet-acc.com

THE TWIN TOWERS

ALTEC-LANSING AC5500 WITH DOLBY PRO-LOGIC

This impressive-looking unit consists of two elegant 18-inch tall, 3-way speaker towers complemented by your standard under-the-desk sub-woofer. It features a Dolby Pro-Logic decoder, and has separate controls for the speakers and the sub-woofer, with one very irritating feature: the power buttons are both very small and hidden on the back of these units in hard-to-reach locations. Cabling is sound and the overall craftsmanship is excellent.

Between Altec's reputation and the Pro-Logic, I was expecting to be blown away, but was surprisingly disappointed. The sub-woofer was particularly weak, and at typical game volume levels it

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If only I had a trust fund, this full-fledged surround sound system includes five speakers, a BIC sub-woofer and an amplifier/Dolby Pro-Logic decoder box.

Five Tips to Shop By

There are a lot of different speaker systems on the market, so rather than trying to cover all these systems or proclaiming system X as the one to buy, I've covered a few units, and here are my criteria for choosing a speaker system for a game rig. Of course, if you can get to a store where you can listen to the units yourself, that's the best litmus test, since your ears are the best judge.

1. Sub-woofers rule! I don't know how I lived without one. A sub-woofer adds a visceral quality to game sound that can't be beat.
2. Surround/3-D/spatializing technology really works. Some implementations work better than others but in general it seems to be worth the extra bucks.
3. If it hisses, take it back. Fine for serpants, not speakers.
4. If you live in a thin-walled apartment, be sure your sub-woofer has a volume control. Eviction notices and irate neighbors tend to ruin the quality of your gaming experience.
5. Look for thick, high-quality, replaceable cabling.

Five speakers you say? Here is how they break down: You have your traditional RL speakers, a center speaker that combines both right and left signals, and two special "surround" sound speakers that are positioned behind the listener. The Pro-Logic decoder distributes the appropriate signals to each of the speakers. The cabling was excellent, and setup was a no-brainer.

The quality and depth of sound was excellent! One small problem: the mammoth sub-woofer can really rock the house, but it has no volume control. This

\$399.00 list, SSI Products, Inc., Arcadia, CA, (800) 845-6774.

MY KINGDOM FOR A SUB-WOOFER!

NUREALITY VIVID3D SPEAKERS

Ah, the magic of technology: The Vivid 3D system is a marvel. Using only two speakers and SRS surround technology, NuReality creates a very convincing depth of sound. While playing *Might & Magic II* was continually amazed at how the sound seemed to come directly from the monitor (the speakers were several feet away). But I found myself thinking, "If only it had a sub-woofer!" The speakers produce reasonable bass tones for normal music, but we're

NUREALITY



could call any apartment dweller a quick-eviction notice. I noticed this right off the bat because the sub-woofer is almost too loud and, sigh, I do live in an apartment. Finally, no hiss! The sound quality was outstanding, even during the tough piano test. If you have the room and tolerant neighbors, go for it!

...talking games here. You want to "feel" every impact and explosion. Not very realistic, but damn fun. Still, for the price and 3-D effect, these well-made speakers are very tempting. Wood construction, convenient controls, and good cabling round out this offering.

\$199.00 list, NuReality, Inc., Santa Ana, CA, (800) 501-8086, www.nureality.com

Speaker System	Bassing Sound	Sub-woofer	Hisz	Depth	Instrumental Music	Vocal Music
Aerospaces IV-720/5V-722	Good	Great	Poor	Average	Above Average	Average
Alto Lansing ACS500	Fair	Poor	Below Average	Good	Above Average	Above Average
Cambridge SoundWorks	Good	Good	Good	Fair	Poor	Below Average
Labtec LCS-2812 w/ Sub-Woofers	Average	Above Average	Poor	Good	Below Average	Poor
SSI Cineplex System 1500	Great	Good	Great	Great	Great	Good
NuReality Vivid3D	Good	N/A	Good	Great	Good	Good
A Home Stereo System	Great	Good	Great	Average	Great	Great

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Unexciting Acceleration

Creative Labs' 3D Blaster Accelerates Some Games On A 486, But Don't Expect Miracles

by Loyd Case

1996 should be the year that 3-D acceleration hit the streets in force. Finally, the industry seems to be settling on two or three real-time, 3-D Application Programming Interface (API) standards, allowing programmers to write 3-D games to an API rather than to the registers of every 3-D chip out there. And the price points look about right, too, with \$200-\$300 being the target for 3-D accelerators with 2 MB of RAM.

Creative Labs is one of the first companies to release a 3-D accelerator, the 3D BLASTER, which began shipping late last year. Based on a cost-reduced version of 3D Labs' GLINT chipset, the 3D BLASTER is only available for VESA local bus (VLB for short). The idea is to give all those 486s out there an end-of-life performance kicker. However, the swift move to aggressively-priced Pentium PCI systems has apparently caught many people by surprise, including the folks at Creative.

The 3D BLASTER has both Windows 3.1 and Windows 95 drivers, and will support Microsoft's Direct3D API when it comes out later this year. The marketing man at Creative state that when running games written to 3D BLASTER's Creative Capabilities Library API, the CLINT engine's performance is equivalent to a software-only 3-D rendering engine running on a Pentium. Is that good? Not really. Maybe the marketing folks at Creative only have 60 MHz Pentiums.

The card is very easy to set up, after popping the lid off your system, you find an

available VLB slot and insert the card. Creative decided to use a VCA pass-through, rather than trying to use the infamous VCA feature connector, a smart decision on their part. To use it, you need to run a cable (provided in the box) from your VCA adapter to the 3D BLASTER. Then you connect your monitor cable to

another connector on the 3D card. Software installation is simple, with only one driver to install, although you'll have to be careful to assign the proper IRQs.

3D BLASTER's CLINT chip brings a lot to the party, including hardware Z-buffering (for hidden surface calculations), and perspective-corrected texture mapping in hardware (to prevent texture warping). It also anti-aliases texture maps (to reduce the "jaggies"), and even has transparency blending and fog.

A good software bundle rounds out the mix, and includes 3D BLASTER-accelerated versions of NASCAR RACING, MAGIC CARPET PLUS, FLIGHT UNLIMITED, HI-OCTANE and a good 3-D, first-person shooter called REBEL MOON, all of which are DOS titles. If you're running Windows 95, you can play these games after booting into DOS mode.

So how does it play? The news is mixed. NASCAR RACING fared the best, although turning on all the rendering features created a pretty severe drag on the frame rate. FLIGHT UNLIMITED's frame rate at 640x480 with most rendering fea-



BLASTER PACK The 3D BLASTER comes with NASCAR RACING, MAGIC CARPET PLUS, FLIGHT UNLIMITED and HI-OCTANE, but it won't turn your 486 into a Pentium 133.

tures enabled was unacceptable. The worst was probably HI-OCTANE, at high-res, HI-OCTANE was simply unplayable.

Overall, if you're looking for a 3-D accelerator for your VL-Bus system, 3D BLASTER is the only show in town. However, don't expect miracles. A better performance kicker would still be a fast Pentium upgrade. On the other hand, that will set you back considerably more than the 3D BLASTER's \$299 price tag. 3D BLASTER's support of the eventual Direct3D API will extend the life of that old 486 rig, but given the new CPU-hungry games we're now seeing, the overall experience may still fall short. ☹

Price: \$299 street price (2MB version)

System Requirements: DOS, Windows 3.1, or Windows 95, 486 with VLB, VGA graphics card, 8 MB RAM

Manufacturer: Creative Labs
Milpitas, CA
(800) 998-5227
Reader Service #: 322

APPEAL: Gamers with Vesa local bus machines looking for faster 3-D performance.

PROS: It's the only game in town for VLB 3-D acceleration.

CONS: Performance is still sluggish on these games when most graphic options are on.





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Test Driving The New 4x4

The NEC 4x4 Isn't The Fastest CD-ROM Drive, But It Offers Convenience At A Good Price

by Dave Salvator

NEC'S MULTISPIN 4x4 is built more for comfort than for speed. With the 4x4, NEC has chosen to concentrate on multiple disc access, letting you house four CDs simultaneously. That doesn't mean every game which ships on more than one CD will automatically advance to the next disc in the stack, but it does allow easier access to multiple discs.

The 4x4 has both Windows 3.1 and Windows 95 drivers, and ships with its own IDE controller. There are four buttons on the front panel to load and unload

discs, and a headphone jack with volume control. Unlike some other NEC units, there are no audio-CD transport controls (play/stop) for audio CDs.

The 4x4 is offered at a good price, but there are other units in the same range that are much faster. It's much cheaper than the Plextor 6X, and a little cheaper than Creative's GX drive. However, since the 4x4 performed more like a 3X drive, the unit lives on the speed front.

Which means that the MULTISPIN's main advantage is its 4-disc capacity. Does this capability come in handy for multi-CD games? Well, that depends. Some games, like WING COMMANDER

III, make a call during initialization to check for the presence of multiple CD-ROM drives. If Wing: III finds more than one CD-ROM drive, it checks whether that additional drive contains a disc, and if so, reads its volume label. In this case, the MULTISPIN would be handy since it switches discs on the fly when you move into a scene on the next disc. However, game developers have to write the code to detect and use multiple CD-ROM drives, and not all of them do. Windows 95's CDFS (CD File System) doesn't really have a provision for applications using multiple CDs either, so here again, it's left to the developer to write that code.

The 4x4's Windows 95 driver presents four separate drive letters, each one representing a physical disc. NEC is working on a new version of their driver that will present a single drive letter and offer a task bar-based utility with information on the four inserted discs that lets you select which one to activate.

The MULTISPIN's installation is well-documented, though somewhat awkward. It's not completely plug-and-play, and requires you to install its driver manually, then scan for new hardware at the Control Panel, where Windows 95 recognizes the controller. And while this procedure is carefully explained in the documentation, it could be better automated. In WinBench tests, the 4x4 was able to achieve only 485 KB/sec throughput—a little better than 3X speed. This shortfall may be due to part of the 4x4's IDE controller, which has to rely more on the

CPU to push CD-ROM I/O along.

Given that a lot of games are still running off of one CD-ROM, and speed is king, this unit is hard to recommend for hard-core gaming since it didn't achieve 4X speeds in our tests. Some games will take advantage of multiple drives if they're present, but there's no standard for multi-CD-ROM configs in either DOS or Windows 95. So it's still up to each game developer to enable multiple CD-ROM drives when initializing. But if you like having ready access to multiple discs without loading/unloading your caddy, and are willing to trade some speed for the convenience, the \$279 4x4 (includes controller) may be of interest. ☺



FOUR IN ONE NEC's 4x4 has the advantage of housing four CDs in one unit, but unless a game supports multiple CD-ROM drives, you'll still have to shuffle discs.

Cost/Performance Comparison

Company	Product	Interface	Transfer Rate* (bytes/sec)	Price
NEC	Multispin 4x4IDE	IDE	486,652	\$279
Plextor	6160SPS1	IDE	927,164	\$500
Creative Labs	Blaster CD 6XIDE	IDE	952,223	\$499

*Based on WinBench 3.11 install.

APPEAL: For users who want ready access to multiple CDs.

PROS: Fairly easy setup, easy to use. For games that support multi-CD-ROM drives, the Multispin 4x4 makes advancing to the next disc a little easier.

CONS: The unit doesn't really deliver 4X performance, and there are much faster units available. Some games don't support multiple CD drives, so you'll still have to do the CD shuffle.



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Fore Play

ThrustMaster Builds The Golf Widow's Ultimate Nightmare

by Denny Atkin Sr.

Golfers are crazy. Golfers use vacations to play more golf. They read about golf and watch others play golf. Then they talk about golf with fellow golf nuts. Doesn't sound much different than the typical computer gamer, does it? If you're a golfer and a gamer, you understand the meaning of obsession.

ThrustMaster has long catered to the hardcore gamer, with a series of high-end controllers for flight sim fans. Now the company has turned its sights to the digital duffer with PRO PLAY GOLF—THE HOME COURSE, a device that allows golfers to play PC golf games using their own clubs.

PPC includes a base platform with controller unit, a large golf mat, three foam rubber golf balls, reflective tape which you apply to the bottom of your clubs, rubber tees, and a hanging indoor pitching net. Not being a real techie, I was concerned about my ability to properly set up the system, but utilizing the included video and step-by-step instructions, I was standing on the 18th tee at virtual Pebble Beach, wagging my driver, only a few minutes after unpacking the unit.

The golf mat is an artificial turf layered over a foam base. The balls are made of a light foam rubber, but they do give nice sound feedback when you strike them.

FAST FEEDBACK

PPC isn't just a game controller—it also doubles as a swing analyzer. Using light sensors embedded in the electronic platform, it gives feedback on club head speed, the angle of the club face at impact, club height above the surface, point of ball impact, and direction of follow-through.

The analyzer display is easily visible



▶ **PUTTING AROUND** Pro Play Golf lets hard-core duffers hit the course anytime, rain or shine.

from several feet away, even using my 9.5-inch screen laptop. Along with a performance graph, it also gives tips on correcting swing errors upon request.

When I first tried this function, I found my swing averaged about 85 mph, and that I was swinging "inside-out," producing a hook. By experimenting with a little earlier break in my wrists and more concentration in the follow-through, I increased my club head speed to 95 mph, and ball direction improved dramatically. The next day, I transferred these ideas to Tinklin Country Club's course and hit longer and straighter drives than I have enjoyed in months.

ThrustMaster also bundles a modified copy of Access Software's LINKS 386 which supports the controller. Using your

own clubs is certainly a better way to play the game than watching the screen and trying to click the mouse at the right time. Not only is the control natural, but the swing analyzer functions also shows on the screen, giving instant feedback. You might find you'll need to quickly move closer to the screen to follow the ball's flight, unless you have younger eyes than I do.

REAL BALLS ARE BETTER

The PPC system provides a very real experience, only held back by the fact that you aren't hitting real balls (ThrustMaster says it's possible to hit real balls, in the proper environment.) It gives both the novice

and experienced golfer useful swing feedback, and it's a superior controller for games such as LINKS 386. While the price may seem a major investment, many golfers don't blink an eye at spending as much as \$510 for a new junior titanium driver. **B**

PADDES: Truly obsessed golfers with some discretionary income.

PROS: The device gives you serious and helpful feedback on your golf swings, in addition to bringing interactive games to life.

CONS: You'll need a fairly large space to swing the club, and a hefty wad of cash to drive this baby home.



Price: \$799.95
System Requirements: IBM compatible 386 or better, Win 3.1 or better, 0.5 MB hard drive space, 2MB RAM. (Additional space and SVGA required for Links 386 software.)
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Protection: None
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Publisher: ThrustMaster, Inc., Portland, Oregon (503) 839-3200
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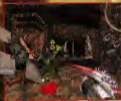
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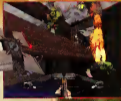
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Legend Re-forges The Sword Of Shannara

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In *Sword of Shannara*, the first of Terry Brooks' Shannara series of novels, Shea Ohmsford, a half-Elf, undergoes an arduous trek to recover the legendary Sword, the only weapon that can defeat the undead wizard Brona. The Sword of Shannara is not the traditional weapon for slaying and slaying; rather, it is a revealer of truth. Whoever holds the sword sees himself as he really is, stern of all self-illusion. Not an easy thing for most people to face.

Shea is able to withstand this revelation, and torches Brona (who does not believe himself to be dead) with the sword, putting an end to this evil creature. Of course, in fantasy, nothing is forever, and Brona has returned 20 years later in *Silveroak*, the third in Legend's "based on a fantasy book series." Unlike *Companions of North and Death Gate*, *SHANNARA* is more a sequel than an adaptation of a literary work.

ELVEN DESCENDANTS WALK WITH THE DEAD

Shea's son, Jak (whom you direct throughout the game), is chosen to wield the sword and face Brona, as only a

descendant of the Elven Horse of Shannara can do the job properly. Events begin with Jak receiving a visit from the mysterious Druid, Allanon, who tells him about Brona and sends him off to the kingdom of Leali. Along the way, Jak meets Sheila, King Miesion's daughter, who becomes the first of several companions for the journey.

In Leali, they save Menwick's life, then continue on to Tyriss, a quiet place of the Sword. Tyriss is plagued with nightly visits from the walking dead, and the Sword vault is barred by a magical barrier. After dealing with these problems, and picking up another companion, Brendel the Dwarf, Jak discovers the Sword of Shannara has been shattered (no surprise to anyone who watched the game's prologue and saw this happen).

Allanon shows up again, and tells Jak the Sword must be re-forged. So off he goes to the lands of the Elves, Trolls, Dwarfs and Gnomes. In each, he must find both a certain magic item and a member of that particular race who can use it, then convince that person to join the party. Only when the powers of these items are invoked in unison can the Sword be repaired.

Naturally, each land presents certain difficulties to overcome, including stop-

ping a war between the Elves and Trolls, and finding the stolen Hammer in the land of the Dwarfs, among others. Eventually, the Sword is made whole again, and Jak goes on to the final confrontation with Brona.

The game's interface is similar to that in the previous ones. As the cursor runs over hot spots, words appear on the screen and sentences form. For instance, putting the cursor over a tree might bring up "Look at the tree." Clicking the mouse would perform the action.

Using items works the same way. An object can be held on the cursor and moved around the screen to see what, if anything, can be done with it. Additional commands usually appear on the right side of the main display, and these vary depending on the active item. "Climb" for example, might appear when the active item is a tree, but not when it's a fishing pole.

Each party member has his or her own inventory, which Jak can access at any time. Objects can be transferred among the members, or used directly from their inventory, in which case, the use is phrased as a command: "Brendel, chop down the tree with the axe."

Walking around a town or similar place shows a standard one-screen 3-D view,

“ What could have been a good mid-range adventure game is marred by a poor combat system and an insult to women gamers. ”

developing a new game for America Online called *Explores*. If you've ever been a fan of Verne's Phineas Fogg or Doyle's Professor Challenger, this may be your chance to assume the role of explorer and compete against your fellow (or sister) adventurers. The design team promises that this won't be just a Source of THE NILE game presented in an online environment.

CRYSTAL BALL
▶ Caped crusaders are back in vogue. Not only can we expect THE WALKING DEAD from Bullfrog this Spring, but *Simplex* (of MASTER OF ORION, MASTER OF MAGIC fame) should have SUPERHEROES (working title) ready by late Summer. Maybe Pepe Moreno could finally do a Batman game? (Nah, too many people would want to play it.)
▶ Interactive Broadcasting is



LEGEND-ARY SCENERY From the Hildebrandt-esque characters to the panoramic overview maps and the pastoral forest scenes, the art style does a good job of evoking the feel of Brooks' novels, and is a good adaptation of the existing Legend engine.

which changes as Jak &崔 move around. Traveling in the outdoors, the display switches to overhead, showing the immediate vicinity and small icons for the party.

Wilderness travel is dangerous, as monsters lurk everywhere. Usually, you can see them before they are too close, and the critters can be avoided with a little care. It is generally best to walk slowly outdoors so you don't end up rushing into unpleasant situations.

While this is an adventure game, it does have a combat system of sorts, and several monster encounters are unavoidable. Presumably, this was put in to prevent the game from seeming too static, and to make it more exciting.

The party usually goes first, and Jak can give orders to the others in the group. This is along the lines of the Ultima-style of "attack strongest," "attack weakest," "attack the leader," "defend yourself," and so on. If no special orders are given, each person chooses a target at random.

Monsters appear at the top of the screen in separate boxes, and the party at the bottom. Below each box is the "hit point line" showing the current health of the critter or character. It starts as green, becomes yellow for injury, and red for severe injury. When the bar disappears entirely, the person or monster is out of the fighting.

Party members won't die if they fall in combat (unless everyone does), but they won't be in great shape afterwards. This is another reason to avoid unnecessary combat, along with the fact that fighting gives you nothing, as there is no experience or treasure to be obtained after a battle.

I did not much care for this system, and would have preferred being able to choose specific targets for each party

member. Jak himself is no great fighter, and didn't appear to improve over time. The others are better, but even so, fighting seemed a drawn-out experience more than an exciting one. Also, I noticed that on occasion, a monster's bar could be down to nothing, yet it still fought on, which did not improve matters any.

Conversation is an important part of the game, and handled by clicking on a person, then choosing from a menu of things to say. In some circumstances, careful manipulation of the conversation is the only way to accomplish certain goals, so close attention is necessary when talking to people. One nice feature (that more games need) is the ability to have all spoken lines show up also as text, so persons with hearing problems or unsupported sound cards are not left out.

For the most part, the puzzles in *SINNARA* are not very difficult. Often, if a solution looks obvious, that's what it is: the obvious solution. This could give veteran gamers some trouble, because it's often the blatant answer that gets overlooked (as happened to me on a couple of occasions).

Graphically, the game is good although not spectacular, and the voice acting is adequate. *SINNARA* was shaping up as a decent one-charge adventure, when I

came to the one point that infuriated me: This was the death of Shiela.

I would not have minded had she died gloriously in battle,

but it is often the fate of heroes and heroines. What happens is, Shiela is mortally wounded, but lingering on, and Jak—to save her soul—must kill her on the spot and perform a certain ritual. The only woman in the entire game, and she not only dies, but goes out a helpless lump.

I've heard that game designers are wondering how they can get more women playing games, if they keep presenting us with garbage like this, and it isn't going to happen any time soon. Far too many products these days have exclusively male heroes doing this, that, and the other; women are either nonexistent or mere adjuncts, at best.

It is all the more surprising since this game was designed by Corey and Lori Cole, from whom we expect much better. If they were trying to show the old "a hero's road is a tough one, and sometimes hard things have to be done, etc.," they have failed utterly, and only presented a slap in the face to women gamers everywhere.

In any case, if you can get by that point, and also avoid the silly combat,

SINNARA overall is an average adventure game, suitable more to the casual or novice gamer, and *Shinnara* fans, *Netscan* ad enthusiasts are likely to whip through this one with little trouble. ☹



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System Requirements: IBM 486-33 or better processor, 4MB RAM, VESA compatible SVGA graphics, 2x CD-ROM, mouse, supports Sound Blaster family, Ensoniq, Gravis Ultrasound, Roland and most other sound cards.

Protection: None (CD must be in drive)

Designers: Lori and Corey Cole

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TIPS!

► In the 7th & 8th hours of 11th Hour, you may have trouble finding objects. Try the Library, the Picture Gallery, or Brian Dutton's Room. From the end of Hour 8—"A man-horse on the fly sounds like a wounded bull's eye"—you aren't actually looking for a centaur

here, but rather a winged man-bull, an old Assyrian petroglyph which had religious significance in ancient Mesopotamia.—A Dembo

► When in doubt, make sure you've examined all of Stauff's art. Not only does the old man have excellent taste, but quite a few of the "objects" mentioned in the game are actually represented on canvas.—A Dembo

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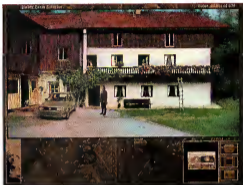
Howlin' Wolf

Our Resident Schattenjaeger Has Ways To Untangle Your Werewolf's Fur

This month, we peer into the dark mists surrounding GABRIEL KNIGHT 2: THE BEST WITHIN. All right, let's howl! Chapter 1. We start with Gabe at the farmhouse. Take a good look around, and check on everything. Check the outdoors carefully for evidence of wolf activity (oh yes,

one's been around, and he's big). You should have a couple of interesting items by the time you're ready for Munich. Naturally, Gabe wants to become acquainted with his lawyer, and probably has something to mull, too. Then it's off to the zoo for some investigating about the missing wolves. Thomas isn't helpful, but you do get to hear about Mr. Khurgiana. He has some interesting information regarding wolves, but won't let Gabe in to see the pack at the zoo. We can do something about that, however. The tape recorder has several handy features.

After seeing the wolves, you'll probably want some lab work done. Gabe's information man can assist with that. Then it's



THE GABRIEL TAPES One of the tougher puzzles in the game requires you to splice the tape of the Huber estates.

a good idea to look over the receipt, especially the back (which is backwards). It's also helpful to know what it says before messing around in private hunt clubs. A little documentation, and we're done with Gabe for now.

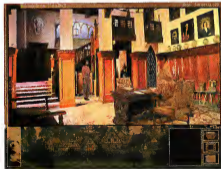
Chapter 2. Now we're with Grace at Schloss Ratten. She's here to do research, but Gerde (the housekeeper, while pleasant, isn't very helpful). So Grace will have to do it the hard way for awhile. Head to town and talk with everyone you can, starting with Herr Huber at the Goldener Lowe (sorry, he just won't) tell Grace where Gabe is hanging out, and working around from there.

So, there was a werewolf trial in Rittenberg awhile back, eh? The Schattenjaeger library back at the castle probably has some info on it. Too bad Gerde's being tough about

the key. Maybe we can do something there, especially now that the workman is gone and you can investigate the fireplace more closely.

You won't come across a more obvious switch for a secret passageway (hch). Where does it lead? Well, go in and find out! Don't worry, it's safe. And before long, you'll be snooping amongst the volumes in the library. Oop! Gerde just walked in (how embarrassing). After the rather volatile scene that follows, Gerde's not feeling too friendly, but at least Grace has the key of the library from now on. Make use of that, grabbing (and reading!) everything you can. Except stuff on Ludwig II. That's harder, because Grace's German is a bit weak. But maybe she knows someone who can help. A fellow academic, for instance.

Now let's go find out about that werewolf trial. Ouchi! Drawn, quartered, and buried at the stake, they sure didn't mess around with werewolves in the old days, eh? There may be more to learn yet, look through the dungeon window for inquisi-



HURLY-GERDE in Chapter 4, if the game crashes when talking to Gerde, try installing and running under DOS.



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tion if you need it. After that, you'll probably want to do something with all this research (Grace wasn't doing it for herself, after all).

Chapter 3. We're back with Cobe now, starting the day at the farmhouse. Check the paper; there's been another wolf killing, right in the city this time (daring, isn't he?). Then it's off for a busy day in Munich. The lawyer is a good place to begin, and you'll probably want to chat with Baron Von Clower (he did give you his card).

There's no one but Xaver, the secretary at the Hunt Club, so this is a good time to swoop around in the back hall. Hmm, what could be behind that locked door? I bet Xaver has the keys, and I also bet he wouldn't hand them over. A diversion is necessary here. This is tricky. Check out the shops at Marienplatz, and see what's available. Then you'll need an inconspicuous place to put the items. After you get

more than ordinary busybodies, it's probably of the unfavorable kind. Hey, it gets you into the police station, and a chat with Leber, so it's not all bad.

Be sure to check out the map before leaving the police station. Another visit to the lawyer and the Baron wouldn't hurt, either. Then Cobe can spend the evening relaxing at the hunt club, and wondering how he can best the conversation between Klingmann and Von Zell. It would be just a little too blatant, even for Cobe, to just plunk a tape recorder there. A bit of camouflage is necessary, and that takes care of the day.

Chapter 4. Time for Grace, who has a busy day planned, at the castle again. Look over the library before leaving, just in case Hinman, no Cerde downstairs, wonder where she is? We'll find her eventually. Off to town. Do the usual rounds (skip the town hall), starting with the inn. Mrs. Smith is for real, amazing as it seems, and she's important. Continuing on, we find Cerde in the crypt, and oh my? Cobe did put her foot (both feet) in it. Cerde never cared a thing for Cobe (smart boy). However, now Cobe has to make up with her. Flowers will do, you should know where to find them. At last, Grace has the car keys and can go traveling.

At Neuschwanstein, play the tour tape in every room (including the entry). Click on every possible object for a close-up. Click on the close-up if possible. If the tour tape appears for an item, play the tape. In the bedroom, move the cursor to the

right for an "exit" that turns you around to see the stove with the *Tinker and Bold* figures (this is all too easy to miss). Check the map when you leave the castle, if Neuschwanstein still blinks, go back and do it again.

At the Ludwig Museum, do much the same (there is no tour tape, fortunately). In this case, make sure Cobe reads everything aloud, be it a letter, wall plaque, or whatever. Get a close-up of the clerk,

then move the cursor towards the upper left for an exit to an exhibit room to the back (this is easy to miss, and is of critical importance). Talk to the clerk twice before leaving. If the Ludwig Museum blinks after you leave, go back and do it again.

At the Wagner Museum, follow the same drill. This is easier, as there are no sneaky rooms to find, and exhibits are fewer (but still important). Chat with Georg before leaving. The Wagner Museum will blink, as this is where the chapter ends later.

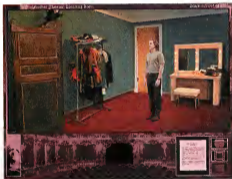
So you're done with the museum tour. Grace probably wants to talk to Mrs. Smith, and there's a follow-up to yesterday's phone call that needs to be made. That sets up a meeting with Hen Dalmeier, who knows a bit about Ludwig II, and that Ludwig's diary isn't available for inspection. He also knows a bit about the Black Wolf.

Back to the castle for more phone calls (don't worry, see this phone bill), and a chat with Cerde. This is a good time to mail something, and then work on Mrs. Smith's suggestion of getting in touch with Ludwig yourself. Check around the vicinity of the church.

After the little "seance," head back to the castle. Your score should be 360 at this point, and after entering and leaving the castle, the fax should be waiting at the post office.

Chapter 5. Cobe again. Naturally, he wants the tape from last night, and seeing the lawyer is also high on his list. The police station is the only other available location, so have another chat with Herr Leber. He'll be more cooperative if you show him something, and that will open a new area. Don't eat a nice person, but you have to pay him to get *mys* here here. It sure clears up a few things, eh? As for the tiger cage, well, that's a hungry cat, need I say more?

Now it's time for that little haunting trip in the great outdoors. Speaking of which, it's a good idea to explore the lodge environs thoroughly, and a map of the woods will come in handy later tonight. A chat with everyone available also helps. Klingmann will need a little persuasion, but I'm sure you have his weakness.



KEEP YOUR DAY JOB Before dressing for the performance, take a good look around—slowly.

the key and unlock the door, remember the key must be returned. I know, interesting little detail room down here, so it is? Take a good look around, but be quick, because Von Zell will show up soon and kick you out of there.

Say, isn't that the scene of the wolf leaping up the block (so close to the club, heinnit). Inspector Leber won't give Cobe's time of day, but we can get his attention. If there's one thing cops hate

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PHILIPS



tagged Van Zell isn't around, so this is the right time to snoop in his room (check Preiss' room)

Then you can visit the cave again (you did find it earlier, yes?) and confirm your suspicions, rather unimpressively. There's one rather obvious person you can talk to about this, so do that... and then it's time for the midnight werewolf hunt. You have to drive it to the room. Only the Ratter batsman works here, so be ready with that as you make your way through the woods. You'll probably die once or twice during the attempt, but if you're careful, it shouldn't take you too long to do this.

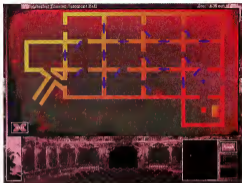
Chapter 6. The most involved. Here you will run both Cobe and Coace at different times, starting with Coace in Rattenberg. Our boy is there, too, as the dragon. The only safe place, in case he turns into a werewolf (midnight hunts are not without their drawbacks).

The first part of this chapter has Grace retrieving the parts of the lost Wagner opera. There are in Neuschwanstein, and one in Alotting, as you know from the opening movie. Do check around town before leaving, though, and don't forget the birds.

At Neuschwanstein, the first open section can be obtained by using something from Alotting (such vandabum!). The second section requires only patience, and the third can be gotten with, so to speak, a flight of fancy in the side hall. The persistent offerings probably reminded you of something, but you'll need permission first. Then you can go there with your own offering. Before doing anything with it, check out the chapel first. What happens after the heart is donated is a hint on what Coace needs to do, and after that, we segue to opening night of the opera. Coace has a lot to do

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WOLF HUNT While this may look like a maze, it's really a strategy mini-game. Limit the options of the real werewolf and back him into the furnace room.

here, too. Working around and becoming familiar with the opera house helps. There are some things in the office she needs. Cobe is there, too (not in great shape). We'll be getting to him later on. In the meantime, visit the cellar (you may want to map this) to find the prop room (important place). Look in backstage (important item here). Talk to everyone you can. Examine items in the inventory, and find the spotlight room.

You also must make sure that the two special guests for this evening are seated in the right place. When all is done, the usher will alert Coace that there're only five minutes to opening the doors. Time to bring Cobe downstairs and dress for the performance. After the chat with Leber, it's wise to ensure the quarry is in place, and then also ensure that he can't get out. With that done, we switch to Cobe in the prop room. As you might expect, he has to get out of there. Not too hard, if you look around carefully in back, and click here and there.

Backstage, he has to pick up something, from about the same place Coace did. This item is not easy to see, so move the cursor slowly to the right. Then into the dressing room he goes. Yep, Cobe is gonna perform in the opera (just as well if it's a non-singing part).

Uh, oh, someone's coming. Better not let him see you, k? s cloud things up a bit

and get out of sight. Then that backstage item will come in real handy. This moves us into the open itself, just sit there and enjoy the performance, because when it ends, the wolf hunt begins.

Cobe and his quarry will be in the basement, both as wolves. The goal is to drive the other werewolf into the furnace room, by shutting the room doors in the correct way. This is the only solution; if Cobe fights wolf-to-wolf, he will die. If the other werewolf gets away, Cobe also dies. So it's the furnace room or nothing.

The immediate task is to close the doors on the left side, blocking access to the easy exits. Then it becomes harder, as you have to shut the doors so as to make a single path to the furnace room, without leaving the quarry an exit, or forcing him into a dead end. Remember, once a door is shut, it can't be opened again.

In the furnace room is Herr Leber and Coace. You can switch between Coace and Cobe here, and that is necessary. Something must be done, and only Coace can do that. But only Cobe can take the action that will kill the Black Wolf. Time it carefully.

Whoa! That should be enough of wolves, Wagner, and Ludwig II to last us all a long, long time. And we're just about out of time here, as I see by the invisible clock on the wall. Until next time, happy adventuring! ☺

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Murphy Strikes Again

Film Noir Meets B-Movie Sci-Fi In This *UNDER A KILLING MOON* Sequel

by Denny Atkin

It's been 100 years since *The Maltese Falcon*, but nobody told 'em Murphy. Never seen without his fedora, trenchcoat, and pack of Lucky Strikes, Murphy's a detective who fancies himself a PI in the world of Spade or Marlowe. With his non-stop wisecracking and laced-out problem-solving, though, he comes across more like Jim Carrey on downers.

My encounter with Murphy started on a dark and foggy day, when Coleman dropped a Fed-Ex on my desk. "Murphy's luck," he said. "Better check this out." I opened the tea-stained envelope and found, not a mysterious manila folder, but four gold CDs with "The Pandora Directive" hard-sew-acked on them along with a cryptic letter saying that 'lex Murphy was on the trail of the government's biggest secret of the 20th century. "Must be either the Rosalind Incident, or the two mil Bill C. spent on lush fast-passes for Arkansas highway patrol-

ment," Hold Coleman. "I'll let you know what I find out."

I took out my feds on Murphy. This digitized gumshoe had quite a history. Back in '89, his exploits were chronicled in *UNDER A KILLING MOON*, a groundbreaking adventure game which was one of the first PC products to use both VCA and digitized sounds—and which remains to my knowledge the only adventure to toss in a flight simulator for good measure. Seems Murphy reappeared in *THE MOUNTAIN MANSION*, an enjoyable little yarn that didn't really break much new ground. *UNDER A KILLING MOON*, released back in '94, brought Murphy and the gang back to the bleeding edge of adventure gaming. Although much of the hype centered around Access having animated Margot Kidder and Brian Keith from a big sleep in order to star in the game, the real thrills came from the 3-D minuscule Murphy had been dropped into. This time around, he saved the world by wandering through rendered rooms that looked about as good as the ones in *THE 7th COUSIN*, but with more freedom of movement than *DOOM*. Add in cinematic sequences, known (if a bit tired) actors, and a mystery that reached all the way into earth orbit and you had one of the best adventure games of the decade. The experience was developed only by a script that packed more corn than an Iowa harvest festival.



FAMILIAR DIGGS Much of Murphy's initial footwork is done on good old Chandler Avenue. The Fuschia Flamingo is a new addition to the neighborhood.

CRUISING CHANDLER

I'd done my homework. It was time to tell Murphy and see what he was up to this time. I popped the first disc into my trusty Dell. Not the most romantic device, but it's damned hard to play Sid Meier games on an Underwood portable. A letterboxed opening video popped up, setting the scene. It was the mid-40s (the mid-20th), that is), and 'lex Murphy's luck was marring its usual course. Beautiful newstand owner Chelsea Bando's baby blues were seducing 'lex into settling down, but her lips were threatening to move to Phoenix. Fiction was the finestest thing on the landlord's mind. 'lex needed a case, and soon. As luck would have it, his old-style gumshoe appearance attracted the attention of one Gordon Fitzpatrick, who was looking for a lost friend.

A simple missing persons case and an easy \$4,000, right? Not with 'lex Murphy's luck. It turned out the person non-locatable was one Thomas Mallory, a chief researcher at the Air Force installation in Roswell, New Mexico. And it didn't look



GREAT BALLS OF FIRE 'lex Murphy has all the luck—Phillip Marlowe never got to face threats like this.

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like he'd just gone for a ride on a beautiful weather balloon.

The search started in familiar territory: Tim's old Malloy had been a resident in the TeS's own building, the magnificently named Ritz. It looked like piecing this case together was going to make anyone who followed Murphy an end on the KILLING MOON adventure feel right at home—the initial investigation, at least, was going to involve talking to the locals on Chandler Avenue, trying to find people who'd seen Malloy, knew where he'd gone and what he was up to. That involved talking to a lot of familiar faces: Chelsea at the newsstand, Rick at the pawn shop, Clint the one-eyed chouchou, and old dependable Louie at the Brew & Stew.



STAR POWER Northern Exposure's Barry Corbin strikes a threatening pose, while Tanya Roberts steps up from Sheena and Beestmaster.

Unfortunately, when Tex Murphy puts two and two together, the result is often a lot bigger than four. As he worked to track down Malloy, he also got involved with tracking down death threats against a eurasian exotic dancer, and aiding National Security Agency operatives who'd taken an unhealthy interest in his investigation—initially to Tex, that is, who was close to pinning the collection of dead bodies that was piling up faster than parkades at the HICOP.

Then, there was the Rowell connection. Malloy, it appeared, was a linguist,

linked with translating alien runes. With the NSA on his tail, he'd sent out a series of puzzle boxes to trusted friends and relatives, boxes that would have to be pieced together to solve this mystery of cosmic proportions. It was up to Murphy to find out why so many people were willing to kill for the secret contained in these Pandora boxes.

THE STUFF THAT DREAMS ARE MADE OF

I followed Murphy through to the conclusion, but I couldn't want to spoil the fun by spilling the boxes. Turns out there were at least three paths to take, leading to six possible endings. Nice—a detective story you could relive without knowing what was going to happen on the second pass. Even Hammer and Chandler couldn't pull that one off.

The first half of the mystery took place in territory familiar to anyone who played KILLING MOON: a post-WW III San Francisco neighborhood populated by a mix of humans and mutants. Despite the familiar digs, though, the neighborhood seemed nicer. Turns out the tech boys at Access had fiddled with the code and cleaned things up quite a bit. Objects in rooms no longer tried to face you as you moved through rooms, as if drawn to your magnetic personality. More fine-tuning was evident in that many objects kept their detail even when viewed up close, instead of blurring away like the rooms tend to do after a long visit with detective Jim Beam. The constant of further surroundings faded soon enough, though, as I journeyed with Murphy to Rowell, a secret installation, and an Arctec labyrinth puzzling enough to give Indiana Jones himself a headache. All told, there were over 70 virtual rooms to explore, beautifully rendered in crisp SVGA with a dark, film noir look.

Of course, finding objects and solving puzzles is only part of a PI's job. Digging for info is another. Interacting with the various dammit's personae once again involved a jarring shift from the first person to the third—instead of explaining rooms through Murphy's eyes, I was watching him from across the room and

guiding him through conversations by choosing a tone of response from three possibilities. While the perspective shift was jarring, at least the acting wasn't. Kevin McCarthy and Northern Exposure's Barry Corbin seemed to be taking their acting jobs seriously, a welcome improvement over the campy Russell Means and bizarre Marge Kidder performances in KILLING MOON. Tanya Roberts also turned in a good performance, albeit looking more a Jean Collins doppelgänger than a former Charles Angel or Bond girl here. Some of the acting improvement may have been attributable to the direction of Adrian Carr. Although his more impressive film credits involve editing rather than direction (his directing credits include the Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers series), he did pull a better performance from the actress involved than in the preceding cyberflick. In KILLING MOON, designer Chris Jones got in on an awkward performance as Murphy. This time, the performance was fine, with only a good percentage of his jokes eliciting groans.

THE LONG GOODBYE

Satisfied with my investigation, I dropped the dices on Cokemum's desk. "Looks like another Access winner," I told him. "The engine's the same, and the scenery's familiar, but the new story should keep gamers happy." I told him about the online hint section that would track solutions for points, and the new play level for experienced gamers that doesn't offer hints, but doubles the point possibilities and offers "a unique reward at the end of the game."

"There's even a noveltion available from Prime," I added. "It's an amusing—if awkward—read. You don't often find the protagonist looking for objects in adventure-game style in most books, and there are so many positive etiquette references you'd think the guy was on the take from R.J. Reynolds. Still, it's a good guide if you get stuck in the plot."

Another case closed. I discovered a break Down to John's Cell for a cup of joe? Nah, I decided to grab my clothes and hit the links. **S**

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MISSILES ON YOUR SHOULDERS AND COULD FLY
AROUND AND KICK ROBOT BUTT?

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Sir-Tech's Step Child

DRUID Fails To Live Up To Its Forebears

by Petra Schlunk

Call it a blessing or a curse, but every new role-playing and adventure game from Sir-Tech will inevitably be compared with their successful Wizardry series. As an adventure game with minor role-playing elements, **DRUID: DAEMONS OF THE MIND** might get a double helping of "Does it measure up?" from Sir-Tech fans. As "The Man With No Name," you play an immortal druid brought to the world of Navan by three other druids to assist them in finding their missing brother. Each druid resides on an island, which you must visit in your quest to find clues about the disappearance.

THE DIRECT APPROACH

Essentially, gameplay in **DRUID** follows a linear course. You begin the game with-out options for No Name's character or control over his statistics. He will acquire experience points, gain levels, improve his health (body points), and magic power (mind points) as he progresses through the game. You start out on an island called the Continuum Ground, which accommodates a jail, an arena for battling up No Name's physical statistics, a library site containing Stonechenge-like megoliths, and a temporarily restricted area. He will spend some time here studying, improving his abilities, and gathering information before traveling to the next island.

You must solve most of the puzzles on each island before No Name can acquire the "Oghlann" keystones he needs to continue his journey. These nano-inscribed stones fit into the megoliths found on each island. He can't continue his journey



LOST IN SPACE: **DRUID**'s elegantly retro "Flash Gordon" spaceship adds a title variety to the typical old-world adventure theme.

until he properly rotates each stone to match the correct symbol in these druidic structures.

You view No Name's progress from a three-quarter overhead perspective as he travels from area to area looking for items to use, people to meet, and creatures to fight. **DRUID** sports a sleek, designed mouse-driven interface, which features an arrow-shaped cursor. The cursor changes color when it passes over something that No Name can touch or use and turns into an exit sign if an area leads to somewhere else. You can pick up and identify an object by dragging and clicking it on an icon of No Name's face in the Main Menu screen. Similarly, you can use an object by clicking it on other objects or people.

Almost every item in the game forms part of a puzzle. No Name can talk to other characters, give them items, or fight

them, although you can't order him to fight a friendly or harmless character. You can read conversations at your leisure by clicking the text on the screen, with high-lighted hypertext keywords providing additional information. Conversations rarely involve game-affecting choices and are primarily a means of learning new information.

A DASH OF HACK-'N'-SLASH

Combat plays a small, but vital role in the game. Throughout No Name's travels, he meets various hostile humans and monsters that block his path. Surprisingly, they all seem to be roughly his equal in terms of strength and endurance. These hostile beings provide valuable experience points, and should be dealt with whenever encountered. **DRUID**'s real-time combat system includes blocking, fleeing, and different attack angle strategies. These can



Price: \$59.95

System Requirements: 486DX/33 or better (486DX/50 or better recommended), 4 MB RAM (8MB recommended), SVGA graphics, 12 MB hard drive space, 2 x CD-ROM (4X recommended), mouse; most sound cards supported (16-bit sound card recommended).
Protection: None (CD must be in drive)
Designer: Matt Stott (lead designer)
Publisher: Sir-Tech Software
 Dagersburg, NY
 (800) 447-1230
Reader Service #: 327

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BALL OF CONFUSION: Sometimes it's hard to tell which limbs belong to you when using Druid's clunky combat system.

be either hopelessly difficult or childishly simple—depending on whether you learn the right tricks for fighting (see sidebar). Monsters hit fast and hard; once they start hurting No Name, it's all over. Be

warned that you will lose some battles, primarily because there is another way to get past these particular opponents.

If you have problems with the combat system, you may find DRUID's magic system more useful than I did. Spells come in handy for hoisting No Name before battle and for "softering up" his targets before he attacks them. Creatures will not attack you until you step into their "space," so you can lob spells at them to your heart's content. No Name should cast more spells if he has trouble with a particular opponent. You can either find spells in the manual, or in books and tapestries throughout the game. Elements (water, air, fire, and earth) make up a majority of the spells. The magic system is simple and intuitive; right-clicking will bring up No Name's magic arsenal, featuring four gems to cast element-based spells as well as a central gem for "mind power" spells. Clicking on the elements and the mind gem in the correct order will invoke a spell, which then can then be targeted appropriately.

Although combat and magic make up substantial gameplay, DRUID's substance lies in the puzzles and storyline. The plot is by no means lucid, but a strong current of intrigue running through the storyline warrants continued play. DRUID's puzzles involve finding objects, using them sensibly, and giving them to interested parties. Unlike many adventure games, puzzles actually contribute to the plot and

do not come off as superfluous to gameplay.

DON'T BLINK; YOU MIGHT MISS IT

Like some of Sin-Tech's Wizardry games, DRUID offers multiple endings depending on choices you make late in the game. Unfortunately, these endings are all disappointingly short and uninteresting. In fact, the whole game is on the short side, something that even a nice storyline and lovely graphics can't redeem.

If you pick up DRUID because you are looking for a challenging role-playing game on par with the venerable WIZARDRY and REALMS OF ARAGONIA games, you will be disappointed. DRUID is short, pretty, and moderately challenging, but uninspiring combat sequences and the disappointing sound effect an otherwise great interface. **B**

Solving Combat In Deen

Without knowledge of the right moves, real-time combat in *Druid* can drive even the most brisacious gamer crazy. Here are some combat tips to keep your druid fighting strong.

Always save before you fight!

The more experience your druid has, the better. For practice, take advantage of one of the few places in the game where monsters regenerate: on the road to the Archives. After killing the monster guarding this road, leave the area and return to fight it again. You can keep this up until you are satisfied (or until you get bored silly).

Whoever lands the first hit during hand-to-hand combat will most likely win the battle. A successful hit makes the target lose their balance and delays retaliation. Repeated hits will keep your opponent off balance and protect No Name from most attacks.

To ensure the first hit is landed by No Name, click directly on your opponent (to walk up to him) and keep clicking as fast as you can to keep hitting him. The best places to hit your opponent are usually on the front of the legs. However, some battles will require experimentation to determine which mouse-click will connect with the monster. The right place to direct your hits depends on the direction the monster is facing and whether it is standing on an incline or on level ground.

Improve your odds by keeping No Name fully healed and with enough mind points to fight properly. Cast some destructive spells on your foe before closing in for the kill. Remember that there are a few opponents whom you cannot kill including the jailer and some of the guards in the restricted area, do not waste your time fighting them.

FAPPEAL: Those intimidated by the richer environment of *Wizardry* and *Realms of Aragonia* may find this easier to get into (and out of).

MPROG: Simple, intuitive magic system; decent storyline with numerous, plot-driven puzzles, multiple endings.

ICONS: Painful pixel-hurling required to find many of the game's objects, plus an excruciating combat system sap the energy from the story. Having only three save game slots is also a detriment.



it can't be reasoned with,
 it can't be bargained with...
 ...and it absolutely will not stop.

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—PC-ZONE

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—SCORE

"Look for Bethesda Softworks to have computer titans running scared in the near future..."

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 just does
 that good



BELVIN BREFINO TACTICAL STATUS



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Actual IBM screens shown

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A Collection Of Screams

Only The Story Transforms User-Friendly Into User-Nightmare In This Masterful Adaptation

by Allen L. Greenberg

During the most bitter "us vs. them" days of the cold war, there was an itch at the back of our collective minds: would the computers, which we were developing to help organize and protect our lives, somehow turn on us and take far more authority than they were every intended to have? Such a computer might be buried deep in another hemisphere, or be as close as the bank around the corner. Arguably the greatest literary realization of those fears is a 1967 short story by Harlan Ellison entitled *I Have No Mouth And I Must Scream*. This Hugo award-winning term, having been reprinted in numerous fimsies in various collections, has finally appeared as a brilliant piece of interactive fiction. In cooperation with the author, Cyberdreams has recently released *I Have No Mouth And I Must Scream*.

While the background of both the game and the story are the same, the key events of each have very little in common. Three giant computers have been built for military purposes by the Russians, the Chinese and the Americans. The computers draw on their own resources to grow and expand until they interacted and nearly covered the planet. AM was the name of the resultant machine, at first serving as an acoustic for Allied Mastercomputer. Ultimately, however, it was clearly AM, as in "I think therefore I..." AM's most prominent feature is its hatred, and to satisfy this emotion, the computer has captured five humans to be kept with-

in its planet-sized entrails. After 109 years of mutilation and abuse, the game and the short story diverge.

Harlan Ellison's original AM is an ultra-soldistic lab technician tampering with a group of nice, almost to the point of death, while keeping them ever-hopeful that a piece of cheese is just around the next corner. It is a horrible roller-coaster ride which comes to a shocking conclusion. In the game,

“ Those disgusting with the games designed from Bradbury's and Asimov's works will find I HAVE NO MOUTH immeasurably more satisfying. ”

however, AM decides to take his group of humans on a different path. Each of the humans suffers from a private, inner-hell which AM takes great pleasure in externalizing a hidden secret, guilt or exper-



UNWANTED WINDOWS The TV sets, a recurring Ellison theme, let Ellen peek into other characters' adventures. It's either that, or face the yellow she so detests.

ience that has buried just beneath the surface of each prisoner's conscious thought, forgotten after 109 years of computerized torture.

Each character, in turn, is tossed into an artificially created mystery world and promised that they will find something there of tremendous personal value. In reality, each of the worlds is haunted by each prisoner's nightmare. From AM's point of view, there is no reason why each subject should not behave according to its own hell. Your job is to guide each character through his or her own adventure, avoiding the most simple and tempting solutions. Will AM follow through on any of his promises? What is there to be gained or lost by ever trying to confront such nightmares and respond appropriately? There is a secret and even a purpose to it all should each of the five emerge through successfully.

I Have No Mouth, therefore, a free-part adventure which may be tackled in



Price: \$69.95
System Requirements:
 IBM compatible,
 486DX/33 or better
 processor, 15 MB hard
 drive space, 8 MB
 RAM, 2X CD ROM,
 SVGA graphics, Sound
 Blaster or compatible
 sound card
Protection: None
Publisher:
 Cyberdreams
 Calabasas, CA
 (818) 222-9348
Reader Service #: 328

RIPPER

FREE

March 1996

The Ultimate in Interactive Horror



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Technological Event
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**Ripping Detail:
The Gruesome Plot**

**Evil by Design:
The Design & Production**

**Shooting the Town:
The Making of Ripper**



Starring
Christopher Walken
Karen Allen
Burgess Meredith
John Rhys-Davies



taketwointer

It was a beautiful night in New York, except, of course, for the screaming. After the requisite digital 911 and dispatch routine, the scene becomes sadly familiar. Another mutilated body. Another homicide investigation. Another brutal crime without any clues. A locked door mystery with overtones of the bideous. The landlady, maybe to avoid thinking about the body of the woman, stares at the bloody carpet wondering if the stains are ever going to come out. The RIPPER has struck again.

RIPPER

THE ULTIMATE IN INTERACTIVE HORROR

And over in the corner, looking on in mute horror, stands the crime reporter Quinlan. Some are harder to take than others, even when you have been in the business for a while. Some you know are going to keep you waking up screaming in the middle of the night for the rest of your life, no matter how much work the shrinkers and their high tech probe toys do. You want to think it isn't happening. You look away and look back expecting the body to be gone, the police to have been shadows and the whole thing to have been a nightmare. But no matter how much you work on it, the result is still the same: you keep seeing the face of your girlfriend superimposed over the body on the floor.



This is the setup for RIPPER, a new game of interactive horror from Take 2. The player, taking the role of Quinlan—a crime reporter—suddenly finds himself caught up in the most bizarre of possible plots: in the 21st Century it would appear that Jack the RIPPER is stalking the streets of New York. Seemingly unstoppable, he leaves no clues, can get to anyone and leaves behind scenes just as sick and twisted as the originals. Worse, with the police seemingly incapable—or unwilling—to solve the crime, it is up to you to stop the psychotic of the century, or go mad trying. RIPPER is a full motion video tour-de-force. Over \$4 million in the making, with a star



studded cast, more than 35 interactive puzzles and combat sequences, a professional production crew and innovative storytelling technology, the final product is a six CD set with over three



hours of digitally enhanced full motion video and one of the deepest plots ever seen in an electronic interactive story. 30+ man-years of production time went to making RIPPER the standard against which all others



will be measured. And Take 2 relies not only on their talents to bring RIPPER to life, but bring out some of the biggest names in Hollywood to complete the effort. Christopher Walken, Burgess

Meredith, Karen Allen, John Rhys-Davies, Jimmy Walker, Tawnee Welch and David Patrick Kelly all lend their considerable acting abilities to the project. Add a soundtrack featuring Blue Oyster Cult and you have a stunning blend of talent and vision that makes RIPPER one of the most complete and engaging interactive experiences ever created.

In this special supplement, we are going to cover every detail of RIPPER. From the initial design to the month of shooting in a New York studio to the details of the programming; no stone will be left unturned. So read on to get the ultimate inside look at the creation of pure horror from the ground up.

"With its fresh, fast-paced story, its first rate cast and graphics, RIPPER looks like it could be one of the most provocative and compelling games of the year."

PC Gamer

RIPPING DETAIL:

A LOOK AT THE PLOT OF RIPPER

As befits a game with over 30 man-years in the development, the RIPPER storyline is as complex as a fractal image: the deeper you go, the more complicated it gets. The game starts in 2046 with a murder hideous enough to make even jaded New Yorkers take notice,



The body of the female victim has been eviscerated with surgical precision and her internal organs spread over the crime scene. As Jake Quinlan, a crime reporter for the Virtual Herald, the player is in the thick of it from the beginning. But the chances of this

being a singular, psychotic event drop to zero when Quinlan starts getting letters from the perpetrator. The letters lend an even more bizarre twist to the senseless killing. The murder is copying the pattern of the most famous serial killer in history: Jack the RIPPER.



As the murders and letters continue, the danger comes home to Quinlan, in the form of a letter from the RIPPER naming Catherine Powell, Quinlan's co-worker and girl friend, as the next victim. Despite the warning, the RIPPER still manages to get to Powell, but doesn't get to finish his job. Powell is alive, but in a deep coma. As if things weren't

bad enough for Jake, detective Vince Magnotta (Christopher Walken) moves Jake up to the prime suspect for the murders. After all, the crimes sure sell digital papers, don't they? It becomes obvious that Quinlan must find out the identity of the RIPPER himself



and stop the evil. But hunting a psychotic murderer does have its inherent dangers, and Quinlan must not only clear himself, but also avoid becoming the RIPPER's next victim. Solving the murders isn't going to be easy, even armed with this much information. It turns out to be impos-



"If there's a right way to do Full Motion Video, this is it."

Next Generation

sible to discover the answer to such simple questions as the weapon the RIPPER is using, much less how he can track and kill his victims and leave no trace except macabre remains.

"RIPPER...threatens to upstage Phantasmagoria as a purveyor of adult content in games."

PC Entertainment

What strange connection do twin brothers Covington and Hamilton Wofford (Burgess Meredith) have to the unfolding drama? How can a killer leave no traces in a futuristic world of advanced criminology? The questions and byzantine twists keep piling up as Quinlan

will be a fight to the death. It is up to the player to make sure that the death involved is that of the RIPPER and not Quinlan. Using their innovative act sequencing and game engine technology, Take 2 ensures that solving RIPPER will be a non-stop thrill-packed journey into

the fly video rescaling, puzzles are fully integrated with the rendered backgrounds, not separate scenes. RIPPER also makes the horror last by having four different ending sequences in which the identity of the RIPPER changes. To do this, Take 2 has used their act arrange-

sections of the game, giving a whole new twist to the mystery. With an all star cast to bring the script to life and music featuring Blue Oyster Cult, RIPPER promises to be not only a good game, but a good work of interactive fiction as well.



moves deeper into the mystery. Before things are over, Quinlan will have to track the killer and the clues all over New York, and all over cyberspace, to bring together the pieces he needs to finally end the madness once and for all. The final scenes, played out in a cyberspace reconstruction of the historical RIPPER's stomping grounds, Whitechapel,

horror. Unlike some games, there is no break in the action of RIPPER to pull a player out of the reality of the game. Movement is seamless, and by using their on-

ment to give an overall background common to all the murders first. Then, in the later acts, the clues leading to the murder are presented. So the different endings aren't just "tacked on" but instead integrate perfectly with the preceding

For those with a mind for the macabre, RIPPER will be the interactive event of the year.

"RIPPER shows signs of being the most innovative piece of software in years."

Computer Game Review



**Evil By Design:
The Design and
Production of
RIPPER**

Ambition was a key word from the beginning of the RIPPER design process. "What we wanted to do was to make a full motion interactive game with a real plot. We wanted to achieve a game with the depth of a novel. A game for thinking adults," says FL Lennon, Vice President of Development. However, to achieve this goal took much more work than expected.

Take 2 needed to utilize a non-linear plot in the game. While

linear plots make a game easier to write, they detract from the gaming experience because characters cannot wander freely and act spontaneously. But the problem is that events must occur in some order. When scripting a scene for actors, you must know what has happened up to that point.

To solve the problem, Take 2 broke the game down into acts. Each act contains a number of puzzles that the player can solve in a varying order. But the players must solve the puzzles in order to proceed to the next act.

With the matter of linearity solved, the designers still had a tough road ahead of them.

While the veterans in Take 2 have designed numerous interactive games, working with live actors and the

requirements of the video medium requires time to feel comfortable. "We learned with previous titles that live actors take much more care. You can have these huge

blocks of dialog that look fine in a text game, but if an actor tries to say them they just don't work. With FMV in RIPPER it was even more pronounced. A lot of the information gets conveyed by looks and acting talent as opposed to the actual spoken lines," says Ryan Brant, Take 2's CEO. The team also worked to integrate elements of the actual historical RIPPER crimes into their cyberpunk recreation. For instance, the real Jack sent letters to newspapers boasting of his crimes, and the Ripper does the same in the game. "He would start every letter with 'from Hell' and would refer to the newspaper columnist as 'boss'. We used

three months designing RIPPER. Next, the video was shot, and the programming team integrated the video with the game engine they had been developing. "We spent a lot of time figuring out how people really move—calculating how many frames of video actually equaled a distance walked in the real world and using a formula to integrate that into our engine. That way, the movement looked like it does in the real world," says Chris Short, RIPPER's Production Manager.

The production team also closely examined the mechanics of human movement to see how a person's eyes and head track. Then they built this into their engine so that when a person turns a corner, for example, the camera angle changes to simulate the way people move their head and eyes in that situation.

A great deal of attention focused on ensuring that slower

"For sheer star quality, it's hard to surpass RIPPER from Take2."

Computer Gaming World

these elements in our letters," says Lennon. The writing and programming team spent

computers can still get the full effect of RIPPER. "We designed an approximation curve



for the video speed of the machine to run smoothly on a 486-50 with a double speed CD-ROM instead of just on Pentium systems," Short explains.

These touches give RIPPER incredibly smooth and realistic movement that no other FMV game has ever had. "It has taken a lot of work," says Take 2 President Mark Seremet. "But when your goal is to redefine the level of the interactive game, you know it isn't going to be easy."

SHOOTING THE TOWN: THE MAKING OF RIPPER'S VIDEO SEQUENCES

In contrast to a traditional stage with props and backdrops, the RIPPER set is totally barren. A bank of powerful workstations sit along one wall manned by Take 2 artists. This combination of human talent and computer power produces all the backgrounds and settings for each scene on the fly. Here's how: The walls of the set are painted a special pigment, called Chroma Blue. The color is then coded into the specialized software and hardware; anywhere the computers find that color in a video stream, they replace it with computer graphics. Thus the

actors appear as live video, but everything else in a scene is the computer overlay. While this might seem more difficult for the talent, Walken and his fellow actors maintain that the differences are fairly small. The Take 2 staff, however, endured a grueling work schedule.

"When you only have some of the big name actors for a couple of days, each day can run up to 20 hours. It's grueling," says Mike Snyder, one of Take 2's Senior Artists. Although this is their first complete full motion shoot, Take 2 paid to ensure it was done right.

"These guys know what they are doing. We didn't want to go the route we have seen in some other games where the designers tried to run everything themselves. It is worth it to pay the money to get the professionals. These people know what it takes to produce perfect results," says President Mark Seremet.

Working with professionals does have another up side—getting to meet and work with big name stars.

"Walken was incredible. The man can act anything. Because of a short prep time, he was read-

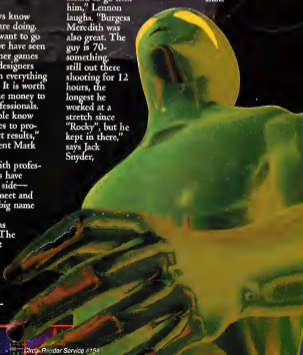
"RIPPER will not be another one of those dreary, interactive movies that turn out to be as interactive as a tumble dryer."

Computer Player

ing his lines off a Teleprompter and it sounded like he lived the part," says John Antinori, one of Take 2's Senior Writers.

"And David Patrick Kelly. The guy is just as intense in real life as he is acting. In between shots he would walk in these tight circles in the back corner, muttering to himself, to keep his intensity up. Of course, I was kind of afraid to go near him," Lennon laughs. "Burgess Meredith was also great. The guy is 70-something, still out there shooting for 12 hours, the longest he worked at a stretch since "Rocky", but he kept in there," says Jack Snyder.

Senior Artist. While the shooting was expensive and grueling for the Take 2 team, it no doubt produced the excellent results they expected: the finished footage for the game is comparable to a movie or high quality television show. It might be hard to get a game that has the impact of a feature film, but Take 2 is certainly giving it a shot.



TAKE 2

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PC-CD

Starring
Christopher Walken
Karan Allen
Burgess Meredith
John Rhys-Davies

RIPPER

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any order and combined with a spectral sixth ending game which can only be attempted after the first five have reached a satisfactory conclusion. One of the torturers is Cornister, a darkly sober individual who holds himself responsible for his beloved wife's loathsome death. He has attempted suicide many times, only to be rescued by AM. Another is Benny, a former soldier who led an allegedly satisfying career. AM has twisted both his mind and his body on various occasions. Ted fancies himself a young, handsome stud, deserving of special treatment. Wife AM has, for some reason, resisted destroying the youth's good looks, he tortures Ted with accusations of fraudulence, threatening to tell the others about Ted's less than spectacular life.

Ellen is the only female of the group, and a very talented computer technician. She cut short her own career at one point, and never revealed why. AM finds it easy to torture the woman by keeping her in a coffin-like prison with shades of the color yellow. Finally, there is Nimdok. He is a well-educated man and a Jewish survivor of the Nazi concentration camps. He remembers very little of his past, although AM seems to enjoy exposing small pieces of it which, for some reason, causes Nimdok great agony.



SPEAKER FOR THE DEAD Benny comes face to face with his past, as his victims call to him from the grave.

"REFORMED" LUDDITE

Harlan Ellison's fingerprints are to be found nearly everywhere on *I HAVE NO MOUTH AND I MUST SCREAM*, indicative of the level of creative control Harlan

insists upon. As a result, those disgusted with the games designed from Bradbury's and Asimov's works will find *I HAVE NO MOUTH* immeasurably more satisfying. (And Harlan will be thrilled that our Editor-in-Chief may eat his words suggesting that Ellison was such a "Luddite" that he wouldn't have any more to do with the project than the manuscript two weeks in which he had originally agreed.) Harlan's voice may also be heard, at the risk of shattering sub-standard sound cards, as the voice of AM, with just a tip of the hat to *The Wizard Of Oz*.

The remaining cast puts in a satisfying performance, and the sound effects and music score are also quite effective. The graphics are slightly gitty as one might expect deep in the bowels of the computer, though perhaps a bit stiff in places. Gameplay is mouse-controlled, using characters, objects and locations on the graphic screen in addition to a small collection of verbs.

While gameplay in *I HAVE NO MOUTH AND I MUST SCREAM* may be standard, every over-used plot-device has been refreshingly removed. There are no arcade sequences, no insight prophesies, no cross-country Federal Express missions and, most importantly, there are no movies. The game judges you strongly on the morality of your actions. We are dealing with genuine emotions such as pain and hate, rather than some cartoon caricature of them. It is a good idea to invest some thought before speaking in a conversation, and those players with a bit of cultural and historical knowledge will probably be at a slight advantage. *I HAVE*

I Have No Hints...



Benny makes it very obvious that he doesn't care for certain charity-dependent people. Spend a lot of time with them anyway, and possibly help them out.

Ellen is more afraid of her surroundings than she is willing to admit. Don't give up on the goal. It's far more important than Ellen guesses. Out of sight, out of mind.



Cornister is sailing aboard a zep-pelin, and not quite sure why. He should search the craft from one end to the other to find something which belongs to him. Then, it's time to land.



Nimdok has lost his memory of his experiences in the concentration camp. Listen to everyone, they know a lot about you. However, hide certain items you find which might damage your reputation.



Ted claims to be in love, but is he really? Make sure honor and chivalry are not forgotten.



I HAVE NO MOUTH AND I MUST SCREAM is a disturbing game, which rewards as much as it demands. **S**

APPEAL: Not the best to try as a first adventure, though anyone who likes depth of storytelling should consider this game. Even without copious gore, some of the material may be too intense for children.

PROS: Outstanding story which breaks free from every over-used adventure plot device. It really is Ellison.

CONS: The often stiff graphics are inadequate to convey the depths of the story.





This Old House

The Sequel To THE 7TH GUEST Strikes Perilously Close To Midnight

by Arinn Dembo

Every town has a haunted house. Generators of kids pass on rumors about what goes on inside, double-clanging their friends to go explore it—just once! Parents issue warnings about broken glass, rusty nails, and spitting crows, but fear is always a better deterrent than common sense.

In *THE 11TH HOUR*, The abandoned, decaying Stauf mansion is back and scarier than ever; the place that every kid dreads to pass on the street. As the game begins, a rash of brutal murders in the town nearby raises the question of whether there could be a link to the old Stauf place's infamous and horrible past.

THE 7TH GUEST veterans should have no trouble finding their way around the house using the same first-person perspective and mouse-driven interface. However, you now explore the house through the eyes of a grown man, well over six feet tall. Besides an additional secret room, and the removal of the top floor from *THE 7TH GUEST*'s explosive climax, Stauf mansion's floor plan remains the same.

As in *THE 7TH GUEST*, you must solve puzzles to unlock and explore the various rooms. But now, the rooms contain dozens of beautifully rendered objects and paintings instead of bare walls. Of course, they serve a purpose; Triblytic added a treasure hunt to the game.

Players must solve riddles associated with each item in the house. Upon solving a riddle, players learn what object to access next. Touching the correct object rewards you with either a film or animation clip which reveals part of the story and moves you one step closer to victory.

The riddles add to gameplay, but sometimes needlessly increase *THE 11TH HOUR*'s difficulty level. Occasionally, inelegant and



WELL-SCRUBBED *The Hour's* crisp "coffee-table" graphic quality is in league with *Myst* and *Bured In Time*.

logically constructed word problems will bury an answer under several layers of awkward metaphors. Fortunately, the game provides the player with a handy hint system called a "game book," a hand-held PC that provides hints and maps and displays the game's film sequences. The gamebook keeps gameplay flowing by seamlessly incorporating the hint system into the interface—a good feature in any game and especially necessary in a horror game, where frustration can cancel out suspense.

AND NOW, THE REST OF THE STORY

Triblytic produced an incredibly slick title. Few will find fault with *THE 11TH HOUR*'s beautiful SVGA graphics, exceptional sound, and top-notch animation. The flawlessly rendered chrome would be enough for many games.

THE 11TH HOUR's problems fall into two categories: demanding system requirements and lackluster script. The former issue bears only minor mention; *THE 11TH HOUR* gets cranky if you don't have a state-of-the-art system. Unlike similar titles, the game's recommendation for a Pentium with at least 8 MB of RAM cannot be taken lightly. It will have trouble running on anything less than a 486cd66 with 8 MB, a double-speed CD-ROM and a recent 2 MB graphic card. The older your

equipment, the more likely the game will lock up or not run at all.

Despite being more involved and adult-oriented than *THE 7TH GUEST*, weaknesses in the script hamper *THE 11TH HOUR*. Carl Denning, an old man for TV's "Case Unsolved," ventures into the mansion to find his producer and ex-lover, Robin Morales. Robin recently disappeared while researching a story on the mansion. In the course of his search, Carl must solve clues about her disappearance. The game displays his discoveries through film clips which play on the gamebook. While it's satisfying and entertaining to watch these long cinematic sequences after you guide Carl through piecing together a clue, players will find his real motivation suspect.

Not to nitpick, but our hero is a bit of a bastard. The game establishes only an anemic connection between Carl's strength of character and his struggle to find Robin. You will question his scruples during the finale, where one crucial choice decides her fate. I won't spoil the ending, but none of the three possible conclusions correspond well to Carl's original goal. Sympathizing with him may not be easy, but at least he is noble enough to rescue her from Stauf's Rutch Motel.

continue on page 132 MH



Price: \$39.95

System Requirements: 486-66 or better processor (Pentium strongly recommended), Win 95 or DOS 5.0, 8 MB RAM, SVGA graphics, 4 MB hard drive space, 2x CD-ROM, any major sound card, mouse.

Protection: None
Designer: Triblytic
Publisher: Virgin Interactive
 Entertainment
 Irvine, CA
 (800) 874-4607, (714) 833-8710

Reader Service #: 329

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Rainforests Revisited

Michael Crichton Plunders His Own Plot Devices For Viacom Newmedia's Congo

by Charles Ardai

Some years ago, before he was the Jurassic-scale multimillionaire he is today, Michael Crichton dabbled in computer game design. The result was *AMAZON*, a graphic adventure for the Commodore 64 about a team of researchers in the South American jungle who have become mysteriously stranded and the operative—you—who is sent from the home office to investigate. By the time he designed *AMAZON*, Crichton had already written *Congo* the novel, but *Congo: The Movie* was not yet a glimmer in someone's eye, and *Congo: The Game of the Movie* wasn't even the glimmer of a glimmer.

So, was *AMAZON* ripping off *CONGO* then, or is *CONGO* ripping off *AMAZON* now? Perhaps this is appears to be a meta-physical question akin to, "Was I a man dreaming I was a butterfly or am I now a butterfly dreaming that I was a man?" Sure, other successful pop artists re-use material (Sung comes to mind), but I think the question actively speaks to the problem at the heart of *CONGO*.

LUSH FORESTS

The game is spectacular to look at, packed to its cydams with visual sparkle and effects that make you grogle with delight. For example, it's the first game I know that uses morphing effectively—and that's just on the main menu! But under the sparkle, is there anything to chew on?

Very little that wasn't there back in 1983 is the answer. It's a different jungle, you're

hunting exceptionally rare diamonds instead of emeralds the Edgar Rice Burroughs-ish lost city is called "Ziq" instead of



From the mini-movies in the corner of the com device to the lushness of the rushing jungle river, *Congo* is slick, cinematic... and very predictable.



"Cluk", you link to the communications satellite with your "Tlavi on translation" instead of your "NSRT field computer"; but you're still poking through oversized frogs, dodging poisonous darts, chugging snakes and apes and other beadies, and generally carrying on like a techno-savvy version of Indiana Jones.

What's wrong with that? Nothing, especially when you consider that essentially zero percent of today's gamers have ever even heard of *AMAZON*, much less played it. (If they've heard of the Commodore 64, I'm happy.) But I can't help wondering why it is that originality is in such short supply among game designers these days. *AMAZON* wasn't exactly fresh material even a dozen years ago, and it's no fresher today. It's hard to find fault with the storytelling of a writer as successful as Michael Crichton, but I'll tell you, it would be nice if with all his money he could buy himself a new plot once in a while.

FROM ZAIRE TO ETERNITY

CONGO's basic story will be familiar if you saw the movie in the theater or on video, or even if you only saw the trailer for the movie. (If you didn't even see that, it's conveniently provided for you on the CD-ROM.) It seems that there exists a super-high grade of diamond that can be used to make either great weapons or great communications devices, and this diamond can only be found in the untamed jungles of Zaire. One team of jungle-bummers sent out by *Tlaviom*, a greedy multinational corporation (if that's not redundant), has been lost. The follow-up team appears to have been waylaid as well, possibly by uncommonly large and hostile apes. Now, it's up to you to bring them—the team, the diamonds, not the apes—back alive.

Doing so requires you to dabble with the most basic sorts of adventure game puzzles (and I don't just mean mazes,

continue on page 132 >>>



Price: \$69.95

System Requirements: 486-66 or better PC processor, 8 MB RAM, SVGA graphics (LocalBus), 1 MB hard drive space, Windows 3.1 or Win 95, 2 x CD-ROM, Sound Blaster and compatibles, mouse.

Protection: None (CD must be in drive)

Designer: Illumina Productions

Publisher: Viacom New Media
New York, NY
(800) 489-2539, (708) 520-4440

Reader Service #: 330

What are you doing here?
The free Tempest 2000 demo disk is
back at the front of the magazine.

*** continued from page 130

through a maze, a, alas, part of the package). Didn't you have to find your way across a gorge at the start of Sierra's seminal *Wizard and the Princess*? Didn't you have to raft a river in Infocom's *Zork: The Great Evil*, here you'll have to do it again.

Granted, the test-only rafting in *Zork* locked the in-your-face frisson of *CONGO*'s virtual reality-style goggles display, which lets you see the incoming rapids, the rocks that will capture you if you're not careful, and all the plants whipping by your face. *Wizard and the Princess* offered fine drawings where *CONGO* offers a realistic stone-and-sed chasm.

I admit that I found myself so caught up in the environment that I didn't even mind the typically awkward movement scheme. (You click left and right to turn in place, then forward to walk. This means that going back one step requires three moves.) Later, when the gee-whiz gadgets

Twittern packed into my workstation—a radiation scanner, a photo-enhancer, a cool snapping and tracking system—came into play, I got into the spirit of the thing, studying the fictitious workstation interface as intently as if thereafter I'd be working on the thing from nine to five every day.

But my willing suspension of disbelief was sorely tested the holy familiarity of the game's events. There's a snake on a branch overhead! There's a booby-trapped door with ancient carvings on it! There's a snazzy female scientist who mouths off about having a "cowboy" like you assigned to cover her backside, but then calls for help when the uber-griffus attack! It's all professionally done, but it's paint-by-numbers: this patch red, that patch blue; this patch gorillas, that patch booby traps.

CONGO—LINE

By the time you get to the end of this

game, there's no question that your adventure will be flowing. As our glibber film critics like to say, *CONGO* is a roller-coaster ride. It'll even escalate the praise if it's one hell of a good-looking roller-coaster ride.

But we've all ridden this ride before and know its dips and turns too well. It's hard to get too excited about what's basically a fresh coat of paint. **S**

APPEAL: Mainly for fans of the film or novel, or those who don't mind a rehash of familiar adventure themes.

PROS: slick production values and lots of animation bring the jungle and its menaces to life.

CONS: We know the menaces too well to be scared by them, the puzzles too well to be challenged by them, and the story too well to be wholly sucked in.



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games on the horizon."
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*** continued from page 138

Even the best conclusion won't reward your efforts to solve the puzzles. Adding insult to injury, Tibiabyte's sneaky programmers made it impossible to save your game just prior to the fatal choice! At best, you can save one puzzle and one riddle before the end. Also, the final puzzle becomes progressively more difficult each time you go back and attempt to choose a different ending.

Experienced gamers will find these "plot protection" devices annoying. You get the feeling that Tibiabyte used them as a ruse to distract players from 11th HOUR's weak ending, but it only makes things worse. It also smacks of punishment—"You made the wrong choice, now you'll pay for a second chance." This is rude to do to someone who just invested sixty dollars and a minimum of 20-30 hours in your product. If you don't want us to check out all three endings, just give us one!

CASE UNSOLVED

A less-than-satisfying conclusion won't trouble the majority of the game-buying public. 11th HOUR is light on gameplay and heavy on Hollywood influences and adult themes—if you aren't interested in that combination, you might want to pass it up. On the other hand, gamers who enjoy puzzles, riddles and light board games will delight in 11th HOUR's elegant presentation of such games as Reversi, Connect Four and Pentis. Gamers who enjoy high-budget interactive fiction will not be disappointed by the production values, and virtually anyone will enjoy the SVGA graphics and superb animation.

Gamers who value gameplay more than flash—or who think that puzzles should have something to do with the plot of an adventure game—will have to think twice before revisiting this old house. ☹



BORED GAMES The clever, but often irrelevant puzzles of 11th Hour may interfere with your sense of immersion in the game.

APPEALS: If you loved 7th Guest, this game looks and sounds better.

PPROS: SVGA graphics, great music, good full-motion video.

PCOMS: High system demands, weak ending, and lighter-than-average gameplay. It can be a real bear getting the game to run.



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Circle Reader Service #133

Coming of Age

The Why And The How Of The PC Market's Arcade Action Explosion

If you're an avid fan of arcade games, you've undoubtedly noticed that the PC gaming market is often found lacking when it comes to traditional action-arcade games. Aside from the notable exception of DOOM and its ubiquitous entourage of "me-too" clones, action gaming on the PC has been forced to take a back seat to other game genres. Flight sims, strategy games and wargames consistently grab the headlines and garner the most coverage. But while PCs may indeed rule the most when it comes to these genres, coin-operated arcade machines and next-generation game consoles reign supreme when it comes to action: in the tradition of STREET FIGHTER, VIRTUAL RACING and MORAL KOMBAT. Sega's coin-op VIRTUA FIGHTER 2 soundly punishes the PC versions of FX FIGHTER and SWORD WARRIORS, while arcade-to-PC conversions of MORAL KOMBAT 3 and PRIMAL RAGE come up short when compared to their Sony PlayStation counterparts.

Fortunately, this sorry state of PC

action gaming is about to change in a big way. Over the next year or so, PC owners will witness a flood of arcade-quality fighting games, shoot-em-ups and platform games to rival the best offerings at the arcade or on competing console machines. If you're the type of gamer who longs for quality PC conversions of games like THUNDER VIRTUA FIGHTER, you won't have to wait much longer. Cartridge game developers see the recent surge in PC gaming through greenback-colored glasses, and coin-op manufacturers are beginning to realize that the PC market holds a large number of game-hungry action fans.

There are a number of reasons behind the impending boom in action gaming, but four central issues seem to be driving growth: the increasing size of the PC gaming market; the arrival of a game-friendly operating system in Windows 95; the ascendancy of CD-ROM as the primary means of distribution; and the advent of accelerated 3-D graphics cards for the PC.

BIGGER IS BETTER

The days of the PC gaming market

several popular Genesis and Saturn games to the PC during 1996. Look for PRINCE OF PERSIA first, followed by an impressive list of high-powered ports from the Sega Saturn.

► Need game cheats? If you do, your next stop on the Internet should be the Games Cheats & Info List, written by Lam Chi-fung (clam@hk.supernet). This is a huge list of game cheats and hints, filled with all sorts of

being an "also ran" when compared to the massive cartridge market are long over. The PC market is bustling at the seams, with thousands of new computer games being added to the fold weekly. According to data collected by the Software Publisher's Association (<http://www.spa.org>) sales of PC entertainment software have been absolutely booming over the past 12 months, making the market simply too lucrative for cartridge game developers to overlook.

WINDOWS 95 = GAMES!

Love it or hate it, Windows 95 is selling like sultan lotion at a midist colony. It may be less than the perfect operating system for gaming, but it is still a colossal step in the right direction. And the powerful tools included in the Windows 95 Game Software Development Kit (SDK) make games easier to develop and support, reducing the conversion costs of porting arcade and console games to the PC. The first Windows 95-specific game releases may have been a bit lackluster, but rest assured—bigger and better games are in the wings. Naysayers can grouch about Win 95 all they want, but it won't change the fact that the game industry is going for Bill's baby in a big way.

“ Action gamers need no longer feel like the forgotten orphans of the computer gaming industry. ”

► In addition to adding Crystal Dynamics' Gex to their gaming stable, Microsoft has joined forces with a number of other noteworthy action game developers. Terminal Reality (developer of FURY3 and TERMINAL VELOCITY) and Rainbow America (THE HIVE) have also signed agreements with Microsoft to produce games for Windows 95.

► Sega's newly formed SegaPC division is gearing up to port

meaty game info and useful information. The Game Cheats & Info List can be found at any of the following top sites:

<http://http.gmd.de/ff-archive/solutions/non-ff/cheatmap.txt>
<http://wch.bham.ac.uk/pub/dh/taqs/cheat.list>
<http://www.parlx.com/~vip/>
<http://www.xmission.com/~rstulca/index.htm>

Thanks to Kevin Rank of Boise, ID, for this handy info.

CD-ROM: A PUBLISHER'S BEST FRIEND

Now that the PC gaming industry has adopted CD-ROM as the de facto standard for entertainment software distribution, many cartridge-based game developers see the market as "safe" to port their wares to. Game developers in the console camp have historically been leery of the PC market, certain that they would watch their hard-earned profits dry up in a piracy-prone market based on easily repro-

ducible floppy disks. Since the software shipped on most CDs is usually large enough to make illegal copying impractical, the threat of software piracy has been greatly reduced. Factor in the lower cost and greater reliability of the CD medium, and game developers have yet more reasons to support the burgeoning PC CD-ROM entertainment market.

HARDWARE HEAVEN

If you've ever compared *BATTLE ARINA*, *TURBIDON* on the Sony PlayStation to the leading best 'em ups on the PC, (*FX FIGHTER* and *MORAL KOMBAT 3*), to be specific) you'll agree that high-end console machines have a headlock on the fighting game market. Most of that superiority is largely due to the advanced graphics hardware standard on every

Sony PlayStation, Sega Saturn and 3DO machine available. Moving complex texture maps about the screen in 16-bit color at 30 frames per second is easy for the PSX and the Saturn, but it can bring even the fastest Pentium to its knees.

However, with the impending arrival of dedicated graphics accelerator cards from Creative Labs,



VIRTUA REALITY Can gamers expect to play console-quality action games like *Virtua Fighter* on the PC? You bet!

Diamond and Philips, the PC can finally blast hits with the best of the console crowd. Just as the venerable Amiga computer proved nearly a decade ago, having a dedicated graphics co-processor to munch pixels and bitplanes translates into faster animation, more color, higher resolution and—big shock—better games. Teamed with Microsoft's Direct3D programming spec, this influx of accelerated video cards will allow game developers to produce breakthrough games with millions of colors, multiple bitplanes and silky smooth animation.

THE FUTURE

All of these factors are creating a strong inducement for action game developers to dive into the PC gaming market, and they're already flocking to the PC in droves. Sega's SegaPC division (<http://www.segapa.com/>) has released PC ports of *FIGHTER DREAMS*, *TRUCCA ALLI* and *COMIX ZONE*, while a drop-dead gorgeous PC version of

VIRTUA FIGHTER 3 is currently being bundled with Diamond Multimedia's (<http://www.diamond.com/>) Diamond Edge 3D graphics card. Sony released *DISTRIBUTION DESTINY* for the PC and PlayStation almost simultaneously, with PC versions of *WARUWAKU*, *CRASH NINJA* and other titles only months away. Atari recently formed Atari Interactive, a new division with the sole purpose of producing games for the PC and other platforms, leading off with a PC version of

THE MIST 2000. Even Microsoft is wading into the fray, joining forces with console game developer Crystal Dynamics to bring the best-selling *CRASH* to Windows 95.

So there you have it—PC action games will no longer have to feel like the neglected stepchildren of the computer gaming industry. The first few releases of this bold wave of action games may fall short of expectations, but the long-term outlook for the PC action gamer is a bright one. You'll undoubtedly hear some noise from critics, prophesizing that the arrival of games like *VIRTUA FIGHTER 3* on the PC is a sure-fire sign that the PC market is one



HAWKEYE Look for a PC version of *HawkEye*, a best-selling Sony PlayStation title, to hit the shelves soon.

step away from mass-market mediocrity. Created, some of these new action games will be more marketing hype than playable substance (the same holds true for many games on the strategy front as well), but one fact is clear: the PC gaming crowd has reached "market maturity", and there is more than enough room to accommodate fans of all game genres. **B**

TIPS!

- ff**—The on-screen *Adventures in Activision's Adventure* (for Windows 95) have you eating topsail on a regular basis, there's nothing like a good batch of cheat codes to even the odds. Here are a collection of keywords to help you give Professor Monkey-for-a-Head and Queen Slap-for-a-Butt a righteous bootkick in their collective keisters. To activate any of the cheat codes listed, simply type them in during play.
- haiman**—Transforms Jim into a white pencil sketch.
- iddqd**—Displays a picture of the EWJ programmers and prints "Nice try! This isn't Doom."
- idkts**—Displays a picture of the EWJ beta testers.
- isawonderful**—Gives Jim an extra life.
- isanderandom**—Gives player the maximum number of continues.
- popquizwhohot**—Mazes out normal gun with 1000 shots.
- slaughterhouse**—Allows you to jump to any of the five first levels.

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Circle Reader Service #178

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The Hero And The Horror

CYBERMAGE Delivers Excellent 3-D Action, But Hero Worship Is Held To A Minimum

by Martin E. Cirulis

Computer games are admirably capable of handling genres from sports to fantasy role-playing, but there is one small branch of popular North American culture that seems to continually slip through the fingers of designers: comic-book superheroes. Whether it is the dismal experiments in computerized comics performed every two or three years, or the superhero RPGs that never seem to make it off the drawing board, there appears to be some great difficulty in translating the tough-guys-to-fights concept to the life of a chip machine. In fact, superhero computer games have only achieved a modicum of success when they patch the form, as in last year's *StreetHero: League of Heroism*.

In a brave attempt to break out of this trend of banality (if debty city schedules are to be believed), 1996 will be the year this industry takes a real stab at

producing "serious" comic book computer games. At least three major companies will have titles revolving around men and women with powers beyond that of puny mortals. Always one to set the trend instead of follow it, Origin is first out of the chute with their cyberpunk-esque *CYBERMAGE: DUEL WITH AWESOME*, which asks the nautical question, "Do you have

what it takes to be a Super hero?"

Well, maybe you do and maybe you don't, but I can't really say that there is much in *CYBERMAGE* that made me feel like I was wearing lycra (or whatever superhero clothing is made from) tights.

SECRET ORIGINS, OF A SORT...

Your first clue you won't be joining the Justice League any time soon is your place of birth—or rebirth, as it is. There's no rocket in a Kansas conflict, no glowing ring of emerald power lying around, and you definitely are not on Paradise Island. Instead, you stumble out of a healing tube with little memory and a body filled with strange new abilities. You soon realize that you are a test subject rescued from the hallowed halls of death by a mysterious cat-hybrid scientist, who has fixed



SNIFF THE GLOVE Your mystical "mag" powers increase and diversify as you gain energy, providing you with an arsenal at your fingertips

you with the exotic Darklight gem by stuffing it into your forehead. Clad in fantastic battle armor and warned by a dwarven lab tech, you must escape the compromised base and flee into the sewers.

From the Sewers you make your way into the Skens, acquainting yourself with both a strange decaying Earth and your weird new powers, which primarily involve absorbing the spirits of the newly deceased as an energy source (am I the only one who finds this concept a little icky?) and spewing them back out in the form of various long-range energy attacks. Yes, it sounds a bit less wholesome than gaining super-speed by being luffed in random lightning-charged chrome ash—but what the hey, the 90s seem to favor realistic heroes.

The world of the mid-21st century you find yourself trying to save is a fairly clichéd Cyberpunk realm; the corporations have done away with all those pesky congressmen and senators they've been rotting and have taken over the world themselves, thus throwing things into a near-anarchy state. The livid (or battle of the situation) is a super-character named,



DROEDS IN THE HODD: You can fight hoods and assess personal stats at the same time with *DreadWee's* handy repositionable Video Display Units (VDUs).



Price: \$99.95

System Requirements: IBM Compatible 486 DX2-66 (Pentium 60 recommended), 8 MB RAM, 2x CD-ROM, mouse; supports Sound Blaster compatible sound cards; Pentium 90, 16 MB RAM, SVGA graphics card required for 640 x 480 mode.

of Players: 1

Protection: None

Designer: D.W. Bradley
Publisher: Origin
Austin, TX
(512) 335-5200
Reader Service #: 331

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<http://www.megatech.com>

Minimum Requirements: OS - DOS 6.0, Ram - 4MB, Video - VGA,
CD-ROM - 2x, Hard Disk - 5MB, Sound - Sound Blaster & MKA, Input - Mouse





NO LEAPING ZONE Don't expect to be imbued with awesome powers—despite stunning SVGA graphics, *Deadhead* is basically just another Doom clone.

net so subtly, Nelson, and wouldn't you know it? He's got a gear just like yours fused into his own forehead, and he's much better at using it than you are.

"EAT MY JUSTICE!!!"

While I could go into a lot of the details of the mechanics of *Chaos Theory* (CM), it might be more useful (and faster) to break the news to you as soon as possible. While standing in SVGA mode, CM is basically just Another Doom Clone, and those of you expecting some kind of interface breakthrough that would deliver a first-person CHAOS THEORIESEQUE experience are going to be sorely disappointed. Though there are attempts to model flying, both in a vehicle and on your own, the only motion that made me feel at all super-powered was the jumping. While your vertical jump isn't great (no looping til buildings in a single bound here), I must admit that looping from rooftop to rooftop made me feel like "The Tick" and I had to resist yelling "Spoooo!" every time I fell amongst the surprised foe.

Other than this small perk, though, you very quickly become a horribly-armed goon who must blast your way through the usual lands of terrain in search of the usual keys, bio-tips, ammo, and weapons. The "keys" themselves are also well thought-out, although I never got the feeling I was moving through a "real" environment. And whenever the action moved aside I seemed to be doing for more: flip the secret switch, go downstairs, get the key, open door, kill guards" than I ever thought I would in this game.

The outdoor sets are ambitious, and there's a nice sense of other events going

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gearheads
a furious war of wind-up toys



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on without you. Unfortunately, the only thing people in this world seem to do is fight, wait to say something to you, or wait to say something to you and then fight. One of the rare technical problems in this game is that while the people you encounter look great, there is a severely limited number of "looks" available—the difference between the street tough who wants to kill you and the one who needs to impart some crucial information is that one shoots and the other talks. This doesn't strike me as a very efficient way of making friends in the big city.

As a first-person combat engine, CM works great. It handles complex firefights involving multiple combatants stretching over multiple levels scalably and smoothly, even on a doddering 486-66 (it'll take more if you want SVGA graphics, of course).

BUT WOULD KAL-EL APPROVE?

CYBERMACE is a slick, enjoyable action game, but I must confess to being disappointed on two important fronts: content and style.

While this game is more complex than your usual DOOM-clone, it is still not in the league of a classic SF adventure game like SYSTEM SHOCK. The designer, D.W. Bradley, is most famous for the WIZARD series, and I don't think he stretched far enough from his roots in this title. As I've said, the plot is interesting, but since there is no interactive portion to the conversations, all you are really doing is living long enough to get somewhere to trigger a tape recording from an SVGA animation. There is far too much combat and door-opening for this game to take its place beside more subtle Origin action/adventure games.

ZAPBOT: HE'S A REAL LIVE WIRE.

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For me, though, the biggest flaw of this game was its utter failure to live up to the style it had chosen: the adventures of a comic book hero. Both thematically and technically, there is little here to make me feel like a superhero. The first bad move was giving the player a whole arsenal of weapons to use. Any gun can fire a plasma rifle, but when was the last time you saw Batman packing heat?

While it might be a philosophical debate whether this game is about simply slaughtering to survive instead of "heroism," the "super" part of the concept is remarkably weak. *Beakley* has created a set of superpowers that come off like the spels, and, while absorbing the essence of the dead is an interesting, albeit dark twist, I never felt as if I was doing anything except gathering dungeon-bash mana for my own benefit. Sure, I defeated the bad guy, but since he was after me first, it was hardly a heroic act.

Even the sets themselves undermine the whole comic book premise. The whole line of having super-powers is the fantasy of absolute control of your environment, tossing cars, bowling troops over with a lightning bolt, smashing through walls. But the poor pathetic *CyberMaze* can't even knock a tree out of his way or set a policeman on fire. The shattering stained glass of *HERON* conveys a better sense of power than anything I encountered in this game.

CyberMaze is an excellent single-player, first-person shooter, on a par with *Dusk Forces*. The storyline takes enough twists to make you forget the clichéd setup. On the other hand, if you truly want to know if "you have what it takes to be a superhero?" you won't be finding any answers here. ☞

APPEAL: For 3-D action fans, *CyberMaze* is a no-brainer. Comic book fans looking for some real superhero action might be a bit disappointed though.

PROS: A great looking first-person combat game with a good story.

CONS: A long way to go for a Doom-clone, and there is nothing but lip-service paid to the comic book style it covets.



DISASTEROID: Loves to kick asteroid.



Whenever Gearheads battle, Disasteroid is always laser hot. So, if you need someone to hack holes in your opponent's defenses, Disasteroid's the guy.



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Altered States

At Play In Purgatory With Bethesda's New Mission-Oriented Doom Alternative

by Peter D'afson

I didn't just play *The Terminator: Future Shock*. I was there in it. Three or four missions into this spectacular 3-D action game from Bethesda Softworks, you're sent off to disable an enemy base. The trick is you have to find it first. Along the way, you'll come upon a high ridge. You can climb the slope to the top and peer down into the bleak no-man's land below. At that moment, I wasn't sitting in front of a computer at 3 a.m. with a two-liter bottle of Diet Coke tucked between my knees. I was there, peering my head over that ridge just enough to see without being seen, tugging my head slowly in search of even a flicker of enemy movement. *FUTURE SHOCK* had sucked me through the screen, and, powerless to resist, I found that a rare and a wonderful place to be.

WHAT'S MY MISSION NOW?

This second entry in Bethesda's line of *TERMINATOR* action games is simply the most immense 3-D shooter to surface to date and the best thing to happen to 3-D gaming since *Doom*. The first game, *RAMMO*, was ill-humored good looks and almost on substance. Forget it. This one looks as

though someone had dropped a bomb on it—in fact, that's exactly what has happened—and staying alive and doing your job is a positive art.

You're the Human Resistance's newest recruit in its war

against the SkyNet-controlled robots occupying post-apocalyptic Los Angeles. Leader John Connor and his sergeants will dispatch you on 17 harrowing missions—a structure borrowed from Bethesda's earlier *TERMINATOR*. That could mean blowing up a base, killing a traitor, performing a whole series of tasks or simply reaching a destination. (There's a time-travel storyline here that gradually evokes out of the results of your missions, but I won't spoil it for you, except to say the ending is very satisfying.)

Either way, that involves exploring a range of wide-open 3-D environments where you can do more or less what you want, when you want. (A lot of the fun here is simple exploration.) Whether escaping an apparent dead-end in a warehouse, finding your way out of an abandoned building or climbing a shaft from the depths of a sewer, there's no sense of restraint, no feeling of the game imposing

on you. The only evident limits are those of your character's physical person and those of the physical world. (Well, most mission areas do have an impassable border—whether unclimbable runs or a radiation zone too hot to handle.)

That world is gritty, realistic, and littered with bodies and body parts—even a trench full of bones—and examples of general chaos: blasted buildings, collapsed sections of freeway, abandoned vehicles and even a derelict train. You can explore all manner of non-essential buildings in search of supplies, convenience stores, apartments and office buildings. But be warned: You're not the first visitor



ONE FOR THE GIPPER: Completing *Future Shock's* mission objectives requires following orders and using your head. Of course, an itchy trigger finger always helps.

But be warned: You're not the first visitor

VIRTUAL VERTIGO

Thanks to the utter nitriteness of the controls, you'll navigate through them with care. I played with the keyboard handling movement and the mouse handling direction and they went together like peans and pie. It's fluid in movement, sensible in practice and almost burlesque in its effects. Consider one of the mid-game missions requires you to plant satchel charges next to three satellite dishes. They're located atop high metal towers and reached by a series of narrow ramps and catwalks.

Three-quarters of the way up the first



Price: \$89.95

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Publisher: Bethesda Softworks
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tower, I made a mistake. I used the mouse to look down—almost straight down—and for a fleeting moment, an acidic knot formed in my stomach and the world seemed to tilt chaotically beneath me. It wasn't the motion sickness of which DOOM players sometimes complain. It was simple fear of heights.

Or, more to the point, it was fear of heights induced by a computer game. I've never felt anything like it before. Once again, for one blissful, sickening moment, I was there.

You're not simply walking around the whole time, either. That might get tiresome. In a handful of missions, you pilot either a captured Hunter-Killer aircraft or a jeep. The HK sequences are 3-D shoot-em-ups rather cool to the touch, but the jeep sequences have a joyful rugged charm all their own. You can drive like a lunatic, hoping to beat the odds with sheer speed, or progress in baby steps, shooting at every shadow. (It's especially fun to be able to fire in one direction while moving in another.)

Mind, it's great, but it isn't perfect. FUTURE SHOCK is the first game that uses Bethesda's new "Game" 3-D game engine—DAGGERSHIELD and NCAR were expected to follow it by a few months—



RUBBERNECK: Future Shock's beefed up first-person game engine gives you total freedom of upper body movement.

and the game has some bumpy spots.

For instance, on those vehicle-based missions, you're chained to your seat until you reach your destination. I would have preferred a more open-ended approach to travel, a la CYBERMACE, that allowed the player to hop in and out of these craft at will as the situation required. (If anything, it would have added to strategy, you'd not only have to survive, but protect your ride as well.)

The autopilot—effectively a textured version of the 3-D one used in DISCREET—is more handsome than useful in this form. If you lose your bearings indoors, you may find you can't shrink the map enough for it to be a useful tool in finding your way out again. The outdoor helicopter-view snapshot of the immediate area is of no practical use.

A FAILURE TO COMMUNICATE

And while Connor radios you to urge you on to your tasks, alas, he never tells you if you've blown a critical element of a mission—say, by using a switch to change in the wrong spot. That's a real problem. For example, the 11th mission is a three-part affair: race through a section of city to destroy a conveyor, blow the bridge it meant to cross, and disable the factory to which it was headed. I knocked out the conveyor (or so I thought), took down the bridge, and the factory and waited for the mission to end.

And waited. The mission didn't end. I finally realized that I hadn't destroyed the

critic conveyor. Unfortunately, having already blown the bridge, there was no way to go back and finish the job. Yikes. Once I figured that out, I restarted the scenario, and found that this time, I'd been provided with only one switch to change instead of the two that were required. Yikes twice.

Fortunately, I had one save from late in the previous mission, and when I played it through and moved on to the 11th mission again, the game properly set me up with two switch charges. But that was too close a call. Without that save, I'd have had to restart.

But I kept going, and not just because I had to keep going to write this review. I loved FUTURE SHOCK, dearly, for all its faults, and I'm genuinely sorry it's over. (I want data disks, and I want them now.) I usually don't play a completed game a second time, but I'm looking forward to revisiting this one using Virtual IO's I-Classes to peer over that hill into that bleak no man's land. It may take a while to find, but I'll know it when I see it.

After all, I was there. **S**

APPEAL: Anyone who enjoys Doom, but wants something new.

PROS: Compelling, unrestrained, you-are-there 3-D gameplay with a wide range of missions and three types of transport.

CONS: It's got some oddities, inconsistencies and bugs, bugs, bugs.



Files in The Ointment

FUTURE SHOCK's engine, splendid as it may be, does mislead on occasion. Some examples:

▶ A distant object that you can see in dark silhouette on the periphery of your vision disappears entirely when you pivot and look straight at it.

▶ A clear visual line-of-sight between gun muzzle and intended target, and the ability to tag your target with the crosshairs, does not necessarily mean you can hit said target when firing at a downward angle from a raised area. (Your ammo may still detonate against the edge of that raised area.)

▶ Even with an unobstructed, horizontal LOS, you may miss an enemy entirely at reasonably close range, due to a lag in the screen update of enemy positions; I was shooting where they weren't. In such cases, the game performs sudden position updates, and the enemy simply zaps to a new location nearby.

▶ Crashes to DOS often happen with several enemies on screen. This could be a conflict with some internal ceiling for simultaneous operations.

▶ Graphical problems: robots sometimes poked parts of their bodies through intact walls, and could be killed through them. The ground graphics occasionally break up, as does the sound of any weapon.

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ZONE RAIDERS Provides An Interesting, If Uninspired Auto-Destruction Experience

by Martin E. Cirulis

Every year, some *lame-ey* gaming current gazettes a wave that flows game publishers everywhere into a "we've got to catch this trend" fiasco. 1995 was the year of DOOM clones. This is the year of the Car War; everybody and their dog seems to be developing an action game where you drive around blowing things up real good. Virgin Interactive's entry is a straightforward piece of vehicular mayhem called ZONE RAIDERS, and it completely lives up to the game classification notice on the side of the box: "3-D Driving/Shooter." Unfortunately for gamers, it does very little to surpass this description.

ASPHALT ATROCITIES

Even the most hate game has a premise, and for ZONE RAIDERS it's a '90s spin on an '80s movie. You're a wacky, freedom-fighting Road Warrior kind of guy, trying to save the people from a technocratic tyranny in a post-holocaust landscape. To accomplish this, you stop together a funky, laser-armed hovercraft based on a classic 20th-century automobile, declare yourself a Zone Raider and proceed to take it to those technocratic tinheads.

COOL, BUT NOT CLEVER

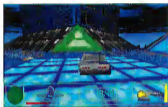
While I hate to describe games in terms of their predecessors, ZR is derivative enough that it necessitates the kind of treatment. Basically what we have here is DESCENT on asphalt. Other than the fact

your vehicle moves in two dimensions instead of three, and you are restrained by guardrails instead of tunnel walls, the game design is virtually identical. You must guide your vehicle into a maze of roadways, activate certain objects by driving over them, and then get out, all within the allotted time. Take too long to do the job and the security system releases a flying "Bee" class robot that hunts you down and blows your doors off.

Players begin with an old jalopy of a hovercraft, but can trade up after a few successful missions to three other, more interesting-looking vehicles. The usual variety of pyrotechnic weapons and vehicle repair/upgrade options are available, in true arcade fashion, by driving over them as they lie strewn along the roadways. Combat is a simple matter of pointing your car toward your target and letting an auto-targeting system take care of the precision aiming. Like driving a tank from Kodak, all you do is point and shoot.

The actual driving part of ZR is enjoyable, though the fact you are in a hovercraft detracts somewhat from the visceral part of the experience—no squealing tires, no screeching brakes. On the other hand, some care has been taken to model a semi-realistic environment, and the way the cars handle in jumps and slides makes you feel, at times, like the star of some high-tech *Dukes of Hazard* re-make.

GETTING WHAT YOU PAID FOR



KILLER CLASSICS "Froging up" old cars takes on new meaning in Zone Raiders, where you can add heavy weaponry to your classic Olds.

ZONE RAIDERS is a competent, if somewhat uninspired design. The missions are fairly interesting, but most will find too few for their game-dollar. The graphics are good and, while I think more time could have been spent on the appearance of your vehicle, some of the city-scapes and exotic close-ups are impressive indeed.

If you are looking for a straight-forward arcade "3-D Driving/Shooter" that will give you fast action on an upper-end 486 without bothering you with little details like variety or plausibility, then ZONE RAIDERS will be a treat for you. But if this doesn't describe exactly what you are looking for, you should probably leave this one in the used-car lot. There's little more here than meets the eye. **B**

APPEAL: Dedicated Car-Wars fans will enjoy *Zone Raiders*, but those outside the genre might want to wait for something meatier to come along.

PROS: A good networkable arcade game with some enjoyable driving characteristics.

CONS: Probably too basic for the non-cartridge gamer and a little short in the game-play department.



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System Requirements:
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Gunner's High

MARATHON 2 Improves On Last Year's 3-D Shoot 'em Up Success

by Christopher Breen

I don't know about you, but whenever I sit hunched over a box of greasy popcorn in my seven-dollar movie-theater seat and the first person's title contains the words, "Again," "Two," or "The Return of," I get a sinking feeling. Although some might dismiss this as the first symptoms of cotton-seed oil poisoning, I've lived with the condition long enough to recognize it plainly—sequelophobia. That's right, the worstness that results from watching a rehash of the previous season's blockbuster.

It is with this feeling that I unpacked, with some trepidation, Bungie Software's *MARATHON 2: DURANDAL*, the follow-up to last year's runaway hit for the Macintosh. Here it was, the same durable triangular box design—albeit in canary yellow instead of blue—that virtually guarantees the top flap will rip when you open it, the same layout in the manual, and the same red seal indicating that the game has been accelerated for Power Macintosh. Could my gut be right? Was this just more of the same old, same old?

Hardly.

MARATHON 2: DURANDAL is more than a simple rehashing of one of 1995's finest Mac games. Rather, *MARATHON 2* takes the original *MARATHON*'s frantic gameplay and solid storyline and adds drop-dead gorgeous, high-resolution full-screen graphics, 16-bit active stereo-panning sound, several new network scenarios and battlefields, a wider variety of bushes, and

the opportunity to practice your backstroke (many of the scenarios require that you play under water, or lava, or sewage). Far from treading over the same old ground, *MARATHON 2* blazes new trails,

lection of processors, you've been transported across the reaches of space to the planet Lh'oon. Your mission: Destroy the Pflor garrison and unravel the secrets of the planet's ancient civilization. Of

course, what this really means is dash about, stockpile ammunition and even-more-powerful weapons, heal your wounds and Kill Kill Kill.

THE SOUND OF MAYHEM

Although *MARATHON 2* introduces a host of new enemies, a couple of new weapons (sawed-off shotgun), and an updated plot line, the real show stopper is the game's sound and graphics. *MARATHON 2*'s haunting background

music is gone, replaced by eerily authentic natural sounds like bubbling lava, lapping water, and howling wind. As with the other sound effects in the game, these pan across the stereo field as your orientation changes. If a pool is to your right, for example, you'll hear water sounds mostly from the right speaker. Although the original version used stereo sound, it wasn't so convincing that you could track an enemy by sound alone. With *MARATHON 2*, you can.

Bungie has also improved the game's interface and consequently widened the field of vision by placing the gauges at the bottom of the screen and removing the side panels. The new panoramic, letter-box perspective removes the tunnel-vision so common in 3-D games and presents a



BUGGY SOFTWARE *MARATHON 2*'s full-screen view helps set a more sinister tone as you battle the bug-like Pflor on their home planet.

once again raising the standard of 3-D action games on the Macintosh.

IT WAS 17 YEARS AGO TODAY

A full decade later, you still can't forget the exhilarating whosh of a single SPNKRN7 rocket, or the martial pleasure of wiping out a nest of the bug-like Pflor, who'd rudely taken up residence on the starship *Marathon* man. Your only regret is that Durandal, the rogue computer responsible for recklessly bearing you about the *Marathon* to do battle with the otherworlders, managed to pick up his superior intellect and oil out of the area with only a faint promise of a second date.

Durandal has now made good on that promise. Slaughtered by this beauty col-



Price: \$79.95

System Requirements: 68040 or higher Macintosh, 4 MB RAM, CD-ROM drive, 8-bit color monitor (13" recommended), System 7 or later

of Players: 1-8
Designer: Jason Jones
Publisher: Bungie
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view realistic enough that on more than one occasion I found myself craning my neck to peer around a corner. This, coupled with the game's beautiful texture-mapped, 16-bit graphics and dynamic lighting, makes *MARATHON 2* very easy on the eyes.

KILL, SPACEMAN! FASTER! FASTER!

MARATHON 2 also differs from the first iteration of the game in terms of gameplay.

To begin with, this version is less puzzle-oriented than its predecessor. Although the original *MARATHON* bristled with action, it also required a fair bit of cogitation to escape the different levels—switches always seemed just out of reach and doors were always closing a split-second too soon. *DUANDAL* doesn't completely forego brainwork, but maybe that's the game's main focus.

This doesn't mean, however, that strategy plays no part. Not only do your enemies seem smarter—some of them actually run away when you start shooting—but there are also raging interpersonal conflicts among the badies. As in *DUAL*, one of the best strategies for getting out of a sticky situation is to anger one of the less-manly crea-



AH, FRESH AIR Unlike the original *Marathon*, *Duandal* allows you outside for a breath of clean, fresh alien air.

tures and duck out of sight while he takes his liberty out on his nearest and dearest.

From a pacing standpoint, the games are also quite different. Playing at the Normal level (these are the usual five difficulty levels, ranging from Kindergarten to Total Carnage), *MARATHON 1*'s level of violence gently rises as the game progresses. This sequel follows this same pattern, until you hit the late teens of the 25 levels, at which point all hell breaks loose. One minute you're leisurely blasting sewage-soaking bipeds, the next you're scurrying around like an ant on a hot grill, frantically gathering shotgun shells and randomly unleashing both barrels on the surrounding hordes. I expect that more than one player will choose this moment to quit the game in frustration, open the Preferences dialog box and change the current

skill level to something requiring a little less adrenaline.

NET SCRAPE

As great as *Marathon 2* may be as a single-player game, it can't hold a candle to the frantic, blood-pumping thrill when it is played over the network. In networking mode you and seven of your buddies can still play the Every Man For Himself Scenario found in the original *Marathon*, but *MARATHON 2* introduces such childlike



COME HELL OR HIGH WATER Sock it to the Pthor by land and by sea.

diversion as King of the Hill, Tag, and Kill the Guy With the Ball (in this case the "ball" is a human skull). In addition, if you're having a tough time beating the single-player game on your own, you're welcome to form a network team and play the game cooperatively. But steep is the price you must pay for network play. For satisfactory gameplay, every player should be sitting at a Pknox Macintosh connected to an Ethernet-based LAN. And although the game includes a feature that enables you to stream off one another over the net using PlainTalk microphones, conference calling over speakerphone is still the communication method of choice.

THE END OF THE COMPLIMENT

MARATHON 1 was no slouch, but *MARATHON 2* is, in nearly every way, a vast improvement. Yes, if you preferred the original's more cerebral elements over its shoot-'em-up charms you may long for a few more puzzles. And those who aren't ready for an all-out assault may feel overwhelmed in the latter half of the single-player game. But no one, no one, will be disappointed by the game's improved look and feel or the added-value network play.

Bungie has produced a remarkable, refreshing sequel and has once again captured first place in the Macintosh action Marathon.

APPEAL: Any Macintosh game, particularly these looking for 3-D shoot 'em up action.

PROS: Gorgeous graphics and rich sound accompanied by frantic game play. If you can't play this game over the office's Mac network, consider quitting your job.

CONS: Those who enjoyed *Marathon 1* for its puzzles may be disappointed by M2's focus on action.



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Worm Warfare

EARTHWORM JIM Takes A Bite Out Of Platform Game Stereotypes

by George Jones

One day you're a common earth-eating worm, the next an evil-buffing, save-the-process, cosmic superhero. Such is the life of Earthworm Jim. This guy, er, worm is a 90s James Bond kind of superhero who hangs-jumps, bitches rides on rodents and in underwater glass bubbles, and of course, gets the girl in the end. Life as a worm is surely this much fun.

Thankfully *EARTHWORM JIM*, the Windows 95-based platform game is just as much fun. This title, much like the main character (who has his own Saturday morning cartoon and line of action figures), loves character, from the fun, kish graphics to the ludicrous sound bites throughout the game. And some of the most annoying platform game traits have, for the most part, been avoided.

WORM HOOK

In an age when crappy platform games are a dime a dozen, Activision has graciously spoiled us PC gamers by puffing yet another top-notch platform scroller. A little less challenging than *PIRELLI HARRY*, *HARRY'S MEGA ADVENTURE*, *EARTHWORM JIM* is still on par, with rich graphics and some ingenious pacing.

Whereas most platform-style games require your hero to keep moving through one horizontal level after another, Jim Tanaka and Douglas TenNapels' wild designs avoid such monotony. Plenty of the 20 levels in *JIM* are of the traditional variety, but scattered along the way are lots of mini-games, such as space races, and bungee-jumping. The *Arcky Asteroids* "intermissions," which require you to race through an asteroid field, become a bit tedious by the fifth or sixth run-through, but for the most part, these short intense-

drite levels serve as a great way of breaking up and posing the game.

And even the normal levels are creative. You'll traverse junkyards and explore underwater environments. You'll even play some parts of the game without your trusty plasma-firing battle suit. And, in a radical departure from the platform genre, you don't have to fight a super-powered boss at the end of each level.

INSTRUMENTS OF DESTRUCTION

Your suit, of course, is what makes it all happen. The top left of your screen shows how much power your armor has left. The bottom of the screen shows how many plasma shots are stored up, as well as any special weapons you've acquired.

The controls are simple. One button jumps, one button fires your energy weapon and a third button cracks your whip (*PIRELLI HARRY* cry?).

One beef I had with the controls is that when you accumulate special weapons, you have no choice over when to use them. Say, for example, you pick up the Mega Plasma, a one-shot destroy-all weapon. The next time you open fire on the enemy, you have to use it—you can't save it for your showdown with an end boss. But since Big Bosses are rare, this isn't a huge problem.

Games can choose from easy, intermediate and advanced difficulty levels, and the game is easily configurable through the same nifty Properties Box as in *PIRELLI HARRY*. Another nifty feature is that the game records your progress, so each time you play you can start off on the level where you left off (or died).

Despite a few minor shortcomings and



SHOTTY BEHAVIOR During your adventure, you'll engage in a bungee jump duel with the likes of Major Mucus and his friend Mucus Pilegm Brain.

the negative label that some stuffy PC gamers immediately brand all platform games with, *EARTHWORM JIM* is a hoot and a holler. Put anyone in front of it, and with the exception of the grumpiest non-action gamer around, they'll love it. No, it won't have you obsessing over how to defeat Queen Sting-For-A-Butt. But you'll have a marvelous time the whole way.

I'm glad Activision decided to port this title to Windows 95. Newcomers to computer games will appreciate how easy it is to get into, while veteran action gamers will appreciate the diversity in the action.

Here's hoping the next major port of a console title is as much fun. Hey Nintendo, how about *DUNGEON KING COUNTRY*?

Check out Jeff James' action column for a list of *EARTHWORM JIM* cheats. ☛

FAPPEAL: Action gamers, particularly fans of the platform genre, will love *EARTHWORM JIM*.

PROS: Easy to learn, fun to play, great graphics, and entertaining sound bites. Best of all, the game has lots of character and variety—unusual for "platform-type" scrolling games.

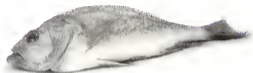
CONS: Some minor control problems, including the inability to save special weapons for later use.



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IBM Compatible 486-33, Windows 95, 8 MB RAM, 2x CD-ROM, mouse, supports Windows 95 compatible sound cards.
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Hot Wheels

SCREAMER Brings Colorful Arcade Racing To The PC, But You'll Need A Fast Machine To Catch It

by Scott A. May

For years, personal computers have outpaced plug-and-play gaming consoles in speed and sophistication. But the advent of "next generation" systems like the Sony PlayStation and Sega Saturn has quickly narrowed the technology gap. Nowadays, even with the onset of Windows 95 and more action games than we've ever seen before, PC action enthusiasts still find themselves glancing with envy at some of the hot new console titles being released.

One particular action genre has singularly fallen short when measured against its "pure" siblings. This category is open-style arcade racing, and besides Electronic Arts' *Turbo Out Run* and Sega's *Out Run*, most other titles have been incapable of providing the requisite thrills, chills, and spills on gamers' desktops. Virgin Interactive's answer to the call is *SCREAMER*, a two-fisted driving game that, given enough memory muscle and CPU

horsepower, certainly lives up to its name.

NO HOLDS BARRED

Straight out of the box, *SCREAMER* is a simple, no-holds-barred, single-player arcade racer, similar in character to such best-selling console titles as

Race: Race and Virtue Racers. Choose from six wide-bodied, low-to-the-ground machines, each available with either automatic or manual transmission. The exact configuration of each car, as evidenced by their names, is strictly arcade generic: Shadow, Tiger, Hammer, Rising Sun, Panther and Yankee. Each car is rated for top speed, grip (how it handles corners) and acceleration.



► **WRECK CITY** Treacherous city courses offer ample opportunity for undisciplined wheel motion.

Three courses are available in a Normal, or single-race, game: Palm Town, Lake Valley and Landborg, where you'll compete against one other computer-controlled driver in a 3-, 5-, 10- or 25-lap race. Three skill levels—Rookie, Amateur and Pro—allow you to substantially increase the tenacity of the "other guys" as your own driving prowess improves. Keep in mind you're not only competing to win the race, but also to finish it. An on-screen timer counts down the seconds until you reach the next checkpoint, where you're given additional time. Fail to reset the clock and the race abruptly ends.

The championship game tests your mettle a lot more; you must finish in the top three on each course in order to progress to the next race. Success in championship mode is also the only way you'll get to see *SCREAMER*'s other three courses (not available in a Normal game). Finish all six courses, and you'll start over again, at a substantially higher skill level.

If your eyes are still in their sockets, proceed to the final stage, Bullet League. Here you'll run the entire grand Prix again, this time competing against only one car, The Bullet.

One advantage *SCREAMER* has over its



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 mended), DOS 5.0 or
 greater, SVGA (with 2
 MB RAM recommend-
 ed), CD-ROM, supports
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 ble sound cards
 # of Players: 1-8 (net-
 work required)
 Protection: None
 Designer: Griffin
 Publisher: Virgin
 Interactive
 Irvine, CA
 (714) 833-6710
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 Reader Service #: 336



► **CANT DRIVE 55** *SCREAMER* boasts high-resolution, high-speed arcade racing fun.

arcade and console brethren is that, during the course of a Championship Sooner, you can save and reload your games.

SCREAMER 2000

But not—there's more. No, *SCREAMER* can't cut through steel cars as easily as it slices tomatoes. But it does have three speed modes that offer several entertaining variations on the standard racing format: Time Attack, as the name implies, is a solo race against your best lap time on the track of your choice. During each lap a ghost image of your car will appear on the track before you. Use this as a visual reference to your current lap time—if you trail the ghost car, you're seconds behind your best lap time; if you pass, you're on track to set a new course record. Unfortunately, you'll need at least 12 MB of RAM to enjoy this special option, since your previous lap (the ghost car) is stored in memory. Those with only 8 MB of RAM can still race, but won't see the ghost car.

Another racing option, Cone Crazie, prompts you to run a series of cone barriers specially placed around the track. Each cone you hit adds another second to the checkpoint timer. The alternate version of this race, Station, demands that you do just the opposite. Instead of striking cones, you must maneuver between them to save extra time. Miss a "gate" and the checkpoint clock keeps ticking.

TOTAL RACING NETWORK

SCREAMER's big bonus is network play, supporting up to seven nodes of simultaneous head-to-head racing. It's a heck to be sure, for several reasons. The computer-controlled races rarely make mistakes, particularly at upper skill levels. This means they're usually less compelling opponents. Humans, on the other hand, are a different story, racing against your own kind inevitably and inherently fires each driver's competitive spirit. You can't damage your car, but each bump, spin-out, guard rail grind and wreck, comically executed as an end-over-end tumble, pushes you to the back of the pack. The computer usually avoids such collisions,

but human nature being what it is, net-work play often provokes more wipeouts than the opening lap of the Indy 500.

SPEEDY COMPROMISES

The graphics are arcade quality, post-dated perhaps a year or two. Each course winds through all manner of terrain, including freeways, city streets and mountain passes, dipping and weaving around buildings, tunnels and high-banked rural curves. The designers heap on plenty of peripheral chrome and glitter, in the guise of heli-copters and jets zooming overhead, active windmills and rotating billboards. All are rendered in colorful 3-D texture maps. If nothing else, *SCREAMER* captures the stunning look and feel of the classic coin-op machines.

Four user-selectable driving views allow you to view the action whichever way you want it, full-screen (a hood-mounted camera), behind the dashboard, chase view and extended chase view.

Despite running in DOS 32-bit protected mode, *SCREAMER* exhibits the typical problems games do when played at the minimum system requirements. You'll need at least 12 MB of RAM to experience the game's polished SVGA graphics, but don't expect to enjoy high-res unless you've got a Pentium. High-resolution animation runs extremely choppy on a #65 DRI-66, but smooths out on a 90 MHz Pentium. The alternative—the only option for systems with only 8 MB RAM—is to run the game in standard VGA mode. Here the graphics are chunky, but still look pretty good. It's a worthy compromise. Other factors, such as a quad-speed CD-ROM drive and local bus video card, also help to ease the hardware burden.

The game does offer decent support for specialty driving tools, including Thrustmaster's new Formula 12 steering wheel and floor pedals. Otherwise, a

good analog joystick suffices. Even simple keyboard controls perform adequately.

THE HOME STRETCH

Flying *SCREAMER* is a gas, given its arcade limitations. Racing purists, of course, won't want to touch it with a 10-



CATCHING AIR *Screamer* doesn't have realistic car models, but that won't stop you from diving 150 mph or leaving the ground when you hit bumps.

foot talpape, given its profound lack of real-world dynamics. About the only nod to realism is the ability to power-slide around particularly tight corners.

But it isn't meant to be real. *SCREAMER* is pretty much a no-brainer, targeting little more than your gut instincts and need for speed. And I mean this in a positive sense. Your console friends still aren't likely to be jealous, but at least now your PC can run on the red line, almost with the best of 'em. **B**

APPEAL: Arcade racing fans, or those looking for quick fix racing, should check out *Screamer*. Purists should stay away.

PROS: Colorful arcade-style eye candy for the PC, with racing options galore, including an 8-person network play. Championship mode and multiple skill levels boost long-term gameplay.

CONS: You'll need a powerhouse system to enjoy the SVGA graphics, smooth animation and advanced game options. Lack of real-world conventions will instantly put off racing purists.



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Circle Reader Service #54

Take The Last Trick

QQP's legacy of winning card games deserves better than CARD PLAYERS PARADISE

Admit it—we've all played silly little games like *Solitaire* on our computers, usually the incessantly repetitive version that comes with Windows. No game will ever match the tactile feel of flipping and shuffling cards (and for many users, this isn't a problem), but *SOLITAIRE'S JOURNEY* comes darned close to re-creating the experience, without wearing out your favorite poker deck. Over 100 different kinds of Solitaire, from mind-numbingly simplistic to agonizingly challenging, are combined with various "quests" to form the most unique slant of a classic game ever designed for the computer. Best of all, the game is readily available in bargain bins—I've seen it for as little as ten bucks.

Problem is, all of QQP's clever card games will soon find their way to discount heaven, as the company has been gutted, surviving in name only. For why, we can

only speculate: perhaps the parent company, American Laser Games, simply decided to channel all of its resources into their line of games for girls, called *HER INTERACTIVE*. If so, the irony is that card games, especially good ones such as QQP designs, are among the games most played by females of all ages.

All of which makes the release of QQP's newest card game package, *CARD PLAYERS PARADISE*, bittersweet. It's obvious from the spartan packaging that this was a low-budget project, which belies the modest advances in documentation and layout—there's even an index, almost unheard of from QQP. Moreover, while the explanations of rules have the seemingly inevitable QQP holes, the copious examples of play are hard enough to help you learn the more esoteric games included.

ACE HIGH OR LOW?

The real winner here is *Rummy 500*: easy to learn, hard to master, it brings back memories of endless Rummy games played on long winter nights. Quack, natural and final, *Rummy* is quite good either versus the computer or via modem,

can make you a better player regardless of your playing level.

► You Don't Know Jack has become such a big hit for Berkeley Systems that they are releasing an add-on pack of additional questions for a street price of around \$15.

and includes plenty of variants. Pinochle and Bezique (a forerunner of Pinochle) are just different enough that they test your ability to learn new bidding styles, players too accustomed to the comfortable parameters of Bridge will struggle. Casino is the weakest link of the four games, as it at first seemingly defies logic, then becomes too predictable as the pattern emerges.

The graphics are actually a step back from the crispness of *BRIDGE OLYMPIAD*, despite the increased use of digitized screens featuring "geographically educational" card-playing locations from around the world—they struck me as little more than fancy clip art (and truth be told, I'd rather view lands in *SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION*). One welcome change in *PARADISE* is that while the AI still cheats, at least it isn't brazen as in the higher levels of *BRIDGE OLYMPIAD*, which never missed an opportunity to snag your lone King. On the other hand, this game will never compete with really good AI, such as in the best Bridge and Chess games—but then, where else can you go to play a good game of Rummy?

As with *BRIDGE OLYMPIAD*, you get to compete in a "World Tour" with the best amateur and professional opponents the computer can throw at you. After paying entry fees, you enter events and win coins

“ It's no Card Player's Paradise with QQP gone from the industry. ”

CHECK!

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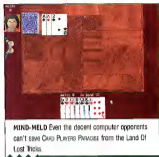
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CLASSICS & PUZZLES



MIND-MELD Even the decent computer opponents can't save *Card Players Paradise* from the Land Of Lost Tricks

and lanterns—more on this later—to advance. Typical of QQP's "campaign games," this is enjoyable at first. But after the first couple of times, it fades, unlike, say, the eminently replayable *Southern's Journey*. Why, for example, do you win lanterns to wander through a city maze, here every bit as infuriating as any needless maze from an adventure game? Wouldn't a simple "top 10" ranking or medal-winning system, as in *Bricka Olympiad*, have worked better?

In the end, *Card Players Paradise* is a microcosm for QQP: some annoying bugs, typos and tepid layout make you think it was rushed through development; worse, the game, despite some fine moments (such as *Rummy*), really lacks that remarkable mix of play-balance and sheer joy of gaming which once defined QQP products. If this is the state to which Bruce Williams and Co. are to retire, or, perhaps it's better that they move on (if American Laser Games has any sense, they'll release an SWGA Windows 95 version of *Southern's Journey*, and maybe include *Bricka Olympiad* and *Rummy* on the same CD. That would certainly be a more fitting legacy for QQP than *Card Players Paradise*—I mean

Paradise, of course.

TIPS!

► Boy, are the computer opponents aggressive in *Card Players Paradise*! Playing it too close to the vest in *Rummy* can leave you behind in a hurry. But don't despair, just play more tricks as three and four-of-a-kind, which will frustrate your silicon opponents—who prefer (like my late great-uncle Doris Mae) to play long "melds" of a series (2,3,4,5,6 of hearts, for example). As the AI gets closer to

going out, it tends to discard high cards. Patience usually rewards you with a high spread of aces or face cards. ► An alternative method to winning at *Rummy* can be to simply hold cards, only playing them when you have two or three runs. The advantage is that your opponent has nothing to play off of, but if you get caught with all those cards... I would use this strategy against a human only via modem, and only if I were way behind

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Don't Be Square

I'm Good Enough, I'm Smart Enough, And Doggone It, People Like Me

by Charles Ardai

I'm surprised that more computer games don't turn out like **ENDORFUN**, given that most of them come from California. It's also a good thing, I can't be

the only one who finds New Age philosophy hard to swallow. Daily affirmations and computer games mix about as well as Beef Wellington and Jell-O.

If Eino Rubik (of the cube) and SNL's self-help guru, Stuart Smalley, designed a game together, they might come up with a similar product. While you maneuver a multicolored cube around the playing grid, **ENDORFUN** harangs you with "motivational" messages spelled out on the screen, scattered over the soundtrack, and inserted subliminally into the music. Whether **ENDORFUN** included pearls of wisdom such as "I am free of dependency" and "I love myself the way I am" to encourage or to distract plays remains open to speculation.

You control the subliminal messages by turning off the music, suffering no great loss either way. You're stuck with everything else.

What does all this mushy self-help have to do with a Rubik-style puzzle game?

Nothing. But if you want to play the game, you better get used to it.

PUT THE BEST FACE ON IT

You move the cube around the grid by turning it end over end in the four basic compass directions. Each time you turn the cube, a different color appears on the exposed face. After starting a given level,



GROOVE TUBE Escorces might be the first self-actualizing computer game, with lava-lamp background art to boot.

colored squares begin to randomly populate the mostly bare grid. You must direct your cube so that the top face shows the same color as an occupied square. Successfully landing on a colored "block" will remove it from the grid and allow you to continue your progress.

Play continues until the timer runs out, the colored blocks trap your cube into an inescapable position, or you clear all blocks from the screen. Depending on which of the three variations you choose, you can score points for removing blocks, clearing a grid quickly, or length of playtime.

Although simple, **ENDORFUN** doesn't have the hyper-simplicity of the best puzzle games, like **TETRIS**. But it becomes addictive. What starts out awkward quickly becomes intuitive. Once you can move without consciously calculating the sequence of turns necessary to land on a given block, roaming around the grid becomes quite enjoyable.

SOUND OFF

Enjoyable, that is, until a level ends, and we're back in fruitcake land. "Your

body functions perfectly," the computer tells me. Oh, yeah? I have a cold.

"Your body heals itself!"

"Bite me." I say, reaching for a Kleenex.

"I create joyous creation," it whispers subliminally. "I forgive myself. I am divinely guided. I create miracles."

I think not. What it creates is the queasy sensation of being indoctrinated by the crunchiest of all granola factions.

"I am divinely guided?" "I choose life?" How

would the well-meaning souls behind **Endorfun** feel if their right-wing counterparts marketed a game containing subliminal messages such as "I accept Jesus as my personal savior," "I choose right-to-life," or "I draw pride from the supremacy of my race?"

"Oh, but that's different," they'd cry. Sure, just like your left shoe is different from your right. The shoe would just be on the other foot.

Come designers should stick to designing games; if there is an appropriate place for this feel-good dogma, it's not here. **B**

FAPPEALS: If you insist on light games with a "message," this might be your cup of herbal tea.

PROS: Simple to play, and it grows on you once you master the basic moves.

CONS: Psychedelic background art, bongos on the soundtrack, levels named "Kama" and "Flower Crystal"... all this and subliminal messages, too!



Price: \$29.95

System Requirements: IBM 486-66 or better processor, Win 3.1 or Win 95, 8 MB RAM, SVGA graphics, 2.5 MB hard drive space, 2 x CD-ROM, Windows compatible sound card, mouse.

Protection: None
Designer: Onesong Partners, Inc.
Publisher: Time Warner Interactive
 Burbank, CA
 (800) 482-3786
Reader Service #: 337

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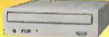
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CG603



Match Play

Scrawny SET Will Garner More Respect Than Enjoyment

by Charles Ardai

Beware the scrawny guy in the pool hall, the one with coke-bottle lenses, sloping shoulders, and hands that look like they've never held a cue. Same thing here, beware SET. Rarely has a game looked scrawnier. The self-published brainchild of a one-time geneticist, SET has "amateur" written all over it. The screen shots and logo on the box are out of focus. The game's soundtrack is a mishmash of audio clip art: a New Age fanfare when you start the game, an exuberant "Yah!" when you do something right, a gurgling "Aaahh!" when you do something wrong. The screen layout is remarkably plain, even for a computerized card game. The whole thing looks as sturdy as a wet prieta, and roughly as much fun.

READY...SET...

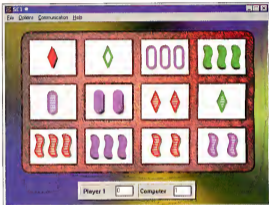
How hard can a game be when it looks so flimsy—especially when it only has one rule? Well, here the rule is that you have to select sets of three cards out of twelve shown on the screen, such that each of the cards' four characteristics—color, shape, number, and shading—either match or don't match.

"Match" means that a given characteristic is the same on all three cards; for instance, that all the cards feature green shapes, rather than red or purple shapes; or that all the cards feature ovals, rather than diamonds or squiggles. "Don't match" means that a given characteristic is different on each card; for instance, that the cards feature one shape, two shapes, and three shapes, respectively, or solid

shapes, striped shapes, and open shapes.

It's difficult holding all four characteristics in your head at once, especially when you can't make a set out of two cards that match and a third that doesn't. You may

SET is really, really hard. Unless you enjoy detecting quadrivariable patterns at a glance, you'll get frustrated. And I suspect, even logicians and the mathematically inclined will respect SET more than



POLYAGONY Challenging but unsteady, this game seems aimed more toward the Mensa "set" than the puzzle/classic gamer.

find three cards that are all the same color and all have three shapes, but notice too late that two of the cards feature diamonds while the third features ovals. As they say, *Aaahh!*

Making matters worse, the computer is watching over your shoulder, picking out the sets for you as a timer ticks away (you may also have a human opponent, either hot seat or linked in by modem, racing with you to find the sets.) Stare for too long at any one arrangement of cards and you feel your opportunity slipping away. You can't afford to panic, since that's when the cards start dancing before your eyes and you start picking false sets, one after another, losing a point for each mistake.

they enjoy it. Personally, I left feeling like something of a wet prieta. For those who cherish that feeling, SET provides it in spades. **S**

APPEAL: Only for die-hard fans of the puzzle pages in *Scientific American*.

PROS: A tough symbol-matching card game with enough play variations and subtlety to earn your respect.

CONS: Difficult and visually plain, lacks the spark to make it much fun.



Price: \$34.95

System Requirements: PC compatible 386 or better, Windows 3.1 or Win '95, VGA graphics, 2 MB hard drive space, mouse, supports Sound Blaster and compatibles.

of Players: 1-10 (hot-seat and modem)

Designer: Merouly Software

Publisher: Set Enterprises, Inc. 15402 E. Verbena Drive Fountain Hills, AZ 85268

(No telephone orders) **Reader Service #:** 338



(figure 1)

THE HARD WAY.

(figure 2)

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SIERRA

NBA Kicks in 1996

Electronic Arts Makes The Best Hoops Game, NBA LIVE '96, Even Better



The sight of a grown man crying ain't pretty. Or even a grown-up little boy. But I confess to tears of joy when EA Sports' conversion of NBA LIVE '95 to the PC platform hit my hands last spring. For too many years, basketball games on the PC had been a vast wasteland. NBA LIVE '95 was the virtual promised land. Great graphics and a gameplay model that felt more like basketball than any game I've ever played made this title a runaway success.

Like the initial release (and subsequent sequel) of its hockey counterpart, NHL HOCKEY, NBA LIVE had its fair share of problems—fairly AI and fairly in-

high-resolution mode are two examples. But the action was so refreshingly enjoyable that it was easy to overlook these flaws. Being able to Play The Game is what it's all about, and here, finally, was a



ABOVE THE RIM NBA LIVE '96 improves upon the high-flyin', in-your-face action of its predecessor.

basketball game we could play.

It should come as no surprise that even as NBA LIVE hit the best-seller charts (phenomenal for a sports game), Electronic Arts was already drawing up a sequel. For

“ NBA LIVE '96 boasts the same revolutionary graphics engine used in the latest release of NHL HOCKEY ”

ON DECK

In the non-interactive demo of FRONT PAGE SPORTS BASEBALL '96, a photograph of one of the stadiums includes a billboard with an advertisement for "FRONT PAGE SPORTS BASKETBALL '97." Sierra neither confirmed nor denied this project, but we were able to squeeze them into saying "if we did do another PPS title, it would be basketball."

Mindscape's NCAA Football title has been bumped into the late 1996 time-frame. The development team "really wants to get it right," so they're going back to

the drawing board to ensure this promising college football title, which will include most major NCAA football programs, meets its potential.

On the subject of football, JOHN MADON FOOTBALL for the PC, by EA Sports, has also been moved back to the April time-frame. Electronic Arts is also close to releasing a course disk for PGA TOUR '96. The New course disk takes you to the Links at Spanish Bay. Check for it in the early spring.

fans of EA Sports games, this comes as even less of a surprise (how many years has John Madden been in evolution now—four, five?). But this sequel is a far cry from your standard "update the players' stats, and tweak the code" update. NBA LIVE '96, as those Madden commercials used to say, is something greater.

YOU SAY YOU WANT A REVOLUTION?

NBA LIVE '96 boasts the same revolutionary graphics engine used in the latest release of NHL HOCKEY. This means a three-dimensional court, with multiple views from five different camera angles. You can even play from an on-the-court



FLOOR GENERAL You can get as up close and personal to the action as you want, although the players' line resolution suffers a bit as a result.

perspective (not easily, though). You switch perspectives on the fly by hitting keys 1 through 5 atop your keyboard. To switch between Sky Cam I, II and III you

hit "Z" multiple times. Some perspectives, much like in HOCKEY, are better suited for gameplay—I still haven't figured out which I'm most comfortable with—while

others are more appropriate for reliving those high-flying, "best-of" moments.

Besides looking good, one other bonus of the new camera angles is that, for the NBA LIVE veteran, it takes a little longer to master the action, increasing the lifespan of the game.

Other graphical elements besides the on-court perspective have changed as well. Three different resolution modes (320 x 200, 640 x 320, 640 x 480) are included, although you'll need a Pentium for the highest resolution, which is gorgeous. As of the pre-release version we played, however, the players were surprisingly blocky in the more close-up views—much more so than their HOCKEY counterparts. But their animations are amazing (not that they weren't amazing before). Tip-ins, spin dribbles and several other new moves will blow games away.

BASELINE DRIVE

NBA LIVE's action, of course, remains top-notch. EA Sports listened hard to fans

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 **The National Arbor Day Foundation**

of the '95 version and have made this version even more intuitive, easy to use and fun.

The gameplay is basically the same—you control the man with the ball. One button passes, one button shoots, and the turbo button makes you go real fast. New features include Quick Plays, which allow you to call offensive and defensive plays on the fly, rather than waiting for a dead ball. You can even successfully call for intentional fouls now.

TIPS!

NBA.COM (<http://www.nba.com>) is a marvelous site put together by the National Basketball Association. It contains profiles for every team in the league, AVI files of your favorite players in action, and full season and career

The Artificial Intelligence, one of NBA LIVE '95's weakest spots, has also been improved significantly. End-of-game breakdowns, the dribbling the ball for a full 20 seconds before shooting when down or taking lay-ups when down three, have been eliminated for the most part. And EA Sports is promising a much more challenging game of computer hoops. The game did seem harder than before, but it's too early to tell whether that's because of the new graphical engine or an improved AI.

Crowd Clap support has been built in

statistics on most players in the league. Rottensho league fans should check out the SmallWorld site (<http://www.smallworld.com/>), a fantasy leaguer's dream come true. This site has fantasy sports leagues for most major league sports as well as hockey

This means that up to four players can play simultaneously, each with your own joystick, with the Carib Grip module.

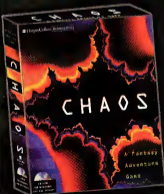
Other enhancements include a new free throw model (the crowd comes into play), shot statistics diagrams, power dunks, the ability to create custom players and animated play diagrams, and the Vancouver and Toronto expansion teams.

BACK TO BACK

With NBA LIVE being the only game in town, it would have been entirely too easy for the folks at EA Sports to rest on their laurels, make a few minor tweaks to the game engine and call it a day. This aggressive pursuit of excellence is commendable, and illustrates why, when it comes to computer (and video) sports games, they're the best word.

I played an 82-game season in NBA LIVE '95 faster than humanly possible last season. Looks like I'll be playing through even faster this year. **S**


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Winner And Still Champion

FRONT PAGE SPORTS FOOTBALL PRO '96 Continues Its Dominance, But Age Is Taking Its Toll

Dennis McCauley

Back in the days when the New York Yankees' dominance of the diamond was absolute, a sports pundit wrote that rooting for this team was like cheering for U.S. Steel. That's because, much like a corporate giant, the methodical man in blue pin stripes steamrolled the opposition year after year. That, of course, was long ago. A similar situation exists today in the realm of pro football, and I'm not talking about the San Francisco 49ers (certainly not anymore) or the Dallas Cowboys, but **FRONT PAGE SPORTS FOOTBALL PRO '96**, a title that has run circles around its competition every fall since its release in 1992.

This year, unfortunately, nothing's changed. No other gridiron offering has risen to **FOOTBALL PRO's** challenge, and the 1996 version still leads the pack. I say unfortunately because competition is a good thing—there's no bigger incentive than one or two competitors nipping at your heels.

Might the current lack of competition be responsible for the cracks starting to form in **FRONT PAGE FOOTBALL's** shiny helmet?

Let's be clear about one thing: **FPSFP'96** is still the best package on the mar-

ket. And the quality of this year's version will come as no surprise to gamers who enjoyed last year's version, which earned five stars on these very pages and has been Sports Game of the Year for 3 years running. But here's a tough question: if you've already got the '95 edition, do you really need '96?

WHAT'S OLD IS NEW

Like its older siblings, **FOOTBALL PRO '96** offers gameplay options such as exhibition games and single season or career league play. Players can choose to act as coach, general manager, or both. Or you can grab the joystick and let the field—and your opponents—yourselves.

On a disappoing note, modern play once again didn't make the cut. That's too



SACK ATTACK! High-resolution graphics mean you can really feel the hits in **FRONT PAGE SPORTS FOOTBALL PRO '96**.

bad; most of **FPSFP's** changes are evolutionary, rather than revolutionary, and a well-timed modern option would have rattled more than a few eyes on the sports gaming scene. If you want online football action, it'll have to be **UNNECESSARY ROUGHNESS '96** or the Imagination Network's version of **FRONT PAGE SPORTS FOOTBALL PRO**.

If you played **FPSFP '95**, you've seen the bulk of what '96 has to offer. The interface, league management tools, play editor, coaching profiles and gameplay remain largely unchanged. While Sierra touts improved artificial intelligence routines for quarterbacks and offensive linemen, veteran players will mostly notice improvement in the graphics, and, uh, well, the graphics. For a more realistic look, the **FRONT PAGE SPORTS** team utilized motion capture technology to digitize the movement of real players. The result? **FOOTBALL PRO '96** is the best-looking football game yet to emerge from the tunnel.

Of course, footballs take crazy



KICKING IT **FPSFP's** kicking games are a little slower; there are way too many missed field goals and punt return touchdowns, and no kicking return touchdowns.



Price: \$59.95

System Requirements: 486 66MHz (Pentium recommended), 8 MB RAM (16 MB recommended), SVGA graphics, 90 MB hard drive space, 2x CD-ROM drive, supports Sound Blaster and compatibles.

of Players: 1-2

Designer: Dynamic
Publisher: Sierra
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<http://www.sierra.com>
Reader Service #: 339

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business, and so, apparently, do football game animations. Ball carriers on occasion appear down by contact inside the five-yard line, but somehow still manage to score a touchdown. And occasionally a fumble recovery by a team will be completely disregarded. I thought the replacement officials were in the NBA.

In general, though, the on-screen action in FOOTBALL PRO '96 is quite consistent with play results, and has the fast-paced look of real NFL action.

STRONGER THAN A 300-POUND LINEMAN

For some however, the FOOTBALL PRO season may get off to a rocky start. Some users have reported sound problems, like missing crowd noises and sound effects. Others have been plagued by mouse difficulties. And after completing my first simulated Super Bowl, the program asked if I wanted to see the championship anima-

tion. I said yes, but the game said no, crashing back to DOS and taking Super Bowl results and statistics with it. To their credit, Sierra has quickly released a patch that addresses a number of issues. Still, this is a disappointing opening dive for a game system that has set the standard for football sims in recent years.

COMMISSIONER, COMMISSIONER

Happily, FPSFP's league play still works just fine. Causes can be played or simulated, with limited games available in two flavors. Fast sims zip by in a heartbeat, but their speed is purchased at a price of statistical accuracy. Slower sims yield



ZOOM LENS The CAMS system allows unlimited camera angles on the action, but also reveals some flaws in the high-res visuals.

more realistic results, but can take ten minutes or more per game, making a seasonal replay a project for a long weekend (on a Pentium-66, an hour per week was the norm).

The game's trade AI seems much improved over last year. No longer will computer opponents swap their starting halfback for your backup punter. Trades are still on a one-for-one basis, so if you were planning on winging that blockbuster multiplayer deal, you're out of luck.

CAREER PLANS

FOOTBALL PRO vets know that career leagues form the heart of the game's system, and this aspect remains a winner. Pick your franchise and put your draft strategy to work, carefully building a dynasty (you hope). Send your players to camp, allocating training time to develop the skills that you think are the keys to victory. Make trades, sign free agents, and put co-talent stubs on the waiver wire. Then play your season schedule, and get ready to do it all over again, replacing retired players and combing through the rookies and retools available in the college and supplemental drafts. Last year's problems with the draft pool appear to have been rectified, with a sufficient number of players available to flesh out rosters and make up for player attrition.

CAMS (Camera Angle Management System) still allows you to enjoy FPSFP '96's marvelous graphics and animations. The ultimate in viewing systems, CAMS allows coaches near-infinite flexibility in watching games. You can zoom, pan and tilt to your heart's content, saving effective

new viewing angles you've created.

Coaches can save and swap highlight films, and the game also provides a screen capture utility which saves the images in BMP format.

ENO ZONE PUSH

What does Sierra need to do if they want to stay ahead of the pack with future versions? That's open to debate, but the aforementioned modern play is a must, along with perhaps a salary cap feature that would impact team management much as it does in the real NFL.

After years of fighting up the competition, FOOTBALL PRO '96 certainly can't be considered a diamond in the rough. Although it's a tried and true game system that has once again been dressed up in fancy new clothes, an assortment of bugs makes this year's version more like a flawed ten-carat diamond. While some might take Sierra to task for standing pat with the game's basics, it's hard to argue with a track record as convincing as this series'.

The bottom line is this: If you're considering FRONT PAGE SPORTS FOOTBALL PRO '96, don't expect too many differences from last year, aside from the exceptional graphics. Owners of the '95 edition will have to decide whether the improved look is worth the investment. First-time buyers or owners of older editions, however, should look no further than FOOTBALL PRO '96. Warts and all, it's still the best of the bunch, by far. ☺

NFL Swami?

Taking the Swami cap off of Chris Berman's (of ESPN fame) head and putting it on the dome of FRONT PAGE SPORTS FOOTBALL PRO '96 proves one thing: neither is any good at predicting what will happen over the course of a real NFL season. One mark of a good simulation is how authentically it replays seasons. Here FPSFP '96 did a reasonably fair job. Two huge surprises were the Carolina Panthers (!) making the playoffs, and Tampa Bay's surprising playoff run—they made it in with an 8-8 wildcard record and managed to upset the Dallas Cowboys in the second round of the playoff. San Francisco cruised into the Super Bowl by blowing out Tampa Bay, and Miami did the same by crushing the Kansas City Chiefs. After fans might get some consolation in the Front Page Sports Super Bowl, Miami couldn't hold onto a 6-0 halftime lead (blame a crucial third down pass interference call in the fourth quarter) and lost to the 49er's, 7-6.

The Green Bay Packers? Didn't even make the playoffs. Guess Brett Favre can't light up the league every year.

APPEAL: For rookies to football sims, FPSFP '96 is no bainer; veterans might want to think twice—is the new, admittedly gorgeous, facefit worth the munny?

PROS: Brilliant graphics, incredible player animations, game and league management systems that are tried and true.

CONS: Asserted installation difficulties, mouse control bugs, temperamental game sounds, not much other than cosmetics to distinguish it from last year's model.



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Back In The Running

UNNECESSARY ROUGHNESS '96 Rebounds From A Rough 1995 Season, But Still Has Room For Improvement

by Jim Gindin

Last season, "Unnecessary Roughness," or maybe even "Brutality" would have been an appropriate headline for this review. Back then, as some of you might (painfully) remember, Accolade unleashed a pretty, but extremely buggy action-oriented football game just in time for the 1994 Christmas shop-a-thon. 1995, Accolade promised, would be a comeback season for this pigskin title. And right they are:

Oh sure, UR '96 still has a lot of flaws and lacks some polish. There are misspelled words (*Unnecessary Roughness* is even spelled wrong on one penalty screen) and the instant replay interface is as easy to understand as the control panel of a DC-10. The entire passing game is now chiefly an exercise in futility, and there are frequent mistakes in how statistics are calculated and credited.

But somehow, despite a host of problems, UR '96 entertains, chiefly because of its excellent implementation of the NFL ground attack. I've had great fun putting together a playbook of my favorite traps, sweeps and pitches. If I'm lucky enough to stay away from injuries and the defense isn't particularly strong, I can gain up to 500 rushing yards on about 80 or 90 carries per contest. Okay, so it's not exactly realistic. But it feels realistic, and more importantly, it's fun.

GRUND TO A PULP

Maybe the reason I enjoyed running the ball is because it is possibly the only intuitive portion of the game. Or maybe because it's so damn easy.

Racking up obscene rushing numbers is possible, in part, because the defensive AI is not trained to recognize play-calling. Even if you've run a sweep on first down 25 consecutive times, the computer isn't any more likely to call a 5-2 stack defense. It sticks to the selected playbook's previously allocated percentages assigned to each play based on down, quarter, yardage and score, and is completely unable to make such intuitive adjustments. Even if the correct defense is selected, UR '96 still doesn't stand a much greater chance of stopping the play, unfortunately, as long as you're controlling the ball carrier.

Computer-controlled teams, on the other hand, can't use the run offense as effectively; the ball carrier never deviates from the assigned play path. Even if that means running smack into the safety blitz.



INTENTIONAL GRUNDING Unnecessary Roughness '96 excels on the ground level, running the ball is intuitive and easy.

1ST DEGREE OFFENSE

The computer teams don't just roll over and lose, however. Their running game, as inflexible as it is, is not exactly shabby, and the computer quarterbacks can pass, pass, pass. In some games, these little digital signal-callers are inhuman. Just when you think you're about to pound one of them into the turf, they float a perfect 15-yard completion to the tight end, and there's not much you can do about it. In general, they're that good.

In the last incarnation of UNNECESSARY ROUGHNESS, a safety blitz proved devastating. It would completely shut down the run, garner frequent sacks, and if the quarterback did manage to get rid of the ball, you could always switch control to a defensive back and fluten the receiver, an action that often occasionally resulted in a pass interference call.



Price: \$59.95

System Requirements:
486DX-66, 8 MB RAM,
2x CD-ROM, local bus
video card and 16 MB
RAM recommended,
SVGA graphics, joy-
stick, supports Sound
Blaster compatible
sound cards

Players: 1 or 2
(modern play not supported)

Protection: None (CD
must be in drive)

Designer: Gene Smith

Publisher: Accolade

San Jose, CA

(800) 245-7744

Reader Service: #340

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TWO IF BY AIR... Beautiful high-resolution graphics and multiple camera angles don't make passing the ball any easier in UR '96.

UR '96 addresses this by decreasing your ability to switch quickly to a pass defender. Blocking schemes require less accuracy as well; your blitzer gets held up at the line more often, sometimes bouncing a few pixels right or left so the block holds, even though it looks absurd. The quarterback knows how to let the pass go just before the sack, too. In this case, less control makes the game more competitive. But the increased advantage given to offense makes playing defense a little less fun—and the scores a little higher than normal.

If the computer team simply passed on every down, it would be hard to beat. It will, however, stick to the percentages in the playbook, and call some runs—even on third down in crucial situations. Then your blitzing safety wrecks havoc, because in UR '96 the secondary rules the roost. Defensive linemen tackle about as well as medicine balls—all they do is bounce off ball carriers. The linebackers are a little better, with the top ones as good as anyone. But the safeties and cornerbacks dominate. Not even O.J.'s lawyers could get you out of their grasp.

Both you and the computer can take advantage of the "Oomph" button, a nifty new feature. Depending on how you set it, pressing this button causes the ball carrier to dive, spin or hurdle. This is a nice addition that creates some memorable replays.

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VISUALS

Graphically, UR '96 gets mixed reviews. It provides a smooth, quality picture with generous and realistic looking players, with clearly visible uniform numbers. Unlike its predecessor, you can see tackles and certain types of movement. However, the frame rate is still pretty low. When a pass reaches a receiver, the ball simply disappears into the crowd. If the ball

Season of the Week

Just as we did with FRONT PAGE SPORTS FOOTBALL PRO '96 (see previous review), we decided to test UR '96's psychic pigskin abilities by running a simulated season on autoplay. An hour later (compared to FPSFP's weekend), we had the results.

No surprises initially—Dallas dominated the league with a 15-1 record. San Francisco, meanwhile stumbled to a 12-4 finish. Detroit, on the other hand, finished a strong 13-3. Dark horse surprises were the Buccaneers at 11-5 and making the playoffs, and the Arizona Cardinals at 11-5. Green Bay, once again, didn't even make the playoffs.

In the AFC, Kansas City strong-armed the league with a 13-3 record, while New England and Indianapolis posted 11-5 records. Steeler fans will be sorry to know that in the offensively-minded UR '96 league, their Pittsburgh team didn't even qualify for the post season.

Once the playoffs started, however, conventional wisdom went out the door. Detroit coasted into the Super Bowl by beating San Francisco (48-15) and Dallas (31-20). On the AFC side of the playoffs, it was all New England—they blew out Denver and squeaked by the heavily-favored Chiefs (13-12).

The Super Bowl was a shoot-out. Both teams traded knockout punches for four quarters, but in the end Drew Bledsoe's (38-62, 402 yards, 4 TDs) 42 yard bomb to Vincent Brisby with three minutes left in the game set New England on the path to their 39-32 victory. Barry Sanders was held to only 89 yards rushing on 24 carries, and Scott Mitchell's 320 yards passing were overshadowed by three costly interceptions.

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PLAYING BOOKIE UR '96 boasts a friendly, easy-to-use playbook that's completely customizable.

bounces around like a teenager at a Courtney Love concert, you know it is incomplete. If the game pauses and the word "Interception" appears on top of one of the defenders, well...If neither happens, congratulations!—you've completed a pass.

Not that you'll be experiencing this thrill all too often. Passing at the game's toughest levels is about as entertaining as the usual Super Bowl blowout. When you pop into passing mode, the three primary receivers are depicted in little windows at the top of the screen. Forget about determining whether the players are open—the resolution doesn't allow for that—just pass the ball and hope for the best. Making things even harder, on the toughest level, you even have to move the receiver to meet the pass. I tried this a hundred times before I completed one, and I was so thrilled with my accomplishment I didn't even mind throwing another 50 straight incompletions.

NOT SO BAD AT NUMBERS

UR '96's statistical model is much improved over last year's version, which featured 4,000-yard rushers and way too much passing yardage. Rushing attempts are held down by a fatigue system that heavily penalizes those who dare send Barry Sanders on 15 consecutive sweeps. You can still rack up the running yardage, of course, but you have to spread the ball around a bit more. Computer quarterbacks are another story, however and can

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still abuse the system if given the chance. They're hard to tackle, and thus never injured or much fatigued.

It's also literally impossible to return a kick or punt for a touch-down, or even gain more than 20 yards a return. And the kicking game is a bit funny. With Green Bay's Chris Jacke, for example, I never missed 59-yard field goal attempts as long as I gauged the cross wind correctly. But I never hit a 61-yarder.

UR '96 also provides some limited league function. You need to play using 30-team leagues and a 17-week schedule, but you can sign free agents when players are injured, edit players, and create teams from scratch. There's even a salary cap that, like its real-life counterpart, affects nothing. **FRONT PAGE:** Sports fans will be disappointed at the lack of career leagues.

The play editing and creation module is flexible, fairly powerful and enjoyable.

FROM OUT-HOUSE TO CONTENDER

In all, this is a nice-looking game that provides an entertaining simulation of the NFL's rushing game, and not a whole lot more. It's a decent, albeit weak competitor of the **FRONT PAGE SPORTS** series. If Accolade can find a way to increase the frame rate and make pressing fun, or even double, again, **UNNECESSARY ROUGHNESS '96** could be the base for a great series of action-oriented football games. **S**

TARGET AUDIENCE: For football fans who want to play the game, UR '96 is your only choice. Sim fans will want to check elsewhere.

PROS: Nice-looking SVGA graphics and a fantastic running game.

CONS: Difficult passing, graphical idiosyncrasies and some out-of-lane AI.



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The Grating One

Time Warner's Fast-Paced Version Of WAYNE GRETZKY HOCKEY Offers More Chills Than Thrills

by Gordon Goble

It's 1996, and the Great One has seen fit to re-enter the world of computerized hockey (after three classic Bethesda titles) through Time Warner's offering, **WAYNE GRETZKY AND THE NHLPA ALL-STARS**. Why here, and why now? Well, to be honest, I'm not really sure. Besides being an almost embarrassing homage to His Greatness, **GRETZKY HOCKEY** is nowhere near a great game. In fact, it's downright mediocre.

FACE-OFF

Although the game's introduction has all the flair of Grandma tiddling the twins of the local church Warbler, **GRETZKY**—thinkfully—does get better before it gets worse. A number of options are at your disposal, from mode of play (regular season, playoffs, tournament, and practice) to a roster section where trades can be made and teams constructed from scratch. Standard gameplay preferences such as fighting, face-offs, ability levels, period length (2 to 20 minutes), penalties, and simulation vs. arcade gameplay are all included.

Practice mode is a particularly nice touch. Here, face-offs (which are better depicted here than in any other hockey game), passing and shootout strategies may be rehearsed ad infinitum.

Unfortunately, **GRETZKY** is up against a bit of a stumbling block so that it is licensed by the NHL Player's Association but not the NHL. Therefore, players like Boudia and Jureno are on a team from Washington, but that team is not the Capitals. Considering the other products out there that have dual licensing (like **NHL HOCKEY '96**), this hockey sun offers even more in comparison.

DECISIONS, DECISIONS

Once you hit the ice, you'll soon find that "Simulation" vs. "Arcade" mostly determines whether the officials blow the whistle on infractions. Gameplay itself doesn't change, contrary to the box claim that the "simulation mode is serious

hockey." The "Style of Play" option, a choice between aggressive, defensive and mugh, is a nice idea but it doesn't make much difference.

On the ice, a panning in-bleak perspective immediately shows you **GRETZKY**'s out-of-synce scule modeling. Put it this way: if an Eric Lindros doubled in size overnight and suddenly populated every team, the scale would be about right.

But the real problem here is the severely out-of-whack game speed. Everything happens way too fast. During one particularly confusing *ten-second* outburst, I shot the puck from one end of the rink to the other, where four guys bashed into each other at the corner, I was able to free the puck, pass for a quick shot attempt, get the rebound, and attempt another shot. Then about six guys creamed each other in front of the net and the opposition moved down the ice, where they attempted a shot of their own. Yowzers.

It didn't help that the accompanying audio came across like an old Nintendo Entertainment System game. It also didn't help when the announcer referred to Russ Courtnall and Al MacInnis as "Russell" and "Allen." Nor did it further the game's realism when he continually referred to



PUCK OFF Gretzky's got the best face-off mechanism in the game; unfortunately, the rest of the graphics are severely out of proportion.

"Offside" as "Offsides."

DO WHAT YOU GOTTA

But when Kevin Stevens and Sylvain Turgeon were assessed fighting penalties twice in just over a single minute, I knew what I had to do.

Shifting off one-half of my brain (if a gift, okay?), I became the primal hockey man, *Stelios Exekias*. I crashed and bashed and shot and scored, and you know what? I had some fun. Then I played a bit more, said "Uuuugh, uuuugh, uuuugh," just like that guy on Home Improvement. Then I quit, and haven't felt mean enough to play again. To be honest, I'm not sure if I ever will. ☹

APPEAL: Smash 'em-bash 'em hockey fans might like *Wayne Gretzky*, but those looking for a little more realism will be sorely frustrated.

PROS: Fast-paced action, real NHLPA players.

CONS: Fast-paced action is unrealistic, lack of real NHL teams, and severely out-of-proportion graphics and gameplay.



Price: \$49.99

System Requirements: 486 DX-50 IBM PC compatible, 4 MB RAM (8 recommended), 10 MB hard disk space, SVGA card, 2x CD-ROM drive, supports Sound Blaster compatible sound cards.

of Players: 1-2

Protection: None

Designer: Peter Adams, Miro McGilray
Publisher: Time Warner Interactive
Hollywood, CA (800) 482-3786
Reader Service: 341

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A New World...





Pool Party

POOL CHAMPION Adds A New Wrinkle To PC Pool

by Scott May

Some sports simulations are so caught up in realism that they forget one important ingredient: fun. Nothing will dampen a "light" game's enjoyment value more than a difficult learning curve and tons of required practice. This is what makes Mindscape's *POOL CHAMPION* so refreshing—it's a tantalizing blend of real-world dynamics and arcade sensibilities. The end result is a game that begs to be played "just one more time."

Through many people consider pool a mere parlor room diversion, dedicated players know it as a true sport, requiring a great deal of skill and strategy. *POOL CHAMPION* caters to both crowds—those in the mood for fast, fun recreation, as well as those looking for a serious simulation that may help improve their real-life game.

From *POOL CHAMPION*'s main menu you can practice alone or compete against a friend or computer opponent. You can also embark on the game's underlying adventure theme, which, despite its redemptory nature, is something I've never seen in a billiards simulation. Your goal is to earn enough money, handling both friends and strangers, to fly to Las Vegas to compete in the National Nine Ball Tournament. You need \$250 to airfare, plus another \$120 to enter the tournament.

You start with \$50 in your pocket and the Hustler's gleam in your eye. Your competitors' skill is determined by your location—your basement, Dave's Chopper Bar, Jim-Bob's Bar & Grill, Matt's Biffers and ultimately, Las Vegas. The kitty varies from \$1 to \$200, depending on your skill level and who you're playing. Each game affects your ranking and statistics, automatically updated during your adventure. Statistics include games completed, break and shot percentages, games won, scratches, and your overall prowess as a potential pool shark.

Depending on your opponent and location, available game variations include Eight Ball, Nine Ball, Ten Ball, Fifteen Ball, H.I. Continuous and Rotation. The last two games are particularly challenging and perhaps not in the usual repertoire of most casual pool players. The manual, though tersely written, offers detailed instructions on the object, rules, setup and penalties of each game. Except in adventure mode, all game variations and locations are available during one- or two-player competition.

POOL SHARK

The mechanics of actual gameplay are ingeniously simple. Starting from an overhead view of the full table, you must first choose the target ball and, in some variations, call the pocket. Beginners can turn on the optional aiming lines, which show the direction of the cue ball and its potential impact on, and subsequent path of the target ball. Click the right mouse button to toggle the ball numbers on and off.

Once you've set up your shot, the screen switches to a 3-D close-up of the table, shown from the player's point of view. An inset gauge—similar to those used in most golf simulations—lets you determine the power and accuracy of your shot. You can also change the elevation of the cue and the point of contact on the cue ball in order to shoot tight from the rail or from behind other balls. As your skill increases, you can also master advanced techniques such as draws

(backspin), follows (topspin), side-spins and difficult Massé shots. Unfortunately unlike Interplay's *VIRTUAL POOL*, there's no tutorial in the game, so you'll have to learn these techniques on your own.

THE DRAW

The graphics throughout are well drawn and colorful. Ball action is smoothly animated and extremely realistic, enhanced with the appropriate digitized sound effects. If you need to set the mood to get into the game, you can also turn on optional crowd chatter, background music and computerized taunts. "If it was against the law to be bad, this guy would be under



HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE After lining up your shot, get a 3-D perspective of the table; the top left display allows precise control of your cue's power, elevation and striking position.



Price: \$59.95
System Requirements:
 IBM compatible 486
 DX2-66, 6 MB RAM,
 Windows 3.1 or higher,
 SVGA, 2x CD-ROM,
 mouse; supports
 Sound Blaster compati-
 ble sound cards.
of Players: 1-2
Protection: None
Designer: BitMasters
Publisher: Mindscape
 Novato, CA
 (415) 878-9500
Reader Service: #342

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A New Hope...





ANGLE OF ATTACK An overhead view of the table, with optional aiming lines, lets you plot the best strategy to run the balls and win big bucks.

a pal," beats one seedy competitor. As usual, the best way to shut them up is to run the table, take their cash and thumb your nose as you head for the door.

Your stiffly computer-rendered opponents feature limited robotic motion and

personalities ranging from dweeb to drinker to flit to fast-talker. As in the real world, you never know who's hustling whom until the initial break, so keep one eye on the table and the other on your wallet.

Miscellaneous expenses incurred during your pool sharking adventures include buying opponents drinks (presumably to help raise the stakes and impair their performance), purchasing your own cue stick (to improve your performance) and taking lessons from pros (such lessons

only cost you money and raise your skill level; they don't actually teach you anything).

EIGHT BALL IN THE CORNER

POOL CHAMPION'S closest PC com-

petitor is Interplay's VIRTUAL POOL, a technically brilliant title so meticulous in its execution, it occasionally miscalculates the sport's spirit of sheer fun and lively competition. POOL CHAMPION, on the other hand, is more than just a game, but a bona fide adventure. **B**

APPEAL: Pool sharks or pool hawks looking for simple billiards fun with a little depth.

PROS: Adheres to real-world table action without complicated play mechanics. Wide assortment of game variations, coupled with an innovative adventure theme, results in long-term play value.

CONS: Superfluous digitized speech could have been used to better effect, and the "Adventure Game" is not much more than a glorified tournament. No online tutorial for bare beginners. No head-to-head modem or network play.



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Netting A Kill

ICI's **WARBIRDS** Launches Air Strikes On The Internet

You're loaded for bear, and there's nothing to shoot at. That was the dilemma that used to be faced by gamers who wanted to fly against human opponents in their favorite flight sims. Unless you were lucky enough to know a nearby flight sim fan, you were generally forced to locate distant opponents using online networks. This meant hefty long-distance or online-access charges. Kesmai's **Air Warrior** (see last month's column) gave pilots a central place to find skilled opponents, and with recent online service price drops, it's now cheaper to play than calling a head-to-head opponent on a long-distance line.

Last year a group of former **Air Warrior** players banded together and decided to give Kesmai some competition, working to create an online sim that addressed some of **Air Warrior's** limita-

tions. The company, Interactive Creations, Inc. (ICI) created some killer flight models and multiplayer code and initially teamed with Dornak, who provided an updated version of the Flight Simulator "toolkit" graphics engine. The resulting product, **COMBAT KILL**, went online in a beta form in mid-1995. While in beta, anyone with access to the Internet could play the game for free, taking up a World War II fighter against opponents from all over the world. As you'd guess, it got very popular—and very crowded—in no time at all.

BREAKING UP IS HARD TO DO

Late last year, ICI terminated its agreement with Dornak and teamed instead with Graphic Simulations, one of the premiere flight sim producers for the Macintosh. The simulation was renamed **WARBIRDS** (Dornak still plans to bring out its own multiplayer sim using the **COMBAT KILL** monitor), and revamped to use a PC version of Graphic Simulations' high-class graphics engine. The early betas had a complex enough

aerial combat between P-40 Warhawks. Watch <http://www.vr1.com> for news on this sim.

Meanwhile, ICI isn't sitting still with its release of **Warbirds 1.0**. Next on tap is a Windows 95 version that will support SLIP/PPP logons, which should make getting online with the sim much easier for folks who aren't Internet wizards. Following that will be a multiplayer, online space combat simulation which will feature inertia and other unique features.

flight model to impress even jaded sim fans, but the dated FST graphics just weren't impressive. The new graphics engine mixes the imagery from the serviceable to the impressive: 486 users can fly in smooth 640x480 resolution, while Pentium owners can experience a silky 1024x768 view.

A few weeks before this was written, **Warbirds** reached version 1.0, and ICI turned on the billing clock. This doesn't mean that ICI is finished developing the game—many planned features, such as carrier task force groups, still aren't installed. But there's plenty there now to make for a playable game, and new features are being added almost weekly.

In **Warbirds**, the player is a pilot for one of four countries (designated A, B, C, and D), but more commonly referred to by color, such as Green or Purple). In normal day-to-day play, the primary objective is to capture territory. Players for each team stage attacks on enemy embases; once a base's defenses are destroyed, a pilot lands and claims it for his country.

The organization and size of such raids varies immensely. Sometimes you'll log on to find 11 or 15 planes circling it up in dogfights, taking off and joining the fray on a one-on-one basis. On other evenings you may find a group of Purples putting

“**Warbirds'** flight modeling is realistic enough to give even seasoned sim pilots a run for their money.”

The online air combat arena is getting crowded. Joining **Air Warrior** for Windows and **Warbirds** in the fray is **ACES: THE BATTLE FOR AIR SUPERIORITY**, from Gemssoft and VR-1, Inc. While the former two sims are aimed primarily at the hard-core sim fan, **ACES** will be targeted at the casual, beginner pilot. Gemssoft describes it as “a sit-and-shoot experience with a very short learning curve.” Although it's based on the abysmal **Flames War** simulation engine, an early version on display at Winter CES did a passable job of simulating

together a massive raid, with a dozen fighters escorting a group of bombers. You can join a squadron, or attack as a solo pilot. This is part of the fun of



DAWN PATROL A B-17 takes out for an early-morning attack; night time in *Warbirds* lasts only a few minutes

Warbirds—players can make it whatever kind of game they choose.

A wonderful example of this happened just before *Warbirds* went final. A group of players decided that instead of trying to shoot each other down, they'd stage an air race. Rules were drawn up, an appropriate patch of terrain was chosen, and the races were on. But perhaps most impressive is that ICI responded to this unexpected use for its sim by adding a new airstrip to its scenery called Reno, which features a rectangular racing course and marker pylons.

ETIPS!

Looking for more information to help you get started in *Warbirds*? Check out the following pages on the World Wide Web:

- ▶ Main *Warbirds* Page <http://www.warbirdsgames.com>
- ▶ *Warbirds* FAQ <http://www.oris.com/~french/cikfaq.html>
- ▶ BK's *Warbirds* Ramer Page <http://retrol.entertain.com/civ/forbid/it.html>
- ▶ Hatchlings' Beginner's Guide to *Warbirds* <http://www.access.digox.net/~holand/eksp13.html>
- ▶ *Warbirds* Soundfiles <http://world.std.com/~man/len/CK/Dok.html>

If you have tips or cheats you'd like to share with other sim fans, email them to atkin@ed.com

THE PROP DEPARTMENT

As of mid-January, *Warbirds* sported the following WW II-era aircraft: P4U-1 Corsair, A6M Zero, B-17C Flying Fortress, P-38J Lightning, P-39D Airacobra, P-51D Mustang, FW-190-A, BF-109C, and Spitfire Mk. IX. Also in the works are the P6F 1 Koffat, LA-5, Me-109C, Hurricane, IL-2, B-25 Mitchell, and SBD Dauntless, with more to follow.

Warbirds' flight modeling is realistic enough to give even seasoned sim pilots a run for their money. Torque pulls your plane to the side when you gun the engine; pulling too fast into a turn causes an accelerated stall, and deadly spins are easy to enter in planes like the Corsair. You'll really want a



SPIT TAKE The Supermarine Spitfire Mk. IX is one of eight fighters currently available in *Warbirds*.

full set of flight controls (stick, throttle, and rudder pedals) to fly this sim, fumbling for the rudder and throttle keys as you attempt to recover from a spin—while a Zero bears down on you—is too much for most to handle. Most of the flight models are still being tweaked, and some planes fly more realistically than others. The P-38 is the mount of choice for beginners, since it's difficult to spin and the twin engines nullify any torque effects. (There's also a beginner's area with a simplified flight model, but it remains largely unused.)

The B-17 is currently a single-pilot aircraft (computers-controlled gamblers

defend the ship when you hold down the fire button). ICI eventually plans to allow multiple crew members to man the various positions. For now, you fly to the target from the pilot's position, then jump into the bombardier's compartment and use a mech-middled Norden bombsight to take out the target.

CAMPAIGN YEAR

Along with the always-running arena battle, *Warbirds* will also play host to periodic historical campaigns. The first of these, an allied raid over Kiel, Germany, was scheduled to be played out in late January. This campaign was slated to feature 50 P-51D Mustangs escorting 18 B-17 bombers against a force of 40 Me-109 and FW-190 fighters. Next up in April is the Solomon's '43 scenario, which will pit a force of American Hellcats, Corsairs, Lightnings, Airacobras, and Dauntlesses against an equal-sized Japanese force of Zeros and Voks.

Each campaign features custom terrain that can be downloaded from ICI's web page. Like *Warbirds* itself, the downloads are free; you're only charged for time spent flying online. The files you'll need to get started aren't that big—about 1300K for the *Warbirds* executable and the latest update, plus another megabyte or so for basic art files. To get the full, art package, though, you'd better plan on tying up your phone line for a while: the G40s480 art package is about 4 MB in size, while the 1024x768 package approaches 9 MB. If you received the CCW Extra CD-ROM with this issue,



- ▶ **Freebie alert!** Order to play *Warbirds* if you need using the CD-ROM internet printers, with a minimum weekly charge of \$11. The best news: when you fly on a practice server scenario, you won't find any other aircraft in the skies until you're on. For more information on the sim, visit your web browser at <http://www.warbirdsgames.com>, visit atkin@ed.com, or see the Review directory on this issue's CD-ROM.

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PHILIPS

Flanker Attack

Strap Into The Su-27 And Fly CG's Heart-Pounding Training Mission

by Robin G. Kim

SU27 FLANKER fromSSI packs enough realism to challenge even the veteran sim pilot. So, comrade, we've developed this training program to help familiarize you with the intricacies and peculiarities of the aircraft and its systems.

We'll start with a training mission (be warned, it is not a "milk run"), and follow up with some general tips that should help bring you back from all your missions as a hero of the state.

If you're ready, then, comrade, load up the manual file, which you'll find in the SU27 directory on this issue's CGW Extra CD-ROM, or in the SU27MISSZIP file available at CG's web site at <http://www.ednet.com/~gaming>. If you want to see if your instructors practice what they preach, you can also see a film of this officer performing the same mission by viewing *Iron Hand*, included in the same directory.



LOOKED ON Sometimes it's easier to shift the missile seeker's field of view onto the target than to point the whole plane in the right direction.

IRON HAND

Today's target is Simferopol airbase. In a coordinated attack, Su-24s will take out the runway while Su-26s hit other facilities. A pair of MiG-29s will provide fighter escort. Your job is to lead a section of Su-27s on an "Iron Hand" strike to neutralize the base's air defenses. This quick run-through will help prepare you for the mission you've been assigned.

The flight plan calls for a stealthy ingress, below the enemy's early warning radar. You're lucky the Ukrainians have no AWACS in the area, because they can detect planes almost down to the deck. Our AWACS will be flying, so leave your radar off and rely on the information that is datalinked to your aircraft.

At the initial point, pop up to let nearby SAM radars point you. Now is a good time to cut your wingman loose to hunt on his own.

When your threat warning display (TWD) shows a search radar pinging you, select Kh-31p anti-radar missiles. Point roughly at the radar source, then hold down the 'Tab' key so that you'll lock onto the radar as soon as it begins tracking you. Wait for the shoot cue on the HUD, release 'Tab,' and hold down the trigger until the missile leaves the rail.

Now you'll need to maneuver to defeat the SAM that's surely on its way. Chaff is an effective decoy if you can put the threat at your four- or eight-o'clock position. Active jamming reduces the acquisition range of enemy radars, but is relatively ineffective at spoofing missiles, which is what's needed here.

Now that you've alerted the enemy to your presence, interceptors will scramble from Simferopol and Saki to the northwest—you have no time to lose. Turn back toward the airfield and switch to Kh-29T television-guided missiles. Using the missile seeker's view displayed on the multifunction display (MFD), it's hard to spot vehicle-sized targets unless you know where to look. You could drive right in, slowing the seeker around, hoping you



BIG STICK The Kh-29T has a huge warhead (five times heavier than the AGM-68B Maverick's) so using it on ground vehicles is really overkill, but there's no smaller missile you can carry.



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spot the short-range defenses before they blast you, but this may require more passes than you have time for. It's better to do a quick scan of the area with air-to-ground radar first. In scan mode, vehicles appear as twinking dots. The distance the radar can scan varies with altitude, so make sure you're high enough—detection range is roughly 20 times your height above ground level. The Kh-29T's seeker has the same limitation, which means it will only work when pointed three or more degrees below the horizon.

Memorize the location relative to the airstrip of each potential target, orienting yourself using both the MFD view and the radar scan displayed in the HUD, then turn off the radar to aim your Kh-29T. Center a target in the MFD, lock, launch, and then move on to the next target. Seconds count, so work fast.

Once you've fired your missiles, dive for the deck and head for home. If you notice any AA or SAM launches that survived your attack, either because you



ON THE DECK Flying below 100 meters will protect you from SAMs, but watch out for power lines

didn't see them or your missiles failed to connect, you might risk another pass to help ensure the safety of your comrades. After you've cleared out, go ahead and call your wingman back into formation for the flight home. Remember to check the AWACS information periodically to ensure you're not being primed.

FLANKER IN DETAIL

As you fly other missions, you may notice that the Su-27 FLANKER manual doesn't cover every gory detail, leaving some things for you to puzzle out for yourself. Here we will clarify some of the more confusing aspects of the simulation.

Balthic weapons, such as unguided rockets and dumb bombs, have undocumented release restrictions that may leave you wondering why you don't get a shoot one. For rockets, you must pitch down at least three degrees to fire. Bombs can't be targeted at greater than four degrees of upward pitch, and will not release if your true airspeed exceeds 1070 kilometers per hour.

The R-77 missile is nicknamed the AMRAAMiki because of its similarity to the AIM-120 AMRAAM. There is one big difference between them, however: Unlike the AMRAAM, which can operate automatically from launch to intercept, the R-77 requires radio command guidance to get near the target. That means

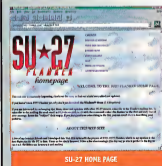
until it's within the 15 km range of its onboard radar, you must maintain your own radar lock or the missile will self-destruct. It is possible to guide the R-77 through this initial stage using just the ECOS, but without accurate range information your missile may fall short. After you judge that the R-77 has switched on its radar, turning off your radar and using the ECOS search mode lets you track your missile to see if it's likely to hit.

Countermeasures deployed by air targets can have weird effects on your sensor displays. If your radar is locked onto a target, and suddenly the numerical target information disappears even though the blip remains, you have been jammed and are probably locked into a chaff cloud. Break the lock and you'll see the target's blip split in two. The chaff's blip will eventually disappear, before then you can recognize by guessing which blip is the real aircraft. False contacts also appear when a target you're scanning with the electro-optical system (ECOS) dispenses flares, but they won't cause you to lose lock.

The tips and tactics described here should help you become more effective in your missions, and evoke a greater appreciation for the wealth of realism designed into Su-27 FLANKER. Watch your six—the homeland is counting on you for its defense. **S**

Target Site

If you're looking for more missions to fly and have World Wide Web access, check out Michael Joseph's outstanding "Unofficial Su-27 Flanker Home Page" at <http://hwink.com/~mike/su27.html>. The site features a growing archive of player-designed missions and films, but its centerpiece will be a branching mission-based campaign scenario that Mike and his team are developing. The lack of a built-in campaign mode is a common gripe among Su-27 Flanker players, so the completion of this scenario is eagerly anticipated.



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Farewell To The Troops

CGW's Wargame Columnist Enlists On The Design Side

A

fter a brilliant but failed defense of France, Napoleon's finest veterans, his Old Guard, assembled on a bright

April morning in the courtyard at Fontenoybleau. Forced to abdicate, Napoleon was allowed to bid his personal farewell to those brave men. "Soldiers of my Old Guard, after 20 years I have come to say good bye. France has fallen," began the old Emperor's brief

and tearful address.

I watched that scene from the film *Waterloo* again, while somebody searching for the words to write this column. After 20 years as a game critic, I, too, have come to say "good bye." Although my circumstances are far happier than exile to Elba, I must leave the pages of *Computer Gaming World* as a reviewer of strategy games and a columnist.

THE GOOD NEWS

That's the bad news. The good news is that I'm leaving my CGW bunker to join the fight in the trenches. I'm joining the fine team at Interplay Productions where I'll be doing my bit for the war effort to

strategy
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com

help create strategy games that will build bridges between our veteran war and strategy gaming community (of which I remain a proud, long-standing member) and the larger, elusive mass market.

Even as I rest my gaming pen to take up a hobby sword, I have been chided by many about what I can look forward to from *The Press*—how different it will be to receive reviews, rather than write them.

“ I’m leaving my CGW bunker to join the fight in the trenches. ”

BRIEFINGS

▶ The ammo continues to roll out of Arsenal Publishing. Their latest announcement concerns *Pacific Tide: The Rise and Fall of the Japanese Empire 1941-45*. Also in the works from Arsenal is *TacOps II* and a WWII North Africa version of *Planners East* (being done with the help of Game Designers Workshop's Frank Chadwick).
▶ It's sad to say, but QOP has closed its doors. Apparently, its parent company, American Laser Technology, made the decision. Although QOP seemed to be turning around its fiscal problems thanks to hits like *The Perfect General II*, it wasn't enough to keep American Laser from taking aim. QOP founder Bruce Williams

and his right-hand man Steve Cohen will probably return to gaming once the dust settles on the closing of QOP.

▶ Deadly Games has finally released *Operation Drummer*, the sequel to their U-boat game, for the Macintosh.

▶ Alan Emrich, Bob Murphy and Richard Barter will be working on three scenario disks for *Empire 2* to be published by Novastar: *The Waterloo Campaign* (10 scenarios), *Napoleonic Battles* (approximately 12 scenarios), and *Civil War Battles*.

▶ What's in a name? Ask the people at MicroProse's marketing department. The new title for the *Master of Andares* game we pre-

viewed in the January issue is now *Master of Orion II: The Battle for Andares*. So, it's *MOO 2* to you, too. As of the New Year, however, this game still has not gone into a full beta stage.

▶ Interactive Broadcasting, the on-line game developer best known for *Federation II* (available on GEnie, AOL and more) is still at work on their massive *Barrabosa* wargame and has started work on a global stock market game. For the first time, gamers will not be limited to either the real ticker or a simulated ticker of one stock market, but will be able to play several markets around the clock, using real ticker feeds.

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ALAN EMRICH

ACTION

That's true, but Interplay's won't be the first games I've done (I have a few board game credits already) and I believe in honest criticism. Although Napoleon once remarked that "The hostile newspapers are more to be feared than with a sword bayonets," I'm willing to step into the arena and face them.

PERCEIVED BIAS

Since I am going to be developing computer games, I can no longer continue this column with CGW (nor review other companies' games). This magazine has never allowed active game designers to review products in a genre that competes with their own. I do hope, though, to return to CGW with an occasional strategy/analysis piece or a guest commentary, as game designers/producers have done here in the past. I will also continue to write (books and articles) and work on board and card game projects as

my "free" time.

While I will no doubt be online less than I need to be, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the special friends I've made there. Many of you I've met, some I've had over for gaming and drinks, and all of you I appreciate more than you know. Despite the rotten fruit from the Lievine, the failed L&S, and senseless flutters, you'll still find me in cyberspace from time to time, where I hope to continue to expand my circle of friends and share ideas with you.

SO REMEMBER ME

"Though I love you all, I cannot embrace you all," Napoleon concluded his farewell to the Old Guard, and knooed the military banner that they had they rallied to through numerous battles and campaigns. "With this kiss, remember me. Good bye my soldiers. Good bye my sons." ☹

CG TIPS!

► Here are various cheat codes for **Warcraft II**. Type them as shown and press enter while playing the game. **Glistening Prizes**-Lots of gold, lumber and oil.

It is a good day to die-Invincibility.

neglues-Disable magical traps.

valdez-Gain 5000 oil.

shawpath-Shows you the map.

Make it so-Builds last.

hatchel-Allows a peasant to take less whacks at trees.

Cheats submitted by

Nick Navano

Pt Leavenworth, KS.

► ALLIED GENERAL

Airpower is the key to a successful campaign as the Americans. Buy strategic bombers and use them as auxiliary units. They are more or less impervious to ground fire, and should be used to carpet bomb enemy units you plan to attack later in that turn. A good attack can suppress up to half of a Tiger's

strength, making them manageable targets for Sherman's and M10s.

Use a combination of air defense and fighters as the Russians to defeat the Luftwaffe. Well positioned AD units can erode those Me109s and FW190s to the point where your interceptors can do some damage. If the weather is bad, try to trap German aircraft over areas where air defense units are available—or trap them and then move the AD units under them in the hopes that the weather will clear next turn.

► HEROES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC

The cost of defending three or four castles can be prohibitive in the middle stages of the game. To circumvent this problem, leave very weak armies in your castles, but keep substantial cash reserve and plenty of recruits. When the enemy attacks, buy an adequate defensive force at the point of attack. If the invaders bypass the now defended castle, side out and meet them in the field. **ALLIED GENERAL** and **HEROES** tips from CGW writer Tim Carter.

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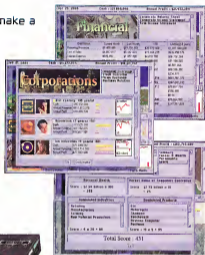
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More Orcs And Humans

Join The Fray Over Air, Land and Sea

by Martin E. Cirulis

This winter has been lousy for weather, but pretty good for computer game seekers. The latest game to test the trend is Blizzard's follow-up to their smash head-to-head fantasy wargame, *WARCRAFT*. The original was such a tight, enjoyable little game that you might think *WARCRAFT 2: TIDES OF DARKNESS*, with such a tough act to follow, would have no choice but to enter the dreary land of "More of the Same" that we've already seen with such sequels as *X-COM*, *TROOP FRONTIER*, *DUNE* or *DOOM 2*. Fortunately for us, the kids at Blizzard have spent some time rummaging through the closet of "Bigger, Better and Prettier" and produced a sequel that is both familiar and novel at the same time.

ORC AND BEINGS

For those of you who played the humans in *WARCRAFT* and successfully saved the noble land of Azeroth, I have some bad news, you didn't! It seems the Orkish hordes were just resting a bit, and the moment you turned off your computer, they rushed from their dimensional portal to victory. The once-proud humans of Azeroth have been forced to flee across the sea to a new land, Lordaron, in hopes of finding allies and a home.

Lordaron provides the classic assortment of



AHOY, YE SCURVY HUMANS! *WARCRAFT 2* has brought the fight for Azeroth to the skies and sea, with aerial and naval units.

upstanding, right-thinking classic fantasy races: Elves, Dwarves and Gnomes are the other inhabitants of this new land. They are as unimpaired by the invading Orcs as you are, and can generally be

counted on to lend you a hand in your upcoming fight for freedom. Of course, the Orcs are not without new resources as they continue to spill across the world. While acquiring naval technology, the Orcs have made the acquaintances of the usual goons of fantasy, namely the Goblins and Trolls.

What this new body politic means to players, be they Human or Orc, is that not only are you showered with a host of new units, but the campaigns themselves are much more interesting, with scenarios now ranging from all-out bloodbaths to diplomatic rescue missions.

BROADSIDES AND ORC-SHOT

WARCRAFT 2 is a DOS-based game that works well in a Windows 95 environment, and is essentially the same engine as the original, but tuned up a notch in



"I GOT AXE FOR YOU" The humorous little Orcs are back, and this time they've brought bloodthirsty Trolls, Gnomes and sneaky Goblins with them.



Price: \$54.95

System Requirements: IBM compatible 486/33 or better; 8 MB RAM, SVGA graphics, hard drive, 2x CD-ROM drive; supports most major sound cards
of Players: 1-8
Protection: None
Designer: Ron Miller
Publisher: Blizzard Entertainment
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tenus of graphic appeal, user-friendliness, and network capabilities.

The interface is simple point-and-click mouse work, but since the game runs in real-time mode only, prospective generals should either have quick mouse skills or be prepared to turn the game's speed way down, as large battles require a fair amount of micro-management. Of course, the transition to crisp SVGA has made unit identification not only easier, but a real pleasure. *Blizzard* has done an excellent job of creating beautiful animations for each unit, which are intricate and entertaining, but don't slow the game down even on a 486/55.

There are two long campaigns, one track for the Humans and one for the Orcs. Campaigns consist of a series of linked scenarios, which involve either building up a base of operations and destroying your opponent's base, or achieving a "quest," in which you are given a set number of units and must perform some sort of task before you are destroyed. Base battles involve balancing the cost of military units versus building up your village infrastructure. In keeping

with the original *WARCRAFT*, the humble but useful peasant laborers are still the key to any long-term battle strategy. There is now an additional resource, Oil, which must be retrieved to build up your navy.

Your new alphas have brought new units, and with them come whole new tactical venues. Apart from cool things like demolition teams, Etern Ranges, Troll Berserkers, and a pumped-up magic system, the big news in *WARCRAFT II* has got to be the expansion of the war over the water and into the skies. Since the playfield is large enough now to have viable seas and large islands, players will often find themselves having to build actual navies in order to protect themselves and then press the attack. You can now construct Destroyers, Battleships and even submarines like the Coercish Subs and Goblin War-Torpedoes. The Air War is not as complex, but players can scout the land with recon aircraft and by wade to it with Gryphons and Dragons.

The tweaks, improvements and details that have been added to *WARCRAFT II* are too numerous to cover in detail, but you can safely assume that almost everything has been changed for the better. Even the unit behaviors are a little more realistic, units are far more capable of taking care of themselves while you are busy elsewhere, and ambushes are not quite as easy to set. This is still a simple, straightforward wargame, but it has been skillfully taken to the next level of detail and complexity, without losing any of the playability.

THE RIGHT TOOLS FOR THE JOB

Another great surprise in this game is the scenario design! While it is primarily for the creation of maps for both single and net play, you can do far more than just fiddle with the landscape. All unit and building values can be changed, allowing you to create your own customized fantasy battles, based on your own preconcep-



▶ THE FIGHT JUST GOT BETTER *Warcraft II* has beautiful SVGA graphics, more features, more units, great multiplayer capabilities, and retains the fun qualities of the original.

tions. Think that the Orc player should be playing more like a horde? Take away his more advanced units and make his grunts cheap and fast to make.

As with most competent sequels, if you liked the original game then you should definitely pick up this one. *WARCRAFT II* successfully breaks new ground without losing sight of what made it a great game to the first place. While I think that those kinds of games really need to introduce branching campaigns to reduce the "puzzle" aspect of some of the scenarios, *Blizzard* should be commended for pushing the design further instead of just pumping out more of the same. If you enjoy fantasy gaming, or simply like the kind of base-building tactical wargames that have become popular in the last couple of years, then this is a sure bet for you—and if you have access to a network for gaming, then *WARCRAFT II* moves into the "Must Buy" category. **S**

Net-Orcing In *Warcraft II*

For me, the best part of *Warcraft II* is its multiplayer capability. With slots for up to eight players and very aggressive computer opponents, you can choose anything from simple head-to-head modern struggles to big IPX-network confrontations filled with alliances and betrayals. The multiplayer suite is extremely easy to use, and the only tricky part is making sure each player clicks on the confirmation box beside their name before starting the game.

The game comes with numerous built-in scenarios designed for two, four, six or eight players, and many of them have maps that highlight land, sea or air combat. Once you set which players are going to be humans and which will be played by the computer, you can go on your way with the standard settings, or change options such as limited sighting range or even the use of cheat codes. Players joining the game get to see which options are being set, but can only change their alliances or race before the game starts.

Creative gamers should really by designing their own battle maps for network play. Tinkering with the attributes of various units can allow for a huge number of possible scenarios. The process of creating and playing scenarios with your friends will give *WARCRAFT II* a long life on your hard drive, and it's a great learning process for you building game designers out there.

▶ **APPEAL:** Anyone looking for laughs, intense action, pocketfuls of features and creature, and simple, yet engaging gameplay will want to play this *Warcraft* sequel.

▶ **PROS:** A worthy successor to the original, which pushes the design in new directions, and a powerful scenario tool-kit and a great multiplayer option.

▶ **CONS:** The campaigns are a little weak and the problem of failure = repetition still exists.



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Riding With Patton

Switching Sides Can Be A Tankful Of Fun

by Tim Carter

Rarely has the prospect of tanks on the horizon been so warmly welcomed as with the release of *ALLIED GENERAL*. And while it is fair to say that *ALLIED GENERAL* does not live up to the expectations of many, this is due as much to the level of expectation as to the quality of the game.

While *ALLIED GENERAL* is a fine game, and will provide many hours of enjoyment for die-hard aficionados and beginners alike, it just doesn't quite have the elegance, play-balance and tension of *PANZER GENERAL*. Matched against virtually any other strategy or wargame on the market today, *ALLIED GENERAL* holds up as solid entertainment. Unfortunately, matched against its predecessor, it lacks some of the intangibles that made *PANZER GENERAL* such a superlative product.

PLAYING PATTON

This time, players command one of the Allied armies, stemming the German onslaught and moving on to the offensive. The number of core units available to players is considerably smaller than in *PANZER GENERAL*, and tends to grow at a slower pace.

While there are good historical reasons for this (most Western operations involve both British and American forces, so that the player has at best access to only half the available units), it does tend to detract from the overall role-playing aspect of the game.

The real elegance of *PANZER GENERAL* lay in the play-balance built into the scenarios.



AXIS TO ALLIES *ALLIED GENERAL* is a good, solid wargame, though it might not be equal to its predecessor. It definitely holds its own as a good game.



Price: \$55.99

System Requirements: IBM compatible 486/66 or better, 8 MB RAM, SVGA graphics, 6 MB hard drive space, 2x CD-ROM drive, Windows 95 or Win 3.1, mouse, supports most major sound cards

of Players: 1-2

Protection: None (CD must be in drive to play)

Designer:

Haleshorn/SSI Special Projects Group

Publisher: Strategic Simulations Inc. Sunnyvale, CA (800) 501-7529

Reader Service #: 344



WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY? Unfortunately, the Windows 95 interface isn't nearly as intuitive as expected, taking time to learn and adjust to.

The combination of tough, aggressive defenses and tight time limits kept most battles tense even the fourth or fifth time around. The scenarios in *ALLIED GENERAL*, while sometimes quite challenging, are not nearly as well thought out. This is unfortunate

because most of them have considerable potential, yet suffer from glaring snags in their execution, leading me to wonder if they were adequately playtested.

The AI has been upgraded somewhat, although most improvements could be categorized as "Really dumb things the computer doesn't do anymore." It will sometimes escort bombers, presumably when it perceives a threat from enemy interceptors, and will often withdraw weak units from dangerous positions rather than let them be destroyed. It will also disband useless or doomed units and rebuild others in more useful areas.

Perhaps the biggest problem with the scenarios is the lack of clearly defined victory conditions. The briefings rarely provide time limits for a major victory, and often do not indicate if all the objectives need to be taken (or held), or where the split between a major and a minor victory falls. Players may have to spend a few games trying out different strategies just to determine the victory conditions.

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1995 KA



RACING TO BERLIN Each Allied power has a unique fighting style, as ground-heavy Russians will race to Berlin with different tactics than Americans riding in with superior airpower.

This is completely unnecessary, and is a real detriment to the enjoyability of the game. Even in scenarios where the play balance is not that delicate, players have no way of knowing—short of trial and error—how many turns they have to

build their core forces into overstrength elite units without losing a major victory.

THIS TANK DRIVES FUNNY

After the scenarios, the most significant changes in ALLIED GENERAL are all related to the game interface. ALLIED GENERAL was designed to run under Microsoft Windows, and may be installed into either Windows 3.1 or Windows 95. I tested the game on a 486/66 with 8 megs of RAM under both 3.1 and 95. While it was a tad sluggish under Windows 3.1, ALLIED GENERAL is definitely functional in the old OS, although the combat animations are too slow to be left on.

Under Windows 95, speed improved noticeably, although scrolling and many artillery screens (such as the unit purchase screen) are considerably slower than in PANZER GENERAL. Spooling of scrolling, most elements of the interface are more clumsy than in PANZER GENERAL. Players cannot move about the map simply by pushing their mouse. Now, a recon window with the standard eight-arrow compass allows you to click and push the screen across the map. After about an hour on the new system it becomes both easy and intuitive, but it is still more work than in the earlier game.

It feels as if the designers struggled very hard to make the Windows interface as smooth and easy as PANZER GENERAL'S DOS interface, and just didn't quite pull it off. Further, ALLIED GENERAL does not take advantage of some of the existing features of the Windows environment (I would love to have the ability to adjust the size of the strategic map).

On the bright side, the e-mail system has been upgraded substantially. The biggest problem with playing PANZER GENERAL via modem was the inability of players to see their opponents' moves. Essentially, you were presented with a flat map that showed only the other side's final positions. ALLIED GENERAL solves this problem by including a video replay

of the opposing side's move with the save game file. Players can now review the enemy's movement before planning their strategy.

Happily, ALLIED GENERAL is practically bug free. After over 100 hours with this game, the only technical glitch I found, which neither crashed the program nor affected game play, was a rare tendency for the computer to display forties as APCs late in the game. The sound and video worked fine from my double-spin CD and Soundblaster Pro.

By the way, the video segments have changed somewhat, now taking the form of wartime films complete with narration. The manual, while competent, doesn't really provide much support or background. The charts of available equipment that were so useful for planning core upgrades in PANZER GENERAL are conspicuously absent.

WOULD PATTON BE PROUD?

Searching for a metaphor to end my review, I kept coming back to the Sherman tank. Multiplexed by many, the Sherman was a well-built, reliable machine that provided very good value for the money. The fact that it tends to fare poorly when compared with, say, a Panther D, should not overly cloud our judgment. Who won, after all?

ALLIED GENERAL is not a match for PANZER GENERAL. But in a market virtually overrun with buggy, unfinished wargames that are—pardon me—complete crap, it will be a more than welcome addition to any wargamer's collection, and should remain on their hard drive for quite some time. ☺

APPEAL: PANZER GENERAL buffs may find ALLIED GENERAL less fun, but those looking for a generally good wargame won't be disappointed.

PROS: This is a solid wargame with play improved by e-mail capability and better AI.

CONS: Not as good as PANZER GENERAL, with some poor scenarios and an interface that takes some getting used to.



Three Games In One

Clearly, the designers had tried to provide players with more than just a politically correct Panzer General. Each nationality has different strengths and weaknesses, and requires a different strategic approach in order to consistently win major victories. None of the Allied armies fight like the Germans in PANZER GENERAL, and none face the same sort of challenges. Regardless of whether you like the new campaigns or not, SSI cannot be accused of just flipping off the Panzer General system by cranking out scenarios with the flags switched.

Aspiring Zukhovs can forget about having an air force. Russian planes never lasted more than a few turns under my command, regardless of how carefully I tried to shepherd them. True to history, the Russians must rely on massed artillery and copious amounts of anti-aircraft units.

For the Americans, airpower dominates the battlefield. Strategic bombers work wonders against all types of defenses, while effective tactical bombing can keep the German armor under wraps. This is crucial, as American tanks are at a greater relative disadvantage against their enemies than the Germans were against theirs in PANZER GENERAL.

The British combine elements of both American and Soviet forces and strategy. Personally, I think it would have been nice (and realistic) if they had been given just a bit more beginning experience.

And while we're on the subject, what do the folks at SSI have against the Canadian army, anyway? The Free French and Free Poles are included in the force pool, but these fearsome Canadian infantry are nowhere to be found. I think I'll send Carl Norman a red and white toque and a copy of John Keegan's Five Armies at Normandy next Christmas.

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EASY INTERMEDIATE HARD

A New High-Water Mark?

Charge To Glory In The Battlefields Of Gettysburg

by Patrick C. Miller

Fans of computer wargames based on the American Civil War have suffered through a gaming drought for the past several years. The few releases that offered potential relief have turned out to be light sprinkles, rather than the much-anticipated gully washers. But with the release of **BATTLEGROUND: GETTYSBURG**, Civil War buffs at last have a game satisfying enough to wet their whistles.

GETTYSBURG represents a significant advancement in the evolution of TakouSoft's *Battleground* series, which clearly comes into its own in 19th century warfare. The hex maps are more colorful, richly detailed and flexible than **BATTLEGROUND: ARDENNIS**, the company's debut game. Moreover, gameplay is enhanced by including more of the detail that was conspicuously absent in **ARDENNIS**: leaders play an important role in maintaining unit morale and cohesion; flank attacks and cavalry fire make unit facings important, keeping infantry and artillery supplied with ammunition is a critical aspect of battlefield command; a single routed unit can trigger a ripple effect of confusion and panic that spreads widely throughout an army.

NOTHING CIVIL ABOUT IT

A grand tactical, turn-based wargame, **GETTYSBURG** covers the "high-water mark" of the Confederacy from July 1 to July 3, 1863, when the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia, under General Robert E. Lee, and the Union Army of the Potomac, under Major General George G. Meade, converged at the town

of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

There are 12 scenarios covering various key engagements during the three-day battle, ranging from the first contact between Buford's Union cavalry and Heth's division, to Pickett's futile charge into the Union center on the last day. Six of the scenarios offer either historical artificial intelligence (AI), in which the computer player's maneuvers are governed by actual events, or alternate AI that allows the computer opponent more latitude. You can also play the campaign game, covering all three days of the battle in a monster 149-turn scenario that features day and night turns. Throughout the game, video clips of Civil War re-enactments, combined with the sounds of men engaged in fierce combat, help immerse you in the period and the game.

ARRAYED FOR BATTLE

The basic maneuver units of **GETTYSBURG** are: infantry and cavalry regiments and artillery batteries. Units are rated for strength, weapon range, movement, quality and fatigue. Officers are rated for their command and leadership abilities. Turns are divided into four phases for each side: movement, defensive fire, offensive fire and notice. During combat, units lose strength points as they take



WELCOME HOME *Gettysburg* finally returns quality Civil War gaming to the table, with great graphics, multimedia, details and scenarios.

casualties, gain fatigue points through melee or prolonged exposure to enemy fire and can become disrupted or routed under the stress of combat.

Players familiar with **ARDENNIS** will have no trouble diving right into **GETTYSBURG**. However, as with TakouSoft's first game, the moving and firing of units isn't as intuitive as it could be and requires both some consultation with the manual and a little practice. A handy toolbar with push-button icons enables you to customize the screen display, from the map in and out and give orders to your units. Unfortunately, you must reset your screen display preferences each time you start a new game or load a saved game.

The 3-D map view gives **GETTYSBURG** the look and feel of a miniature game while the 2-D map provides a board game perspective. There's also a "jump map" that displays the entire battlefield and enables you to move to any location on the map by clicking on a spot. Most players will opt for the zoomed-in 3-D view



Price: \$59.00

System Requirements: IBM compatible 386/33 or better (486 recommended), 4 MB RAM (8 MB recommended), SVGA graphics, 5 MB hard drive space, 2x CD-ROM, mouse, Windows 95, supports most major sound cards

of Players: 1-2

Protection: None (CD must be in drive to play)

Designers: Jim Ross, John Tiller

Publisher: TakouSoft, Forest Hill, MD (410) 621-7262

Reader Service #: 345

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because it provides the most dramatic and realistic depiction of the battlefield. Important landmarks, such as Devil's Den, Little Round Top and Cemetery Hill, are easily recognizable. If you want more information, holding down the Shift key toggles a compass rose and displays the names of the landmarks as well as the names of local landowners.

MINIE BALLS AND CANISTERS

The game does a reasonably good job of emulating Civil War tactics and the strategies used by both sides at Gettysburg. Rifle fire is most effective from medium to short range, and sometimes even then doesn't seem terribly lethal. Melee combat is possible, but because it fatigues and disrupts your troops, it should be employed only when you're certain of winning the engagement. Artillery isn't as useful for softening up the enemy defensive positions as it is for repulsing a determined offensive. Troops holding the high ground, dug in behind breastworks, or in good defensive terrain cause real problems for an attacker.

The game's greatest weakness is its AI. Veterans wargamers, especially those familiar with the armies and events at

Gettysburg, will have little trouble besting the computer player when using the manual control option. The AI will often lead with unsupported artillery batteries, attack piecemeal and leave important locations sitting in the open to be easily captured. The "semi-automatic AI" offers greater challenge; you can either take general command of an army and let the computer handle implementation or command an individual brigade or division while the computer handles the rest of the army. With the computer AI "helping" your side, battles are more challenging and more realistic.

THE DEVIL TO PAY

Even with *BATTLEGROUND*'s increased emphasis on realism, some overly simplistic features remain from *ARMINNES*. For example, you know just as much about every enemy unit spotted as you do about

your own units. In addition, all units are treated as either spotted or unspotted. If you can see an enemy unit, it can see you. In a two-player modern game, this makes it very difficult to ambush your opponent. Unlike *ARMINNES*, *BATTLEGROUND* does not include a scenario editor, nor does it include a play-by-E-mail option.

Although *BATTLEGROUND* is nearly bug free, it's not without its glitches. The manual fails to mention that when a unit moves and fires, it does so at half its normal effectiveness. Starting a modern game



THE BLMIP CAM The impressive 3-D view captures a miniature feel, and makes the action more compelling and exciting.

as described in the manual doesn't work. (The host player must choose the scenario by selecting "File" from the pull-down menu, selecting "Open," and then loading the correct file for the scenario.) Some of the information in the manual differs from the online help. In addition, double-clicking on the README icon produces a jumbled text file instead of the list of which map modules go with the various scenarios. This is very important when reloading a saved game or starting a modern game (see chart).

Overall, *BATTLEGROUND* is an outstanding game that does justice to the American Civil War period. With TildenSoft scheduling a Waterloo game for release in April and another Civil War game based on Shiloh in May, it seems that gamers whose interests lie in 19th century warfare can see an end to their gaming drought and a good chance of some soaking downpours in the spring. **S**

Scenarios, Files and Maps

When you load a saved game or start a modern game in *BATTLEGROUND: GETTYSBURG*, it's important to know which map module corresponds to which file or scenario.

Scenario Title	File Name	Map Module
01. First Contact	m1son	McPherson's Ridge
02a. Out of the Mist	july1ama.son	The Battle of Gettysburg
02b. Out of the Mist	july1amb.son	The Battle of Gettysburg
03a. A Rock and a Hard Place	july1pma.son	The Battle of Gettysburg
03b. A Rock and a Hard Place	july1pmb.son	The Battle of Gettysburg
04a. Decisions, Decisions!	july2ama.son	The Battle of Gettysburg
04b. Decisions, Decisions!	july2amb.son	The Battle of Gettysburg
05a. Double Envelopment	july2pma.son	The Battle of Gettysburg
05b. Double Envelopment	july2pmb.son	The Battle of Gettysburg
06. The Wheatfield to Round Top	rlt.son	Little Round Top
07. Too Little, Too Late	cl2nd.son	Culp's Hill
08a. Fight or Retreat?	july3ama.son	The Battle of Gettysburg
08b. Fight or Retreat?	july3amb.son	The Battle of Gettysburg
09. Culp's Hill, Bloody Hill	chl3rd.son	Culp's Hill
10a. The Final Assault	july3pma.son	The Battle of Gettysburg
10b. The Final Assault	july3pmb.son	The Battle of Gettysburg
11. The High-Water Mark	pc1.son	Pickett's Charge
12. Pickett's Charge	pc2.son	Pickett's Charge
13. The Battle of Gettysburg	july_1_3.son	The Battle of Gettysburg

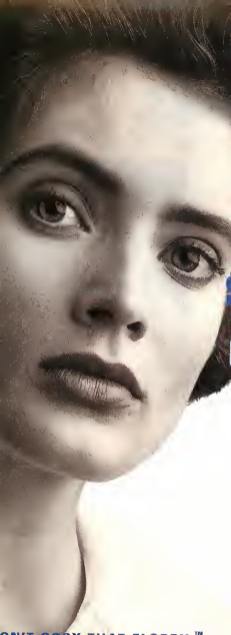
Note: 1=Historical AI, 2=Alternative AI

APPEAL: *Battleground: Gettysburg* is a must for American Civil War enthusiasts and wargamers.

PROS: This game offers beautiful graphics and 3-D maps, effective use of multimedia, modern play option, individual scenarios covering key engagements and a campaign game.

CONS: Weak AI, sometimes confusing documentation, no scenario editor or play-by-E-mail capability and simplistic sighting rules weaken an otherwise strong effort.





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Storybook Wargames

The World Of WARHAMMER Lands A Solid Hit On Desktop Wargaming

by Peter Olafson

I'm not much of a hard-core wargamer, but I have a long-running love affair with games about war: little animated guys running around, wielding rusty weapons, shrieking death cries and falling over in their own blood.

POWERMONGER caught my eye, DUNE. It was a long and lovely walk and COMMAND & CONQUER, a whole lot weekend. Now, WARHAMMER SHADOW OF THE HORNE RAT from Mindscape, has captured all my attention.

It's a slightly Tolkienesque—and more tactical—turn on those earlier games set in the Warhammer universe of the tabletop RPG. You're in charge of a troop of mercenaries based at the town of Wiserheim and begin the game by taking a range of general tasks: the first is defense of a nearby town, the second escorting a merchant caravan.

Of course, there's something larger and darker looming in the background: The Slavers—a race of inhuman ruffians—have come into possession of a magical Elven crystal called the Wargstone. They mean business, and their business is good business for your little army.

Before each mission, you choose which of your troops will join in the convoy, and then set a marching order (meaningful only in the event of ambush). Afterwards, you look upon a

handsome world map, across which a dotted red line winds its way. When it stops, the fighting usually starts.

The battles take place within a richly-textured landscape seen from a bird's-eye point-of-view. You can rotate it, zoom in on it and zoom across it using the mouse, and it's worthwhile to do so simply for the aesthetic pleasures of exploration. You may find little villages populated by tiny people, scavenger birds circling for corpses, rain-drenched rivers, a coking windmill, churches with graveyards, great rocky outcroppings, a fortress parapet and buildings scorched by war.

You'll also use the mouse to set up your troops in the deployment phase. After that's done, the real-time combat begins.



LISTEN UP Bloodthirsty commanders aren't the only wonders of Warhammer, a world of fantastic creatures, worm-like villains, and epic conflicts.

A tour of the battlefield will find troops on the march, others in healing retreat, "moss singing for blood, heavy mortars booming overhead and unit commanders calling out orders. It is easy to play, and you should be able to master the first few missions in happy ignorance of the instructions (however, you'll do even better if you pore over the fine 120-page manual and brief supplement first). Controls are handled largely via a battery of layered icons in the lower right-hand corner. It's fairly straightforward: footprints for moving, crossed-swords for attack, a skull to cancel, a horn to change and so on.

However, for all that ease of play, WARHAMMER'S scenarios become progressively harder to win. Unless you're lucky, you'll eventually find the battlefield decorated with your dead, dying and fleeing, and someone will issue a despairing cry of "All is lost!" So it will be, and you'll have to either restore a saved game to re-fight the battle or check out how well the design team has integrated "failure" into the storyline.



Price: \$50

System requirements: IBM compatible 486/56 or better (Pentium recommended), 8 MB RAM, SVGA graphics, 2x CD-ROM drive; 21 MB hard drive space, Windows 95, mouse, supports Windows 95-compatible sound cards

if at players: 1
Protection: None
Design: Steve Loney, Gavin Moore, Jeff Gammon, Richard Castle and Andy Jones
Publisher: Mindscape
 Novato, CA
 (415) 897-9900
Reader Service #: 346



SAVE THE FAIRIES Wrapped around Warhammer is a classic good versus evil plot, centering on the mysterious, and staler, Elven Wargstone.

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If you're successful, you'll see a unit-by-unit assessment of damage meted out and experience gained—a nice touch which ought to be included in more wargames—and a balance sheet on how the outcome improves your cash flow. You'll have a chance to take on replacements for the dead and wounded, hire any new units that have contacted (Dietrich (your dyed-in-the-wool agent), and then it's on to the next mission.

Often, you'll have a choice of directions here. For instance, once you've recovered the kidnapped family of the border prince Sven Carlsborn, you can remain in his employ and undertake a campaign against the local orc and goblin population, accompany your new-found

wargames. The role-playing elements allow WARHAMMER to escape the trap of wargame/RPGs that fall into a simple pattern of battle, story, battle, story. And the emphasis on maintaining an army whose basic status is preserved from scenario to scenario means you have to be

much more careful about how you control your armies, lest you lose too many troops to battle and find yourself short-handed for the next fray. This more realistic approach is both welcome here and intriguing too often in other wargames.

A few caveats, however. With all the graphical detail options enabled, scrubbing around the battlefield once the battle is joined can be slow, even on a P3 Millie Pentium. Now and then, units that have regrouped after a combat will thereafter be extremely recalcitrant when receiving orders, acting as though they never heard them. There are five save positions in the game, but it's about five too few to my thinking. Thankfully, there is a "last game" function, alleviating some of the stress of having to remember to save before each battle.

Moreover, while I'm told the Slaven have always been less-than-savvy characters in Warhammer, as a newcomer to this game system, I found an odd disparity between the tense exchanges of the pre-scenario briefing screens and the bland, sometimes comic-relief quality of the on-scene story animations. Of course, those who've read the Warhammer novels will feel right at home with this schizoepicronic druck.

Finally, I love the sense of choosing my own direction, but it's a sense that diminishes after the initial blink. The game's paths are more like cut-de-sacs off a central road, and choosing some alternatives sometimes means simply forestalling oth-



SADDLE UP The beautiful graphics, nifty-detailed landscapes, diverse scenarios, and easy-to-control interface combine to make an inviting wargaming campaign.

Some Tips For Taming The Horned Rat

It's possible to win battles but lose the war by taking unacceptably high casualties. If you find you simply can't get through a mission no matter what approach you take, it's likely that some of your units took too much of a drubbing in earlier engagements. Save often, and be prepared to replay scenarios.

Magic is invaluable. You'll pick up an Amber Wizard early in the game. Keep him safe in combat, study his spells and use him prudently. In particular, use The Curse of Anarhaz, with which Alor begins the game. It's an exceptionally useful spell for diminishing the combat effectiveness of enemies, and will drive some into a state of panic.

Don't let the Grudgebringer Cavalry do all the work. It's a great unit, and there are few things more invigorating than watching its riders spur their horses to a gallop for a charge.

But if you use them as your main instrument, they'll also get the lion's share of experience. Share the wealth, and try to

build a balanced force.

If you find an NPC unit already on the battlefield (dwarves, for instance), don't let it stand alone against the enemy. Send assistance immediately. The unit may not be under your direct control, but every ally is valuable in a close fight.

By the same token, don't squander your own forces in a series of one-on-one battles. A combined-arms approach is much more effective. One great tactic is tying down an enemy with a flank assault and then hitting it from the rear with cavalry.

Following these tips will maximize your army's strength and keep Pyrrhic victory at bay.

dwarven ally on a trek northeast to lift the siege at Zhilbar, or escort the ever-cribby elf lord, Cerdan, on a trip to Lozen Forest.

This is a decided step up from previous



APPEAL: This game is for folks who like a well-developed, accessible wargame with rich detail.

PROS: Splendid graphics, lively battle sequences, sensible controls and the ability to choose your missions.

CONS: Needs more depth to the role-playing elements and lacks multiplayer mode.



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Out of Time

Endless Repetition Equals Poor Wargaming

by Tim Carter

Once, there was a nifty little company that specialized in strategy games. The graphics and sound were hardly cutting-edge, but the games were so challenging—and so fun—that true gamers really didn't mind. Sadly, **BATTLES IN TIME**, though it comes with more bells and whistles than any **THE LAST ARMY OF KINGDOMS**, is a complete dog. The problem isn't the premise, but the execution: A future Earth, free of war, suddenly comes under alien attack. You have been sent back in time to re-fight historical battles, re-learning the ancient art of warfare in order to lead the defense of Earth against the alien invaders.

available during that era. Armies are built to capture cities, which provide points for building more armies, and each army comprises up to twelve units. When two opposing armies meet, the map zooms in to a tactical display, and the individual units fight it out.

ARMOR-PIERCING CATAPULTS

Unfortunately, none of the battles offered bear any resemblance to history. Now, I have nothing against generic games. Some, like **THE LAST ARMY**, are actually more fun without the historical constraints. But **BATTLES IN TIME** is so vanilla that the differences between units across time frames are non-existent. For instance, the Romans have catapults that fire exploding projectiles halfway across the tactical map. Other than the graphics, these units behave exactly like WWII era artillery. In



BRIDGE OVER TROUBLED WATERS Even as a generic game, *Battles in Time* fails to excite, especially with its repetitive units and lack of any real strategy.

The sheer number of units, and the ability to regenerate them each turn, create far too many tactical battles that look and feel similar regardless of terrain or the units involved. At the strategic level, an army of twelve infantry moves as fast as an army of twelve tanks! (Maybe if they were riding Brontosaurus, they'd go faster...)

I can't remember the last time I saw a more dysfunctional game. Only if it were played for laughs would **BATTLES IN TIME** have any sort of merit. On the exterior, it appears to work properly. Once you get into it, however, the game reveals itself to be, at best, a sorry joke. ☹

► **GOP** has been dissolved by its parent company, American Laser Games. See Briefings for more details.

FARPEAL: No one who appreciates good wargames will want to play this game.

PROS: It sounds like a good idea before you install it.

CONS: The game is boring and repetitive, and the bomb-chucking dinosaurs will make you sick with disbelief and imitates.



TIME TANGLE There's no need to spring for a stealth fighter, when even dinosaurs are outfitted with missiles.

Scenarios are selected from one of four time periods: prehistoric, Ancient Rome, World War II, and the near future. To fight the aliens, you must first complete a campaign comprising one battle from each of the four periods.

Each time period has four maps, each of which sets the parameters for a scenario: we're using units that roughly match those

fact, most units have identical counterparts in other time periods, save for a free lift. In the prehistoric era, Brontosaurus with area-fire, artillery and missile-loaded Pterodactyls aren't just inaccurate, they're ludicrous.

Another problem is the large number of armies available to each side, which makes for extremely repetitive gameplay.



Price: \$59.95

System Requirements: IBM compatible 386/33 or better, 4 MB RAM, SVGA graphics, 14 MB hard drive space, 2x CD-ROM drive, mouse, supports Sound Blaster compatible sound cards and modem/full-modem play

of Players: 1-4

Protection: None (CD must be in drive to play)

Designer: Rod Olson and Bruce Williams
Publisher: American Laser Games/GOP
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Reader Service #: 347

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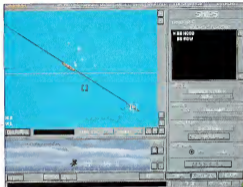
A Change Of Scenery For World War II Naval Battles

By Bob Proctor

SI has released yet another naval battle game, this one set in the European seas. In many respects, *GREAT NAVAL BATTLES 4* is similar to its predecessors, with data for British, German, Italian, French and Soviet ships, in lieu of Pacific powers. What I like best about the *GREAT NAVAL BATTLES* series are the small, six-to-eight-ship battles. These show off the superb graphics to best advantage and are small enough to let you manage every ship effectively. There are very few scenarios like this in *GNB4*. Instead, you get a heavy dose of fleet actions, and controlling these numerous forces tends to get very laborious. For me, six to eight ships is about my limit; others may find their tolerance higher or lower but I doubt any one will have the patience for a *Finalflair II* or a *Jutland 1916* scenario.

STAYING IN FORMATION

The problem is partly in the AI and partly in the game design. The AI does a poor job in too many areas to be a good assistant in battle. The first problem is keeping ships in formation, specifically "Line Ahead" formation. Almost every task force begins in this formation with the flagship in the middle of the line. As soon as you order a course change from the flagship, the flagship turns and all of the ships in front of it begin a Keaton Kops routine to get back on station. In a battle, you lose control of range and target bearing for one-third to half the ships in the task force unless you adopt individual control. A second problem is target selection.



POINTING THE LINE *GREAT NAVAL BATTLES 4* has some pretty graphics and a good interface, but is only a bland addition to the *GNB* lineup.

tion, most of your ships will automatically select the biggest target. This affects accuracy and makes all of your fire less effective. The only solution is to go to manual mode on each ship and constantly check and redock its targeting. A third problem is with torpedoes; put simply, the AI won't fire them at anything other than point-blank range. Finally, the game design won't let you form task forces at sea, fire, say, torpedo runs or to fire smokecreens.

ENEMY IN SIGHT, CAPTAIN

Of the 16 scenarios, only a few are interesting. The British confrontation of the German *Bismark* and the battle against the pocket battleship *Grif Spee* near Uruguay, are small battles. The others are the Atlantic convoy battles, which include hypothetical sorties by the *Tirpitz* and *Grif Zeppelin*, as well as historical raids by the *Schumborst* and *Lutnow*.

All the other scenarios put a bulldozer

ing any of fleets in action, some historical and others hypothetical.

GREAT NAVAL BATTLES 4 is a competent game and there isn't anything better at the tactical level. If too bad *SSI* didn't make the computer a more capable assistant. At times, *GNB4* shines through with a few small, engaging battles, but otherwise it's a mediocre addition to the *GREAT NAVAL BATTLES* series. **S**

APPEAL: Any fan of *GNB3*, or a gamer with a propensity for micromanagement, will enjoy this game.

PROS: The interface and graphics are great; the game engine works well for genny deals.

CONS: The AI is so poor it forces players to micromanage too much, and the majority of scenarios provided aren't very exciting.



Price: \$45

System Requirements: IBM compatible 386/33 or better, 8 MB RAM, SVGA graphics, 14 MB hard drive space, 2x CD-ROM drive, mouse, supports most major sound cards

of Players: 1

Protection: none (CD must be in drive to play)

Designer: Roy Gibson
Publisher: Strategic Simulations Inc.
Sunnyvale, CA
(408) 737-8800

Reader Service #: 349

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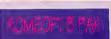
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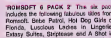
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INDUCTION CEREMONY

DAY OF THE TENTACLE

LUCASARTS 1993

When the zany team of Dave Grossman and Tim Schafer created the script for *Day of the Tentacle*, they had one goal in mind—to create the interactive equivalent of a Chuck Jones cartoon. They succeeded so well in their mixture of crazy dialogue and off beat sight gags that by the time they showed *Day of the Tentacle* to their idol (Jones is arguably the king of the classic Warner Brothers cartoon directors unless you talk to equally devoted Robert Clampett and Fritz Freleng aficionados), he was impressed enough to try to hire artists Peter Chan and Larry Ahern out from under the project. Fortunately, the artists stayed aboard, the animation team created smooth flowing sequences like some game designers had always said could not be done; Richard Saunders (*WWP* in Cincinnati's *Las Vegas*) led the voiceover actors in a series of clever performances; and the script from Grossman and Schafer kept gamers full of both challenge and laughter from start to finish. *Day of the Tentacle* was supposed to be a sequel to *Mancoske*. *Mancoske* was Lucasfilm Games' first game as publisher instead of developer, the game which developed the basic toolset for their successful series of graphic adventures (the SCUMM game engine is an acronym for Story Creation Utility for *Mancoske*), and the inspiration for a cable television series of the same name. Today *Day of the Tentacle* is better known and better loved than the game that spawned LucasArts' successful string of graphic adventure games.



FRONT PAGE SPORTS FOOTBALL PRO

SIERRA/DYNAMIX 1993

From its inception, *Front Page Sports Football Pro* (FPSFP) has offered the best computer football game graphics possible with 3-D perspectives, a rich color palette and flashy replay features. Project leader Patrick Cook had discovered the value of crisp, vibrant graphics in his earlier tenure with Cinemaware's *TV Sports* series of games, and he used that to give FPSFP the right look and feel to capture the loyalty of thousands of computer football fans. With the first FPSFP edition, he founded a dynasty where those same fans plunk down their hard-earned cash for virtual season tickets year after year, as updates of the great system come along. In addition to the appeal of great graphics, FPSFP brought authentic player/team statistics to the table, allowing gamers to play as general manager and handle personnel management decisions from drafts through trades, lineups and injuries. FPSFP also offered the ability to design custom plays/playbooks and provide for league play with custom coaching profiles for AI coaches. Some computer football games offer better stat models and some console football games offer better action, but when most gamers think of computer football, they automatically think of *Front Page Sports Football Pro*.



Modern Inductees

Inductees Prior To 1989

BATTLE CHIEF (Interplay Productions, 1988)
CRASHMASTER (The Software Toolworks, 1986)
EARL WAGON BASKETBALL (Electronic Arts, 1985)
EMERGE (Interstel, 1978)
F-19 Stealth Fighter (MicroProse, 1988)
GETTYSBORO: THE TURNING POINT (SSI, 1985)
KAMPFRUNNE (Strategic Simulations, 1985)
MUCH BRAGGANCE (Strategic Simulations, 1985)
NIght & Magic (New World Computing, 1986)
M.U.L.E. (Electronic Arts, 1983)
PIRATES (MicroProse, 1987)
SanDiego (Maxis, 1987)
SAMURAI (Electronic Arts, 1986)
THE KING'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)

FALCON 3.0
 (Spectrum HoloByte, 1991)

GENSHIP
 (MicroProse, 1989)

HARPOON
 (Three-Sixty Pacific, 1989)

KING'S QUEST V
 (Sierra On-Line, 1990)

LEWINGS
 (Psychosis, 1991)

LINKS 386 Pro
 (Access Software, 1992)

M-1 TANK PLATOON
 (MicroProse, 1989)

RAILROAD TYCOON
 (MicroProse, 1990)

RED BARRON
 (Dynamix, 1990)

SO MIKE'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)

Computer game programs have grown so massive and the number of hardware configurations has become so huge that incompatibilities and glitches are frustratingly common.

Advanced Civilization V1.01

Update: Fixes many small problems and the Windows 95 city construction problem. 11/29/95

Apache Update: Addresses problems with the preferences screen and with invisible mode. This patch does not address the modem problems. 10/24/95

Buried in Time Update: Includes new 16-bit Windows executables, fixes the exploding well problem in Charlos Gallard and the Alien Highway lockup; portions have also been enhanced for better performance. 10/11/95

CivNet Update: Fixes several reported problems. 12/8/95

Command & Conquer V1.18P Patch: Includes fixes for all known bugs to date and some game balance changes. 11/27/95

Crusader: No Remorse V1.21 Update: Includes several new features and fixes. 12/22/95

Dungeon Master 2 Sound Fix: Patches both the demo and the retail version. 7/29/95

First Encounters V1.06 Update (English CD Version): Fixes reported bugs. 12/6/95

Flight Commander 2 V1.04 Update: Fixes some reported errors. 10/11/95

Flight Unlimited V2.0: Contains two physics fixes, two video fixes, fixes a couple of controller bugs, a mouse driver problem, and adds total energy com-

parison to the Grob's vanometer. 8/30/95

Hardball 5 vs.12 Update: Fixes errant force-outs, problems preventing customized stat selections. 12/5/95

Heroes of Might and Magic V1.2 Update: Fixes some problems with connecting via modem and some random crash problems. 10/24/95

Hive Update: Makes the game easier. 12/4/95

MechWarrior 2 DOS Version V1.1 Update: Fixes several things, including the right side taking more damage on mechs, increased joystick support and Windows 95 crash problems. 11/20/95

NHL 96 Update: Fixes a variety of technical problems, including playoff lock-ups or problems with saving playoff games to hard disk. 12/2/95

PBA Bowling for Windows V1.10: Incorporates several fixes and improvements. 12/27/95

Road From Sumter to Appomattox Update: Corrects retreat rule problems, allows confederate recruiting in Kentucky and Missouri. 12/8/95

Rebel Assault for Macintosh Update: Helps correct random lockups, also provides native support for Power Macs. 11/24/95

Riddle of Master Lu Update: Removes the 100 room limitation which causes the "Fatal Error" and

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. **Red indicates new files.**

others near the end of the game. This patch will work with your current saved games. 10/27/95

Steel Panthers V1.1 Update: Corrects several reported bugs. 10/23/95

Stonekeep V1.1 Update: Fixes reported bugs. 12/23/95

Su-27 New and Revised Missions: Contains revisions to several of the training missions, and additional six "Armiership" missions. 12/21/95

Tigers on the Prowl V1.26: 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 Deluxe V2.2.4: Fixes multiple problems. 11/10/95



ZDNet

These patches can usually be downloaded from the major on-line networks (CompuServe, GEnie, ZDNet) and Computer Gaming World's Web Site (<http://www.zdnet.com/~gaming/>), but can also be obtained from individual software publisher's BBSs or direct from the publisher with proof of purchase.

Publisher BBS Numbers

Many of these patches are available directly from the publishers' bulletin board systems. Call with your modem parity settings at N-B-1.

Accolade (408) 296-8900

Apogee (508) 368-7036

Bethesda (301) 990-7562

Blizzard (714) 556-4602

Broderbund (415) 883-5889

Capstone (305) 374-6872

Creative Labs (405) 742-6860

Id Software (508) 368-4137

Impressions (617) 225-2042

InterPlay (714) 252-2822

LucasArts (415) 257-3070

Maxis (510) 254-3869

MicroProse (410) 785-1841

Microsoft (206) 938-6735

Novalogic (818) 774-9528

Origin (512) 328-8402

Papyrus (617) 576-7472

Sierra Online (206) 644-0112

Spectrum HoloByte (510) 522-8909

SSI (408) 739-6137 or (408) 739-6623

Virgin Interactive (714) 833-3305



You've read our take on the latest games, now here's a chance to see what your fellow gamers think. The CG Top 100 is a monthly tally of game ratings provided by our readers via the CG Poll ballot found in each issue. Approximately 50 games are rated 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.

TOP ACTION GAMES

RANK	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	DOOM	id Software	10.24
2	Crusader: No Remorse	Origin	10.01
3	DOOM II	id Software	9.77
4	Dark Forces	LucasArts	9.70
5	Virtual Pool	Interplay	9.52
6	Magic Carpet	Electronic Arts	9.48
7	System Shock	Origin	9.19
8	The Need For Speed	Electronic Arts	9.12
9	Hercules	id Software	9.08
10	Martial Kombat 3	GT Interactive	8.89

TOP ADVENTURE GAMES

RANK	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Full Throttle	LucasArts	9.44
2	Gabriel Knight	Sierra	9.42
3	Sam & Max Hit The Road	LucasArts	9.38
4	Woodruff & Schribbic	Sierra	9.28
5	Reckless	Electronic Arts	9.12
6	Ecstasiea	Pygnosis	9.09
7	Under A Killing Moon	Access	9.04
8	Legend of Kyrandia 3	Virgin	8.94
9	Phantasmagoria	Sierra	8.91
10	Riddle of Master Lu	Sanctuary Woods	8.88

TOP CLASSIC/PUZZLE GAMES

RANK	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Incredible Years	Dynemic	8.86
2	Incredible Machine 2	Sierra	8.85
3	Zig Zag	QOP	8.29
4	Clockwork	Spectrum Holobyte	8.25
5	Had 'n' Pod!	Virgin	8.18
6	Power Poker	Electronic Arts	7.83
7	Shogun: Greatest Moments	Activision	7.78
8	Learnings Chronicles	Pygnosis	7.47
9	Multimedia Celebrity Poker	New World Computing	7.28
10	Bridge Olympiad	QOP	7.28

TOP SIMULATION/SPACE COMBAT GAMES

RANK	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Wing Commander 3	Origin	10.57
2	TIE Fighter	LucasArts	10.28
3	MechWarrior 2	Adrenalin	10.10
4	NASCAR Racing	Papyrus	10.01
5	U.S. Marine Fighters	Electronic Arts	9.86
6	U.S. Navy Fighters	Electronic Arts	9.60
7	Wings of Glory	Origin	9.50
8	Flight Unlimited	Looking Glass	9.51
9	Indy Car Racing	Papyrus	9.43
10	Aces of the Deep	Dynemic	9.38

TOP SPORTS GAMES

RANK	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	NBA Live '95	Electronic Arts	9.86
2	NHL Hockey	EA	9.86
3	Front Page Sports Football '95	Sierra	9.64
4	PGA Tour Golf '95	Electronic Arts	9.63
5	Front Page Sports Baseball	Dynemic	8.70
6	Hardball '5	Acadsoft	8.72
7	Hardball IV	Acadsoft	8.70
8	Tony LaRussa 3	SSI	8.12
9	Rugby World Cup 1995	Electronic Arts	7.91
10	Ultimate Football '95	MicroProse	7.75

TOP STRATEGY GAMES

RANK	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Warcraft II	Bizzard	10.50
2	X-COM	MicroProse	10.37
3	Command & Conquer	Virgin	10.01
4	Heroes of Might & Magic	New World Computing	9.85
5	Jagged Alliance	Si-Tech	9.81
6	Warlords II Deluxe	SSI	9.79
7	Master of Magic	MicroProse	9.66
8	Warcraft	Bizzard	9.64
9	X-COM: Terror from the Deep	MicroProse	9.38
10	Merchant Prince	QOP	9.06

TOP ROLE PLAYING GAMES

RANK	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Arvid of Dawn	New World Computing	9.15
2	Night & Magic: Claws of Xen	New World Computing	9.07
3	Ravenshit: Stone Prophet	SSI	8.58
4	Azura: The Elder Scrolls	Bethesda	8.63
5	Well	Sanctuary Woods	8.64
6	Stonekeep	Interplay	8.45
7	Menzoberranzan	SSI	8.25
8	Ravenloft	SSI	8.15
9	Morder	TOA	8.00
10	Dark Sun: Wars of the Ravager	SSI	7.64

TOP WARGAMES

RANK	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Panzer General	SSI	10.46
2	Steel Panthers	SSI	10.46
3	Rise of the West	RAW	9.63
4	Flight Commander 2 Win Blkr	Avalon Hill	9.48
5	Stalingrad	Avalon Hill	9.38
6	Operational Crusader	Avalon Hill	9.36
7	Flight Commander 2	Avalon Hill	9.36
8	Custer's Last Command	Invisible Simulations	9.12
9	Telex	SSI	9.00
10	Tigers on the Prowl	HPS Simulations	8.97

Reader Poll #100

	GAME	COMPANY	TYPE	SCORE
★ 1	Warcraft II	Bizzard	ST	10.60
★ 2	Wing Commander 3	Origin	SI	10.57
★ 3	Steel Panthers	SSI	WG	12.46
★	Parzer General	SSI	WG	15.46
5	X-COM	MicroProse	ST	16.37
6	TIE Fighter	LucasArts	SI	10.26
★ 7	DOOM	id Software	AC	10.24
8	MechWarrior 2	Activision	SI	10.10
9	Commander Keen Remorse	Origin	AC	10.01
	Command & Conquer	Virgin	ST	10.01
	MASCAR Racing	Papyrus	SI	10.01
★ 12	RIIIGG	EA	SP	9.86
	U.S. Marine Fighters	Electronic Arts	SI	9.86
★	NBA Live '95	Electronic Arts	SP	9.86
15	Heroes of Might & Magic	New World Computing	ST	9.85
16	Jagged Alliance	Sir-Tech	ST	9.81
17	Warlords II Deluxe	SSI	ST	9.79
18	DOOM II	id Software	AC	9.77
19	Dark Forces	LucasArts	AC	9.70
20	Master of Magic	MicroProse	ST	9.66
21	Front Page Sports Football '95	Sierra	SP	9.64
	Warcraft	Bizzard	ST	9.64
23	Rise of the West	RAW	WG	9.63
24	U.S. Navy Fighters	Electronic Arts	SI	9.60
25	Wings of Glory	Origin	SI	9.56
26	Virtual Pool	Interplay	AC	9.52
27	Flight Unlimited	Looking Glass	SI	9.51
28	Flight Commander 2 Use 84r	Avalon Hill	WG	9.48
	Magic Carpet	Electronic Arts	AC	9.48
★ 30	Full Throttle	LucasArts	AD	9.44
31	Indy Car Racing	Papyrus	SI	9.43
32	Gabriel Knight	Sierra	AD	9.42
33	Stalingrad	Avalon Hill	WG	9.38
	X-COM: Terror from the Deep	MicroProse	ST	9.38
	Aces of the Deep	Dynamix	SI	9.38
36	Operation Crusader	Avalon Hill	WG	9.36
37	Flight Commander 2	Avalon Hill	WG	9.35
38	Sam & Max Hit The Road	LucasArts	AD	9.33
39	Woodruff & Schibille	Sierra	AD	9.28
40	Fleet Defender	MicroProse	SI	9.25
41	System Shock	Origin	AC	9.19
★ 42	Avail of Daves	New World Computing	RP	9.15
43	Custer's Last Command	Incredible Simulations	WG	9.12
	The Need For Speed	Electronic Arts	AC	9.12
	Relentless	Electronic Arts	AD	9.12
46	Ecstasica	Phygon	AD	9.03
47	Merchant Prince	CCP	ST	9.03
	Neretic	id Software	AC	9.03
49	Might & Magic: Clouds of Xeen	New World Computing	RP	9.02
50	Under A Killing Moon	Access	AD	9.04

	GAME	COMPANY	TYPE	SCORE
51	Caesar II	Sierra	ST	8.99
	Tanks	SSI	WG	9.03
	VGA Planets	Tim Wozeman	ST	9.03
54	Ravenloft: Stone Prophet	SSI	RP	8.98
55	Tigers on the Prowl	HPS Simulations	WG	8.97
56	The Grandest Fleet	CCP	ST	8.96
	Perfect General II	CCP	WG	8.96
58	Legend of Kyrandia 3	Virgin	AD	8.94
	Transport Tycoon	MicroProse	ST	8.94
60	PGA Tour Golf 486	Electronic Arts	SP	8.93
61	Phantasmagoria	Sierra	AD	8.91
62	Mortal Kombat 3	GI Interactive	AC	8.89
63	Riddle of Master Lu	Sanctuary Woods	AD	8.88
64	Descent	Interplay	AC	8.86
★	Incredible Years	Dynamix	CP	8.86
66	Incredible Machine 2	Sierra	CP	8.85
67	Hexen	Raven Software	AC	8.84
	Warset	Spectrum Holobyte	SI	8.84
69	Arms: The Elder Scrolls	Bethesda	RP	8.83
70	Carriers of War II	SSI	WG	8.82
71	Serf City	SSI	ST	8.80
72	Harpoon II	Three-Sky Pacific	WG	8.78
73	Front Page Sports Baseball	Dynamix	SP	8.76
74	Star Trek: TNG, Final Unity	Spectrum Holobyte	AD	8.75
75	Geophis Khan II	Koei	WG	8.74
76	Hardball 5	Accolade	SP	8.72
	1830	Avalon Hill	ST	8.72
78	Hardball IV	Accolade	SP	8.70
79	Buried in Time	Sanctuary Woods	AD	8.65
80	Wolf	Sanctuary Woods	RP	8.64
	King's Quest VII	Sierra	AD	8.64
82	Superheroes of Neboken	Legend	AD	8.62
83	1942 Pacific Air War Gold	MicroProse	SI	8.61
84	Magic Carpet 2	EA	AC	8.51
85	Apache	Interactive Magic	SI	8.50
	Warcross vs. Comanche	NovLogic	SI	8.50
	The Horde	Crystal Dynamics	AC,ST	8.50
	Death Gate	Legend	AD	8.50
89	Star Trek: Judgment Rites	Interplay	AD	8.49
90	FX Fighter	GTE Entertainment	AC	8.48
91	1942 Pacific Air War	MicroProse	SI	8.45
	Stonekeep	Interplay	RP	8.45
93	Dark Legions	SSI	AC	8.43
94	Lords of the Realm	Impressions	ST	8.42
95	Six City CD ROM	Interplay	ST	8.40
96	Cybermania	Accolade	AC	8.37
97	Rebel Assault	LucasArts	AC	8.35
	Hand Of Fate	Westwood Studios	AD	8.35
99	Ledemaster	Dynamix	ST	8.31
100	Renaissance Three Kingdoms III	Koei	ST	8.29

Games on unnumbered lines have scores equal to the line above. ★ = Top game of type. Red = New Game. AD = Adventure, RP = Role Playing, SI = Simulation/Space Combat, ST = Strategy, WG = Wargame, AC = Action, SP = Sports, CP = Classic/Puzzle. Games are re-rated after two years and become eligible for the Hall of Fame.

What's the Deal With... Reviewing?

By Martin E. Cirulli

It's the day after New Year's as I write this. While the hangover finally fades, and the last of the holiday visits become merely chaotic memories, I have time to ponder a conversation that came up a least a half dozen times over the past couple of weeks.

You all know how the holidays are. You end up at endless little gatherings talking to people you haven't seen since last Christmas (at least). The usual topics come up: "How are the kids?" "Cold enough for you?" and, inevitably, "How's work?" Well, when you write for a living, the work question gets a little complicated, but eventually I mention that one of my gigs is reviewing computer games. Now, if I'm talking to someone familiar with our odd little hobby, their expression is one of unconcealed lust and envy, and usually followed by, "Free games...cool! I wish I could get a job like that."

In the spirit of the holidays, I usually smile back and say something humble and encouraging, instead of cackling madly while I count off the number of copies of *MechWarrior 2* I've received. But after a few of these exchanges and some of the more glib on-line comments I've been reading of late, I've

begun to wonder if maybe somebody shouldn't clear up what this whole deal is about and point out that it isn't a bed of virtual roses.

Now, don't get me wrong, reviewing isn't exactly like getting up at 6 a.m. to dig ditches or lug forty-pound boxes of paper around a warehouse. It's pretty sweet for the most part—but it has tedium and agonies all its own.

I won't even bother getting into the actual writing; I'll just leave hopefuls out there with the thought that spending countless hours playing games gives you the background knowledge to do the job. But it helps to have spent countless hours reading, everything from cereal boxes to Asimov to Shakespeare, if you want to be able to write about what you know in a way that will keep somebody awake.

And of course, there is the sheer work of playing a game from beginning to end in just two or three weeks. Yes, I said "work." Oh, I can hear you snorting out there, but think about it for a moment: The time I spend on a *Command & Conquer* is a treat, but imagine, for a moment, having to put the same time into the likes of *TexNia* or the first version of *Overport*.

But the highest price to pay for doing this job professionally is that it takes some of the fun out of the

whole thing. You eventually lose your ability to play something just for the heck of it without a part of your brain noting the pros and cons. Like a musician who can't

“Free games...cool! I wish I could get a job like that.”

turn off their critical ear for a night of clubbing, you can't have a simple opinion about a game. "This sucks" is okay when you're a lucky consumer, but when you have to have a half-dozen reasons for every feeling about a game, just in case some rabid PR Rep cries "Toul," it takes the simple pleasure out of things.

Of course, this kind of noble sacrifice of gaming pleasure and hard-earned writing skill feels completely wasted the first time you come across some Netwit going on and on about how a magazine you've

written for is pointless to read, because "we all know that the reviews are slanted toward big companies/advertisers." Apart from how incredibly insulting that sort of twaddle is, it is ironic beyond belief. Not only have I never had the gist of a review tinkered with by any Editor I have worked for (in *CGW* or others), but the only time I have been tempted to "go easy" on a game is when it is from a small company. I honestly feel bad when I know I am about to do harm to a small software house—a house that probably tried its best, with limited resources—by telling the public that only a demented Yek would enjoy their game. If that's the truth, then I have no choice but to give you folks the bottom line. Sometimes that doesn't make it feel any better.

I'm sure most of you are not in tears over the plight of the computer game reviewer, but as you go through the scads of critical, accurate and sometimes even entertaining reviews you find month after month between these pages, spare the odd thought for the writers. Sure it's cool, but it's not all just free games. ☹



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