

The #1 Computer Game Magazine

# Computer Gaming

World



AUGUST 1996  
NO. 145  
\$7.99 USA, \$7.99 Canada

Star Trek  
Deep Space 9  
page 130

The Best New  
Games  
Coming  
For  
Fall

100+  
New  
Games

Plus:  
In-depth  
Reviews

- ▶ Strife
- ▶ TacOps
- ▶ Assault Rigs
- ▶ Zork Nemesis
- ▶ Total Mayhem
- ▶ Gateway Destination
- ▶ Battleground: Waterloo



**Have you cleared the  
streets of Los Angeles yet?**

**Did you tip the exotic dancers  
or did you blow a few away?**

**WHAT?!**

**You haven't played it yet??**

## WHY IS DUKE NUKEM 3D THE BEST?

Even running in super crisp 800x600 SVGA it bleeds along faster than every other comparable 3D PC title. It's not pure speed at the expense of versatility either - it is possible to look up, down, or sideways at any time, with the hittripped scenery undergoing minimal deformation and no speed loss whatsoever. The engine also caters for full interaction, so bullets leave pock marks on walls, enemy's blood drips down crates and earthquakes cause huge sections to shift atop each other, thereby granting access to new locations. It all contributes to the feeling of being enclosed within a grim world as opposed to wandering through impenetrable, sterile corridors. The effect is hugely rewarding and is surely the direction in which such games should be heading.

This potential has luckily been exploited too. So often games fail to capitalize on excellent technologies but each of Duke Nukem's levels are noticeably different, being packed with huge ramps, drops, lifts, jumps and cunningly hidden secret areas. None look the same (indeed there is often a significant variation within a single building) and there is always a feeling that there is a new trick round the next corner. — *Edge Magazine*



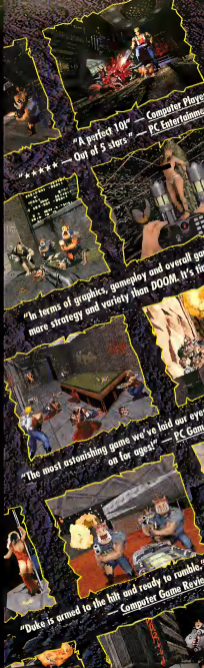
# DUKE NUKEM 3D



CD-ROM (3D REALMS) • WorldWideWeb (<http://www.3drealms.com>) • AGI (Raytraced 3D REALMS)

Mature Players, Violence and Adult Themes

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Computer Player  
PC Entertainment  
"A perfect 10"  
Out of 5 stars

"In terms of graphics, gameplay and overall game  
more strategy and variety than DOOM. It's the

"The most astonishing game we've laid our eyes  
on for ages!" — PC Gamer

"Duke is armed to the hilt and ready to rumble."  
— Computer Games Review

# Well, what are you waiting for?

"The design, Duke is better than DOOM. The modem/network play is far better and allows me to make way for the Duke." — Computer Player

WINNER OF  
"GAME OF SHOW"



"Duke Nukem 3D truly looks like a 3D supermodel of a game: sleek, sexy, and gory with lead-thrashing action." — Strategy Plus

"The BFG was a pop-gun. (It's) got nothing on the sophisticated hi-tech weaponry of Duke Nukem's disposal." — Computer Gaming World

"DOOM IS DEAD — long live Duke Nukem 3D, could this be the greatest PC shoot'em-up ever?" — X-GEN



ALSO SUPPORTS TEN



# DUKE NUKEM 3D

*"COME GET SOME!"*

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# Game of the Year.



**#1 Selling PC Game**, Jan-April 1996 PC Data Report • **Game of the Year**, PC Gamer • **Multiplayer Game of the Year**, PC Gamer • **Golden Triad Award**, Computer Game Review • **Game of the Year**, Computer Gaming World Readers' Choice • **Best On-line Game**, C/NET



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# Computer Gaming

World

ZD

FEATURES

## 47 Cover Story: Big Game Hunt

**S**trap on your pith helmet and hop in the CGW

Jeep as we track down the hottest new games on the plain. In this 24-page feature, we focus in on the best new titles in each category, plus online games, hardware and peripherals. If you've heard the far-off drumbeat, and it stirred the primal hunter in your soul, then polish off that pitcher of G&T's, sahib, and go bag some trophies.

# 100+ New Games

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IN IT FOR YA.**



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men step off Omaha Beach and it don't let up 'til they've taken Saint-Lô. Troops, terrain, situations – if you want to get any more accurate, you'll have to shave your head.

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To experience Close Combat visit your nearest recruiter or head straight for the battlefield at <http://www.microsoft.com/games/kickbutt/>

**Microsoft**

WHERE DO YOU WANT TO GO TODAY?

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### Elliott "Gunboy" Chin

is the editor responsible for the Action and Strategy sections in CGW. A huge fan of Civ, Civ II, Warcraft II, and side-scrolling lightning games, his latest obsession is spanking his colleagues in Duke: DeathMatches. Gunboy is also an RPG

fanatic, and has been playing *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* for over ten years. Never a great CRPG fan, he has recently been lured to desktop role-playing by the sweet alpha of Blizzard's *Duelo*. Now he's crawling through diabolical dungeons, dragging space soldiers and commanding lovable, destructive Qucs. He definitely loves his job.



**Charles Arday**, the billing and creative Contributing Editor for Interactive Fiction, is affectionately known at CGW headquarters as "a good read." Often controversial and always enjoyable,

Charles' ability to entertain while scandalizing makes him one of our most heavily relied upon, and greatly anticipated authorities in

the computer gaming industry. He is a member of the Horror Writers Association, and has had his short stories published in *Elery Queen's Mystery Magazine* and other pulp magazines. But not all of his work for the Master of Quip. For a good time he retreats to the respectable world of business and functions as the President of Juno, a free e-mail service located at <http://www.juno.com>.



**Gordon Gobie**, a confessed sports junkie, is an aficionado of relief festing simulations of all kinds. When he's not crusing the Net to get scoring updates for his hockey pool, Gordon

is busy hot-wiring his Pentium to run the latest racing simulators and sports games. Formerly an agent for a professional auto rac-

ing team, he now runs his own one-man desktop publishing business in Vancouver, B.C. He got hooked on computer racing with *Indyrunner 500*, and since then has continued a relentless pursuit of authenticity over flash in his pursuit of the ultimate digital sports experience. If it weren't for Papyrus, Electronic Arts and MicroPose, he would probably be spending all of his free time at the tennis courts of gym.



**Martin Cirulis** is, by his own admission, "a grumpy old gamer," who also hails from the Great White North in Vancouver, B.C., and has recently joined the Pentium Class of computer gaming.

For several years he has been a regular contributor of game reviews for CGW, and last

year, began writing the popular, "What's the Deal With..." editorial column. In the distant past, he was indoctrinated in the arcane computing arts but has turned his back on them in the name of Science Fiction literature, which he tries to write when he isn't knee-deep in games to review or the daily duties of being a husband and father.



**Jack Rodrigues** is a stealthy weapon in the CGW arsenal. A talented graphic artist with a knack for seamlessly grafting heads onto disparate bodies (e.g., Elvira), Jack is a hard-core gamer

who traces his roots to text adventures on the Apple II. He got hooked on flight sims with Sid Meier's *Helix Ace*, which led him to *Flysim Simulator*, F-15 *Strike Eagle*, *Gunship and Falcon*. His interest in fixed-wing and rotary flight sims comes as no surprise, since he served as a crew chief on CH-46 *Sea Knight*

troop helicopters in the Marine Corps. Accordingly, he's logging lots of hours with *Avonic Loxdown*, but he's also playing *Terra Nova*, *Starwrecker* and *Quake*, while eagerly awaiting *Fishmeo Fuzoris*. Back to *Banano*, *Duelo* and *Return to Khoros* (who?). Both hardware- and software-literate, Jack spends the remainder of his off hours scouring newsgroups and posting messages about technology and gaming. Trouble is, the guy's so knowledgeable he can argue any side of an issue, and often does, which can turn even an off-hand remark into a marathon debate. But that's what makes him a CGW mind of gay

# Computer Gaming World

CG 10

AUGUST 1998

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## SUBSCRIPTION INQUIRIES/ADVERTISING CHANGES

For subscription price questions, address changes or ordering information, call (800) 655-6333 or the (415) 357-4935 ext. 310. U.S. and Canada: 48 issues/issue less \$49.95/48 \$49.95 in the U.S. and Canada, 48 issues/Computer Gaming, PO Box 31167, Boulder, CO 80521-9138. The subscription rate is \$77.94 for one year (12 issues). Canada and all other countries add \$16.00 postage. Annual subscription rates are \$78 per year. Canadian GST registration number is R124265220. Payment must be in U.S. dollars made by check or money order drawn upon a U.S. bank. Visa, MasterCard, AMEX accepted.

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**W**hat's on the business end of my laser this month? What kind of a bent system do you rate games with? What do

you think you are, journalists? Why did you say one of your editors was, "She Who Must Be Obeyed"?



## What's On The CD?

Follow our safari guides as they take you into the bush to hunt Big Games. In this month's CG-ROM, we feature a behind-the-scenes look at upcoming targets from LucasArts, Westwood Studios,SSI, Electronic Arts, Legend Entertainment, MicroProse, Microsoft and many more. Our artists and editors take the best features of multimedia and bastardize them to tell you what's hot and what's hype.

Then, light a candle and settle back in your tent for this month's game demos. You'll find Spectrum HoBo's user-friendly Top Gun: Fire At Will; Kesmai's online, multiplayer air-combat game, Air Warrior 2; Domark's Crusader knock-off, Total Warfare, and Mindscape's action-packed MEGAROCK 2. For a more calculating experience, try Blue Byte's sequel to the strategy game Star City, The Settlers 2.

And now, a message from the doctor: if games with SVGA graphics leave you cross-eyed, the prescription might just be Display Doctor 5.2. The latest version of Softech's popular Universal VESA driver is available here in shareware

form (exclusive for our disc). Or maybe your problem is less technical than gameplay-oriented. If so, Jason Stroutman has graciously donated a few rounds of his Universal Hint System to free you from the snare.

game within any genre by clicking once on the "Next" button, or exit the feature entirely by clicking on the "Back" button twice.

## How Do I Play The Demos?

To view the demos, first click on EDITORS' HOT PICKS or PRODUCT DEMOS button. Next, click on your favorite genre: Action, Adventure, Classic, Strategy, Wargames, or Music then click on the title of your interest. Each demo has instructions for its installation.



## How Do I Use It?

Our CD is a Windows program. If you have Windows 95, installation is simple: the CD is AutoPlay enabled. Just "Lock 'n' load." Otherwise, from Windows 3.x, pop the CD into your drive, select RUN from the Program Manager's menu and type O:RUN-ME (where O is the letter of your CD-ROM drive) to run it straight from the CD. Then type D:INSTALL to create a CGW program group on your Windows desktop. If you have installed previous versions of the CG-ROM, this disk will use the program group already on your desk-

## How Do I Get The Patch Files?

Click on PATCHES under the CGW FEATURES and then read the text window with instructions on copying the files to your hard drive. You also may access the patches from your DOS prompt by typing D:\PATCHES (where O is the letter of your CD-ROM drive) and copy them directly from there to your hard drive. We strongly recommend that you back up any previously saved games before installing a patch as this may write over your existing program.

## How Do I Get The CG-ROM?

Newsstand issues come in two varieties: some with and some without the CD. Each type is clearly marked. If you can't find the version you want in the store you frequent, encourage your retailer to carry it (or subscribe to ensure you get a CD every month). To subscribe, simply call 303-685-6930, and specify that you want the CD-ROM version.




top. Point and click to navigate around the CD, just as you would in any other Windows program. You can access any of the regular items (such as Product Demos or Patches) by simply clicking on its corresponding button. Within the feature, you may skip to the next

# LAB MONKEYS

choose to stimulate their pleasure centers at the exclusion of food, water, sleep, and sex.

They're monkeys.

## WHAT'S YOUR EXCUSE?



**BUNGIE** introduces *Marathon 2: Durandal*, the highly addictive game for Windows® 95 that will leave you poor, hungry, naked, and cold. Within the ruins of an ancient civilization, you'll uncover long-buried secrets of a lost clan and use sophisticated weapons to battle nasty aliens. Take pleasure in 28 game levels that will churn your brain into foamy gray froth. The SVGA 3-D graphics and active stereo imaging don't suck either. And 13 levels of intense network play may cause you to wet yourself. Not that you'll care, monkey boy. **MARATHON 2: DURANDAL: HOW WILL IT RUIN YOUR LIFE?**

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**MARATHON 2**  
D U R A N D A L

## 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, Risk, 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: SHOGUN, Tetris and Zix-Zag.

**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/quests outside the main storyline.

**Simulations (SI):** 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 (FRONT PAGE SPORTS 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, Outpost, MOO), as well as "pure" strategy games and "software toys" such as SimCity.

**Warjames (WG):** A subset of

strategy games, these recreate historical conflicts from a command perspective. They may be tactical, operational, or strategic, and stress anything from logistics and firepower to morale and leadership. They may be simple (PACON GENERAL, Empire II) to incredibly detailed and complex (PACON Waa).

## 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 complementarily 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 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 several ways. 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—you should think long and hard before buying it.



### Abysmal:

The rare game that gets it all wrong. This is reserved for those products so buggy, ill-conceived or valueless that you wonder why they were ever released in the first place.

# The Beast Within™ Game of the Year

Computer Gaming World

## AWARDS

1996 Game of the Year

Computer Gaming World

Editor's Choice

PC Gamer

Golden Triad Award

Computer Game Review

Adventure Game of the Year

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games released this year,

Computer Gaming World has awarded **The Beast Within™** the coveted **Game of the Year** award

for 1996. As with its popular predecessor, **Gabriel Knight: Sins of the Fathers®** (winner of the

CGW 1994 **Game of the Year** award), Jane Jensen has created

a terrifying masterpiece of suspense and horror.



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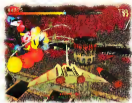
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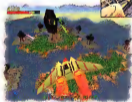
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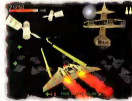
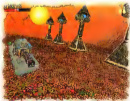


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## "Stellar!"

— Next Generation, March 1996



# The Future Of Gaming

## Are Computer Games Here To Stay?

**I**t's always dangerous to speculate on the future, especially when you're dealing with intelligent readers who tend to have long memories. Still, I have to address this subject, because lots of people, for whom I have the greatest respect, believe that the computer game industry is creatively dead. They believe that the MOTS (More Or The Same) themes of the latest Electronic Entertainment Exposition in Los Angeles loudly proclaimed the death knell for the industry. Of course, I have little to lose in addressing this subject. If I'm right, I won't be writing this column in the ten years or so when my visions might or might not come true. If I'm wrong, you'll have a hard time figuring out where to send the letter to the editor.

Frankly, I believe that the latest E3 show does sound a warning for the industry. The hottest games at the show seemed to be merely the games of a decade ago with better graphics and sound. New technologies are used to rehash old concepts rather than to explore new ones. That's not always bad, but it sure reduces the opportunities for fresh perspectives. After all, there are only so many tricks you can use to enhance on-screen blood and only so many camera

angles with which to view decapitation.

### CONNECTION

Fortunately, I am an optimist. I still feel like computer games will permeate our lives in the future. Like Douglas Adams' supernatural private eye, Dirk Gently, I believe in the connectedness of all things. I particularly believe in the connectedness of all things electronic and I think they will bind us to each other in the future. I still expect to see the time where there will be multiple CPUs (of varying vintages and capabilities) in the home and they will all connect to the stereo, television, satellite dish, home appliances, and home security, as necessary. Essentially, home LANs connected to a cable modem which, in turn, connects them to the Web.

With the cable television connection, casual gamers will watch televised sports events as they watch live updates of their fantasy team records and compare their team side-by-side with their neighbors in a window on the television screen/monitor. Or, they could play a simulation of the game at the same time it is going on. As an added bonus, a smart search agent could go online, automatically find all of the televised highlights relating to their players, and give them their own highlights reel of their fantasy team every night

“ Shortly after 2005, interactive entertainment will reach parity with other entertainment forms in both prestige and revenue. ”

before bedtime or every morning at breakfast.

I also imagine gamers watching televised reviews of computer games or viewing interviews with game designers like Sid Meier, Chris Roberts or Lord British. With a touch of a button, they could order the game downloaded; join a multiplayer version of a game in progress; or send that smart search agent to find an online

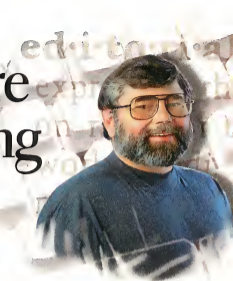
opponent for them at a moment's notice. All would be done without interrupting the television picture because of the cable modem's superior bandwidth on the downlink.

### VISION

I also envision 3D glasses as such an inexpensive VR peripheral that every family should be able to own several. Virtual I/O already offers lightweight glasses that are very close to my ideal. The resolution is getting better every year and I hope the price will, too. At current prices, they are a high end peripheral for flight-sim fanatics and add considerably to the richness of the gaming experience. I loved flying EF2000 with them. Yet, imagine flying the next generation EF2000 while wearing your VR glasses while you fly head-to-head against your son, daughter or friend while they wear their own VR glasses. It should be awesome.

### SIMULACRON

I also think that the games of the future will rely upon synthetic actors. It is theoretically possible to





# WWII Grand Strategy Game

# THIRD REICH

PC



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film actors and actresses using all the phonemes and a variety of facial expressions. Next, a body double or stunt man or woman can tape all of the basic moves using motion capture technology. From the latter, animators can build a working 3D body model and use the former as a filmed texture map over the top of the model. In this way, program algorithms can direct synthetic actors to respond to any given situation as the gamer desires. So, every conceivable scene won't have to be filmed in

“Future gamers will wear goggles and thrust peripherals in the air while swashbuckling with villains and monsters.”

advance, but we can have interactive dramas on the low end and more realistic avatars through imaginary worlds on the high end.

Such potential allows for more advanced human interaction than violence and lets gamers establish virtual relationships. As in any art form, these relationships may be based in fictional worlds, based on non-existent situations, and involve imaginary characters, but they are a metaphor for life. They can teach us and sensitize us to new perspectives, cultures and ideals. That's an exciting potential.

## PERIPHERALS

I'm also expecting to see more and more peripherals that will add to our gaming experiences. I know that experiments on 3D mice haven't gone very well, but I still think that the fantasy role-player of tomorrow will enjoy wearing goggles and thrusting his or her 3D mouse through the air while swashbuckling with villains and hacking monsters. We'll see more sports input/output devices to simulate bats, clubs, racquets and sticks. Flight sim fanatics won't be left out either. CH Products is already working on a forced-feedback joystick. Watch for other I/O devices to use forced feedback to simulate everything from race-track physics to space shuttle controls.

## FAST FORWARD

I firmly believe that, shortly after the year 2005, interactive entertainment will be reaching parity with other entertainment industries in terms of both prestige and revenue. Soon after, I believe it will surpass the maturing forms. I also believe that the new technologies upon which I've speculated will offer new opportunities to design computer games that are more than "shooters," more than "hack and slash." And, God willing, I think I'll still be covering it as the grand old man of Computer Gaming World.

Yes, there are times when I find myself getting frustrated at the immaturity of our medium and the lack of creativity that seems visible in today's products. But as I said in comparing the software industry with the film industry in a 1990 interview with *The San Francisco Examiner's* Amge magazine, "We're in the early stages." As we enter this new era of connectivity, we might just have entered the period of the talkies. ☺

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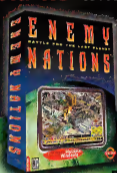
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## THE THIN MAG

Why are CC magazines always thinner in summer and very thick (up to 400 pages) in winter months? And where is the line between Pentium and P5? (Starting at what

speed does it count as a P6?) Does Socket 7 really accept a P6-200P? (Some vendors say it only goes to 180.)

Eric Lee  
Florence, SC

Computer Gaming World is always thinner in the summer because there are less games to write about in the summer. We put out magazines (huge issues) in the winter because most game companies publish the bulk of their products for the holiday season. As for the difference between a Pentium and a Pentium Pro (P6), it isn't merely a matter of speed. There are Pentium processors that run up to 200 MHz and there are fast Pentium Pro processors in the same range. It's not the clock speed that makes a difference. Finally, as for upgrading to a P6 processor, DON'T DO IT! Until we reach the point of true 32-bit gaming, you'll actually be sabotaging your performance instead of enhancing it.

## SOLUTION CONFUSION

CCGW should have a section on solving CD-ROM games in its issues.

John Tupper  
Flintstone City, CA

Actually, we have several sections. As the following letters observe, they are spread throughout the magazine. Look for CC Tips, Scoop's Mail and some of our strategy articles.

I have the cheat codes and helpful hints I had your staff opinions of newly released games very accurate.

Ben Alexander  
Worth, IL

## LETTER OF THE MONTH

## DANGEROUS MISSIVE

With a bewildering admixture of pleasure and confusion—I'm like a mason what don't know which way to quirk—I write to thank you, and your staff and whoever else is willing to take responsibility, for naming my CD-ROM I HAVE NO MOUTH, AND I MUST SCREAM the CC Pioneer Award as Adventure Game of the Year for 1996.

Pleasure, because everybody likes to top the ring as this loop, cartoonish chaps on through Time and Space. Confusion, because—as we both know—I'm an absolute amateur at

acrobatics in your presentation. But someone else who had as much, or more, to do with bringing this project to fruition, who was overlooked as your encomium, is David Mullich. He was the Project



Supervisor and designer after David Sears moved on. He worked endlessly, and with what Belsize called "clean hands and composure" to produce a property that would not shame either of us. If simply would not have been your award had not David

Mullich mounted the barricades.

I remember when I addressed the Computer Game Developers' banquet a couple of years ago, when I said I would walk to the limits of my ability on I HAVE NO MOUTH, but that it would be my one venture into the medium. Nothing has changed. I've been there, done that, and now you won't have to worry about me making a further pest of myself in your living room.

But for the honor you pay me, I am grateful. And bewildered.

Harlan Ellison  
Sherman Oaks, CA

Harlan, that wasn't your phrasing. Of course, in spite of Johnny Wilson's rather premature editorial drifting (I he assured you would blow off the project the many other members have ignored their intellectual properties, but now claims he really likes the taste of crow, thank you), you took the time to participate in the product design. You deserve the recognition for this and we thank you for both the interactive, as well as the finest hours of entertainment with which you've provided us over the years.



Harlan Ellison addresses the Computer Game Developers Conference in 1993, prior to the hostile CGW coverage of his speech.

this exercise. To find myself not only avoiding catcalls and justified laughter at my (no) efforts, but to be recognized with a nod of approval from a magazine that previously chewed a neat, small hole through the front of my face... well, it's bewildering.

David Sears and I worked very hard on I HAVE NO MOUTH. And we both got our

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# SMART GAMES®

I love CC tips. I copy them all into a file for later times and I had out the order forms to all my friends. I tell them to get this mag. I love it. Thanks for a great information source.

Chris Schneider  
Corydon, IN

*Producers, if he didn't think that game magazines were ruining the entire industry by raising expectations for new products of such early dates and contributing to the reputation problem, Peter responded that he thought it would be more of a disservice to artificially constrain*

#### WOE PLAYING

You know what I miss? I miss good role-playing games. Sure, the paper ones still have their magic, but I REALLY miss good RPGs on the computer. It seems to me that over the last couple of years, there has been a serious drought in this genre of game, and I, for one, am sick of it. The crap that they dish out now and try to pass-as CRPGs is simply terrible. I could make a better one than those, and if I had the chance, I would. Another thing I miss in CRPGs is the 3rd view. Most (if not all) computer RPGs are in first person, but I'm sorry. I want to see the character I am playing. Also, ALL of the CRPGs (I am probably exaggerating when I say all), say that the game is very different when played as the different character types, but in most cases, this just isn't true. Many games simply add some puzzles here and take out some there and put this sequence here instead of that one, as if that makes it a new adventure. I am more than certain that if CCW let some of their readers make designs for a game, (tell us how, what we will need and all that jazz) and then have you mail them to interested companies, better games would appear on the market.

And now for another complaint. Games today have become too easy, (at least for me). My average time on any game is 3-5 days. The only game to give me serious trouble was MIST, and that took me three weeks. I have tried in the past to tackle the problem, but most times I get the generic, "Sorry. Nothing we can do. Just a catalog," response from all (just an exaggeration) the companies I questioned about this. I called up and wrote to companies ranging from EA/Origin to Bullfrog to Sierra to Broderbund to Capcom, etc. etc. The closest I ever got was when I

actually got in touch with Al Lowe at Sierra, but even he was apathetic when I addressed him. Another popular excuse was "We are aiming for the mass market." I don't mean to offend anyone (yeah, I do), but the mass market is a bunch of morons, half of who don't even know how to turn a computer on. Games are not designed for mass markets anyway, games are designed for a target audience. And DOOM fans aren't going to be immediately interested in something by Mass (I would like to say one thing for Mass, they actually seemed to care when I called them about this problem) and sim fans won't be quickly captured by DUNE: NOVA 3D. (I'm making generalizations, for I play all kinds of games, but most of my friends don't, so I guess I might be an exception.) The point is, that not only should games be made for a certain genre, but also for a particular degree of difficulty. (lets off to all games with adjustable difficulty settings.)

James R. Knapp  
Boston, MA

#### Separated at Birth?



Cheers' comical Ted Danson and Dark Earth's horridal Guardian of Fire

#### DANSON IN THE DARK

Is it just me, or does the fellow on the cover of CCW #143 (June, 1996) look like Ted Danson of Cheers fame in a really bad mood?

JM  
Montgomery, PA

*It's either just you or Ted found out what Woody Harrelson said about Jim at the end of Doc Hollywood. (Ed: The line was, "That's not a star. That's Ted Danson.")*

#### VAPORWARE PARTY

Vaporware. Vaporware has become more and more of a common occurrence. We just accept it as a fact of life. That's a bunch of bull! We give too much press to projects that are two years out. We have created a monster.

The Vaporware  
Plover, WI

*At the Farnigan Computer Trade Show, a television journalist asked Peter Mahieux, the Managing Director of Bullfrog*

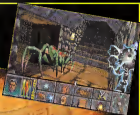
*such information. Besides, he rather liked reading the magazines to see what the other companies were up to. The bottom line, he concluded, was that it was the publisher's responsibility to get the games out. He then apologized for delays on his own DUNGEON KEEPER, but assured readers that it would be a much better game when it came out. We don't deliberately cover games that are two years out, but when you're dealing with potential breakthrough games like STONKREEP, BATTLECRUISER 3000 AD and THE ELDER SCROLLS: DAWGERTALL, the best kind plans of designers and programmers of go onstoy (Ed: We know it reads "...of mice and men of going ayle") in the original, but we didn't want you to go "Huh? Why are they purchasing Robert Binn to answer a letter about vaporware?") Covers want to know what's happening out there and, though we wait may be frustrating, it's better to know what's coming that to wait in the dark.*

#### CORRECTION

*In our July 3D graphics hardware features table, we incorrectly stated that the 3dfx didn't support bilinear filtering. The company's spec sheet indicated it didn't support "bilinear interpolation," because, as it turns out, that term is patented. Instead, the chip supports "advanced interpolation techniques," which is essentially the same thing. Also, our spec sheet referred to "lighting effects," but didn't mention support for source lights (farther than it features, a cheaper method of simulating lighting). Turns out they support source lights as well. We regret any inconvenience these errors may have caused.*



# On August 30<sup>th</sup>...



EMPIRE OF  CATHRELL

# DAGGERFALL

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—Treat Ward, PC Gamer

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—Strategy Plus



Actual IBM artwork shown



Requires CD-ROM



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# New Sony PC Highlights PC Expo

## Toshiba, Panasonic Unveil New DVD CD-ROM Drives

**P**C Expo isn't a game show. Access Software, showing near-final

versions of *Levi's LS* and *The Pandora Directive*, was the only game software developer we saw on the floor when we visited the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center in New York on June 19. Despite the fact that PC Expo is the "anti-E3" (Electronic Entertainment Expo), the show's hardware emphasis meant that there were a number of products of interest to the gamer.

The attention getter at the show was the new PC by Sony line, notable as much for what it doesn't do as for what it does. The Sony VWO PCV-70 and PCV90 aren't Gateway Destination competitors or "consumer appliance" PCs. They don't bring anything new to the technology party, but they do the together leading-edge PC technology with some of the best design work and user-comfort features we've seen yet.

The initial line will sport 166 and 200-MHz Pentium processors, 16 to 32MB of RAM, an ATI 3D Rage video chip with 2MB of video RAM, an 8x CD-ROM, a 28.8Kbps Digital Simultaneous Voice and Data modem with speaker-telephone tea-



tures, and Universal Serial Bus support. Matching 15-in. and 17-in. Trinitron monitors include a built-in speaker and subwoofer set.

What differentiates these PCs are the case design—you can access any component without

tools in this sleek plastic shell—and the software bundle. The VWO Space front end is a high-tech Microsoft Box that doesn't insult your intelligence. You can launch games and applications from this interface, as well as control all the audio-video aspects of the machine. You'll also find a huge bundle of software, including an enhanced Direct 3D version of Activision's *Men of War* 2. Expect Sony to develop titles to take advantage of the units' impressive software MPEG capabilities.

With color-coded ports, easy access, the most complete sys-

tem help files we've ever seen, and high-performance components, Sony seems to have done its homework. The only inadequacy we noticed when working with the machine was the lack of true wavetable sound. Music is provided by an DPL3 synth chip, with an optional software-based wavetable emulation mode that eats valuable processor power. With Sony plastering the machine with the VWO (Video Audio Integrated Operation), it's surprising to see them skimp on wavetable music support.

Also of interest to gamers were prototype DVD-RDM players shown by Toshiba, Panasonic, and other compa-

continued on page 33 ...

ON THE SHELF

Here are some of the hottest products on the market, as well as

the ones that frankly ain't so hot. Reviews for most are coming soon.

### WARCRAFT II: BEYOND THE DARK PORTAL



The Orcs and Humans are back with a vengeance in the *WARCRAFT II* Expansion Set. After their defeat, the Orcs

have retreated into the Dark Portal to regroup and conquer anew. The humans' plan is to follow the Orcs through the Dark Portal to annihilate the Orcs once and for all. The Expansion Set features new campaigns with different missions for humans and Orcs, and several improvements, including 50 new maps and new Orc terrain complete with gurgling volcanoes and mushroom trees. It also introduces unique slats for different heroes, an improvement over *WARCRAFT II*, whose heroes had the same slats as the normal troops. For example, Alena, the another heroine, has triple-hit points, good armor, maximum sight, and



... continued from page 32

ties. Expect to see the first DVD-ROM players hitting the market in early fall. (The possible addition of a copy protection feature to airtight Hollywood's piracy paranoia could delay the units slightly.) Price should be around \$700 for the initial units, which will include a DVD player (supporting DVD discs storing from 4.7 GB to 17 GB of data, as well as conventional CD-RDM discs), as well as an expansion card with MPEG-2 video and Dolby AC-3 surround-sound audio support. Activision and Access are among the companies currently developing DVD-ROM titles.

One surprising piece of news was that DVD players won't be able to play current CD-R while once CD-RDMs due to changes in the laser reading mechanism; new CD-R discs in the works should solve this problem. —D. Allen

## Sid Meier Finds New Settlement 'Civ' Designer Forms Game Company With 2 Others From M-Prose

The designer who is sometimes called the "Father of Computer Games" has left MicroProse—a company he co-founded—to start a new game development house. Sid Meier, who designed the classic *Civilization*, is joined by former MicroProse members Brian Reynolds and Jeff Briggs in the new development company named Firaxis Software. Reynolds, a designer and programmer, and Briggs, director of product development at MicroProse, were instrumental in developing MicroProse's Sid Meier brand of strategy and simulation games—*Civilization*, *Civilization II*, *Railroad Tycoon*, and *F15 Strike Eagle*. The new company, based in Hunt Valley, MD, will maintain Meier's traditional focus on strategy games, according to

Briggs. Meier adds that, "we're known for moving forward with each game, not just repeating the old ones. We want to create innovative new products, even while staying with the strategy genre." The new company will consist of a small, "hand-picked" group of programmers, musicians, artists, and designers, to be assembled around the designing and programming core of Reynolds and Meier.

MicroProse, acquired four years ago by Spectrum HoLoByte, has been beset by financial problems for several months. During the summer MicroProse laid off nearly half of its staff, of which 30 employees were from the Hunt Valley, MD, division. In late June the company obtained foreign investment to remain listed on the NASDAQ stock exchange. CED Stephen M. Race said the company had "negative tangible net worth," and had to seek an infusion.



Meier has agreed to work with MicroProse as a consultant until the completion of *Magic: The Gathering*, (projected to release this fall).

Meier and company say that Firaxis will focus on creating and programming games, while leaving packaging and marketing issues to an outside publishing partner. The company is currently accepting proposals from all major publishers, "including MicroProse," says an enthusiastic Briggs. —J. Anderson

does a whopping triple damage. *Witchaven II: Blood Vengeance* is a must for any blood-thirsty *Witchaven* fan.—A. Ng  
PC CD-ROM  
Blizzard, (800) 953-7889  
Reader Service #302

### WITCHAVEN II: BLOOD VENGEANCE

**W**itchaven II is a rebash of *Witchaven* with some minor changes. Capsone's *Doom* clone is largely more of the same, apart from some changes in level design, the addition of some new enemies, and new weapons variations. *Witchaven* II uses an early model of the 3D *Realms*' Build engine (used to create *Duke Nukem 3D*), and the game even includes the level editor, but while it has some nice graphics in high-res mode, it can't compare



Entertainment Inc., (303) 373-3770  
Reader Service #303

### TONY LA RUSSA BASEBALL 3: 1996 EDITION

Seattle vs. Cleveland. It's the bottom of the 9th, two outs, nobody on, score tied 4-4. Randy Johnson's on the mound, but he's tired, and Albert Belle (just back from suspension) is coming to bat. If you were Seattle's manager, what would you do? *Tony La Russa Baseball 3: 1996 Edition* is

Sportfront's update to their great baseball sim that adds a crucial piece of real-life strategy to the mix: head-to-head stats between every pitcher and batter so you can check out, on-the-fly, how your player has historically matched up against his opponent. Numbers junkies will also like the new situational stats, which let you see how batters have performed in a variety of circumstances (on the road, at night, on artificial turf, etc.). Less



## Scoop!

# MechWarrior 3 Sighted

## FASA To Convert Virtual World's BattleTech To The PC

**F**ollowing the tremendous popularity of MechWarrior 2, no less than four companies are currently wending new MechWarrior games. The story behind the struggle for rights, licensing and ownership of the successful property often appears as a real-life analog to the mecha-

Mechwarriors). After that, Activision will no longer have rights to the MechWarrior property. Spectrum HoLoByte purchased the license and is currently planning MechWarrior 3. But Spectrum will not be developing the game; they will go to Virtual World Entertainment and BattleTech creators, FASA, for that.

Virtual World Entertainment created the location-based BattleTech virtual reality game. Now, it is officially merging with the FASA Corporation, creators of the BattleTech Universe upon which MechWarrior 2 is based. The resulting new company, called FASA Interactive Technologies, will design MechWarrior 3. FASA

Interactive will port the Virtual World BattleTech engine to the PC and use it as the MechWarrior 3 engine. And since the guys behind the MechWarrior 3 storyline will be the originals—the FASA Corporation itself—we can expect even more intensive storylines and great missions that are consistent with the BattleTech universe. Expect at least an 18 month development before FASA's game mech's reach the PC.—Elliott Chin



**MECHWARRIOR 3** Here's the BattleTech game already running on a P90 with 16 MB of RAM and an insane custom video board.

ized clan rivalry depicted in the games.

Activision, which published MechWarrior and MechWarrior 2, will publish one more MechWarrior game, a prequel titled Mechwarriors (see our Space Sim fail lineup feature for more on

## PLAYING LATELY?

Civilization II remains firmly in the number one spot this month, while Warcraft II kicks Duke Nukem 3D back into second place. Fantasy General climbs higher up the chart, and EF2000 returns after a few month's absence.

**Note to veteran game-heads:** you won't find the CGW Poll Card bound into the magazine anymore. Yes, it's been a long-standing tradition, and no, we haven't dumped it to pacify corporate deities. We're doing it more efficiently now by mailing a comprehensive survey to 1,500 subscribers chosen by their color each month. The results from the survey will be used to generate the Top 100 Games and Playing Lateley.

READERS'  
TOP 100

	Last Month	Months On Chart
1 Civilization II (Microprose)	1	3
2 Warcraft II (Blizzard)	2	6
3 Duke Nukem 3D (3D Realms)	3	4
4 Steel Panthers (SSI)	4	8
5 Fantasy General (SSI)	9	2
6 Command and Conquer (Virgin/Westwood)	5	9
7 Wing Commander IV (Origin)	6	8
8 EF 2000 (Ocean)	-	2
9 Heroes of Might and Magic (New World Computing)	7	8
10 Panzer General (SSI)	8	17

## ON THE SHELF

flashy and action oriented than HROUSEL 5, and a bit harder to learn, Turn 3 '96 is still a lot of fun to play and abounds in nice touches, including monitored pitch speed, robust fantasy league play and detailed announcing from the late, great Mel Allen (along with Lon Simmons and Hank Greenwald) that actually enriches the experience. Arcade gamers should stick with HROUSEL, but stat geeks and arm-chair managers will have a field day with this one.—J. Green  
PC CD-ROM  
Stormfront Studios, (415) 479-2800  
Reader Service #304

## DEATHKEEP

This is SSI's first Dungeons & Dragons role-playing game, and it's obvious that the company didn't want to invest too many resources in the project. While Deathkeep does



have a nice rendered intro and beautiful cutscenes, the gameplay graphics look dated.

Deathkeep has the standard features of a D&D RPG, such as character stats, advancement through increased experience, a D&D armor class system, as well as classes and races. However, the game limits players to one of three characters at the outset, and they each have predetermined stats, class and race. So you can't roll your own character or choose its origins. Still, there are quite

a few interesting dungeons to explore, and the environment is 3D, allowing you to jump, fly (with the appropriate spell) and look all around. There isn't much to recommend Deathkeep, but considering the dearth of quality games in the genre, it isn't really that bad.—E. Chin  
Win 95 CD-ROM  
SSI, (800) 601-7529  
Reader Service #305

## PHILIP MARLOWE: PRIVATE EYE

It's 1946. You are Philip Marlowe, PI, and you've had it with the detective business. Just when you're about to give it all up for a day job and a house in the 'burbs, there's a knock on the door. A dame needs your assistance—and she ain't bird-looking either. In the role of hard-boiled detective, you're



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# Biz Bytes

## MechWarrior 2 Hits DWANGO

Activision is taking its award-winning MechWarrior 2 online at DWANGO's 26 game servers throughout North America and the Far East. The MechWarrior 2 network pack, called NetMech, will integrate DWANGO's (Dat-Up Wide Area Network Gaming Operation) access software, a client/server and proprietary codec software, that claims to offer real-time, head-to-head play via modem or multiplayer (up to eight players) network combat. In addition, players in the U.S., Canada and Japan will receive live free hours of DWANGO service. You'll need those free hours since it will take approximately two hours to download the program, even with a 28.8kps modem. NetMech should be available for downloading from Activision's (<http://www.activision.com>), and DWANGO's (<http://www.dwango.com>) Web sites by the time

you read this, with the retail version on store shelves around mid-summer.

—J. Anderson

## Wing Commander News

Chris Roberts, creator and designer of the popular Wing Commander series of PC games, has resigned from Origin/EA to form his own company. After producing four Wing Commander games since 1990, Roberts will be flying solo, and he declined to comment on his future plans.

Meanwhile, EA is already laying plans for Wing Commander V. This time the game is being programmed from scratch, so it will take about two years to develop, according to company spokesperson David Swofford. Most of the issues related to full-motion video, game design, actors and other questions have not been resolved, he said.

In the meantime, Saturday morning cartoon fans will soon

## SELLING SPACE IN SPACE

In space, everyone can hear you advertise. At least, that's what ThrustMaster is hoping. The purveyor of game controllers is the first

in the game, which will be owned by player-controlled corporations, but sponsored by paid advertisers, who will have their logos plastered on the side



company to jump on an innovative advertising scheme in IO's upcoming multiplayer game, *Purveyor Fighters*. It seems there are 12 space stations

of a station. It's an innovative idea (similar to an ad for Last Action Hero plastered on a real rocket—we hope, for ThrustMaster's sake, this is a bit more effective.) We also hope it stays limited to industry companies. Do you really want to be tasked with defending Space Station Cheats? —D. Allen

be viewing a Wing Commander animated series. The show, currently entitled *Wing Commander Academy*, will feature voice talents of three of the most prominent actors in *Wing III & IV*: Mark Hamill, Tom Wilson and Malcolm McDowell. Emmy

award-winning actress Dana Delany (*China Beach*) will be lending her voice as well. Thirteen half-hour episodes are currently in production for the show, which will air on the USA cable network beginning in September. —K. Brown



sucked into a world faced with drugs, murder and beautiful but deadly women, as you search for the dame's missing brother. The game successfully recreates the ambience of Chandler's era. Jazz plays hauntingly in the background, interrupted by an occasional police siren, the hard-boiled gumshoe has the customary Bogey-type drawl. There are also some nice character traits intertwined with gameplay. Marlowe becomes reflective when he drinks, so if you need a recap of the case, just reach for the bourbon bottle in your desk drawer. Plus there's an alternate ending for Chandler fans who've read the original *Lella Sater*. The downside? I found the

Saturday morning cartoon-style animation rather flat and some of the voice-acting for minor characters was pretty off! Nonetheless, it's a good adaptation and will entertain Chandler fans and adventure gamers alike. —C. Panther

PC CD-ROM  
Byron Press Multi Media, (800) 945-3155;  
Reader Service #306

## DYNAMITE 128

Windows 95 may be the emerging gaming platform, but let's face it: most of the games we're playing today still run in good ol' DOS. Hercules has been lining up DOS performance, with their *SHOGUN 64* Vides product, and it looks like the king may be dethroned by yet another Hercules product.

The *DYNAMITE 128* uses the new *8meg ET-6000* chip and a new DRAM technology, multibank

DRAM (MDRAM), to move vast amounts of data very quickly. The result is a PC Bench 9.0 graph as handsome score of over 10,000—the fastest we've ever seen, even on a Pentium 166. The frame rate of games like *AFF* can definitely benefit from this kind of data rate. In addition, the *DYNAMITE 128* is no slouch in Windows, coming within a hair of the *Matrox Millennium* in Windows benchmarks.

One downside: Despite being a very fast 2D board, the *DYNAMITE* lacks 3D functionality and is a bit pricey to boot. But if you're still playing DOS games, want a quick Windows card, and are delaying making a 3D card purchase, check this out. —L. Case  
PC  
Hercules Computer Technology, (800) 532-0800,  
<http://www.hercules.com>  
Reader Service #307

# Microsoft Finally Ships Direct3D

## API Is Considered Key To The 3D Revolution

**M**icrosoft recently shipped its DirectX 2.0 Software Developer's Kit (SDK), which includes the much-anticipated Direct3D Application Programming Interface (API). This API will allow game developers to write one set of code for their 3D action titles, and have it run on all the different 3D graphics boards that are starting to ship. Direct3D is tightly integrated with Microsoft's DirectDraw API, which handles 2D graphics and digital video duties, and Direct3D has provisions for software emu-

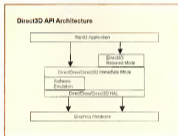
lation—where work is performed on the host CPU—if a 3D graphics chip doesn't accelerate a desired rendering feature. Direct3D can also profile a 3D accelerator to determine where a rendering feature can be optimally accelerated, on the host or by the 3D graphics chip.

There has been a great deal of confusion surrounding

Direct3D, with hardware vendors clamoring for its completion, and cautious game developers supporting Direct3D on one hand, but still clarifying out some DDS titles to hedge their bets for Christmas '96. The API is the lynch pin for much of the 3D revolution, and with Direct3D's arrival, all players concerned can pretty much say, "let the good

times roll." Microsoft plans to ship several Direct3D titles for Christmas this year, and other developers also have Direct3D titles in the works that may be done for Christmas as well. As we get Direct3D-based titles in, we'll have 'em on several different boards and tell you what we find. On the hardware side, two boards based on S3's WRGE are shipping (see our review this issue). ATI is shipping its Xpression 3D, and Diamond is shipping the nVidia-based Edge3D. Droid will be shipping its 3Dix-based Righteous 3D board sometime in July. Another July arrival should be Creative Labs' Rendition-based 3D Blister PCI, and Matrox should be shipping its Mystique-based board in late August.

—D. Saketov



**Microsoft's Direct3D API is the component that will make widely available 3D titles happen, allowing them to run on any 3D graphics board.**

### BATTLE ARENA TOSHINDEN PC

**Toshinden** was the game that defined the Sony PlayStation, with flashy graphics and 3D polygon power. The first 3D fighting game to allow movement along the z axis, *Toshinden* let you dodge left and right, and applied a lot of panning to emphasize the 3D graphics. Yet, underneath all the glitz was a mediocre fighting game that true fighting fans soon ditched.

Well, as we look at the PC version, all the



gameplay has ported over nicely, but the graphics have taken a major two-hit combo. The

graphics in *Toshinden* PC suffer a lot of pixelation, blocky polygons and low resolution. Moreover, the frame rate seems to have taken a slight hit as well. The heads of characters, which in PlayStation *Toshinden* were composed of many shaded polygons, now are single rectangles with poor textures mipped on. The 3D effects, such as the z-axis movement and panning camera, are still there but they can't begin to make up for the sloppy visuals. So an arcade game with great 3D graphics and mediocre gameplay comes to the PC with the same mediocre gameplay and now incredibly poor graphics.—E. Chin  
Windows 95 CD-ROM  
Playmiles Interactive, (714) 562-1743;  
Reader Service #308

### AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

While it's hard to recognize with the graphic overhaul, *American Civil War* is really *The Road From Sumter to Appomattox*



in its third incarnation. Interactive Magic has spaced this with some nice multimedia touches and the core game is still as rich as ever. The fog of war is realistic yet manageable, which allows McClellan to stumble around not knowing where Lee is, for example. Supply is streamlined from Sumter, but still allows inveterate micro-managers to fiddle with munitions and foodstuffs if they must. The leader ratings are still dynamic, showing why inept commanders such as Ben Butler were frustrated by the likes of Stonewall Jackson. The biggest change is that the poor tactical module of Sumter has been discarded for a more elegant, if less visceral, strategic combat routine. As we've said before, this is the only strategic-level Civil War game worth owning.—TColeman  
PC CD-ROM  
Interactive Magic, (919) 461-0722  
Reader Service #310

# 3DO TAKES OVER THE (NEW) WORLD

**3**DO announced intentions to acquire New World Computing, publisher of last year's award-winning *Age of Dawn* and *Heroes of Might and Magic*. The purchase is guaranteed to have a value in excess of \$135 million and is subject to a due diligence review and regular closing procedures. The impending acquisition reflects 3DO's growing involvement in the PC platform and extends its reach into the Strategy and Role Playing genre. New World Computing will continue to function as its own entity and maintain its operations and staffing in southern California; however, it will publish titles under the 3DO Studios umbrella.

Adding to its repertoire of platforms and genres, 3DO recently acquired Archetype Interactive,



creators of the RPG and fantasy-adventure game *Melchior* 59. After relocating to Redwood City, CA, and resuming operations under the 3DO name, the former Archetype Interactive group will continue to focus on establishing a strong presence in Internet gaming. And earlier this year, 3DO acquired Cyclone Studios (makers of console games: *Captain Quasar* and *Battle Sport*), which continues to develop advanced-console (64-bit), action arcade-style games under its own name, yet also publishes under the 3DO Studios name. "We want to make sure we deliver games in all the core genre that people want," says 3DO public relations manager, Diane Hunt. For more perspective on the acquisitions, see Johnny's Wilson's article on CGW's ADL site. keyword: CGW. —J. Anderson

## HOW BIG IS THE GAME BIZ?

Financial analysts estimate the computer game biz is now a billion dollar industry, although not everyone is making money in it. Computer entertainment software now represents about 22 percent of all retail software sales, according to PC Data of Reston, VA. Wanna start a game company? Why not, everyone else seems to be...

## THE WAR COLLEGE

**3DO** The War College is an updated version of the Universe: Military Simulator (UMS) and UMS II. It looks and plays better than the old UMS and the interface is a tremendous improvement. The game includes four battles: Pharsalus (ancient), Austerlitz (Napoleonic), Antietam (American Civil War) and Tannenberg (World War I). The encyclopedic treatment of each battle is impressive, providing players with a wealth of information before they assume com-

mand. Unfortunately, the game's ability to simulate combat during any of the four time periods portrayed is lacking. Among its failings, the combat model allows units containing only a few men to inflict as much damage as they did when at full strength. Also, horrific casualty rates are the norm. As a teaching tool, The War College is interesting, but as a game, those who prefer a dose of reality with their historical war games should look elsewhere —P. Miller  
PC CD-ROM

GameTek, (800) 426-3835  
Reader Service #311

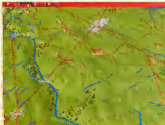
## DINOTOPIA

**3DO** You may think you've seen your fair share of prehistoric monsters, but I bet you've never seen a dinosaur knitting while brooding over her eggs, or playing cards with a gypsy like Velociraptor. Welcome to Dinotopia, an island where humans and dinosaurs live together in perfect domestic harmony. Based on James Gurney's best-

selling, lavishly illustrated book, this game will dispel any preconceptions you may have about dinosaurs being vicious cold-blooded killers.

As Nathan Drake, you find yourself washed up on the island after a shipwreck. Your mission is to locate your twin sister Constance. To fulfill the quest you must discover how to communicate in the Dinotopian language, while collecting items to add to your inventory. The skill lies in figuring out how best to use these items as you navigate the island. Some objects may help you solve puzzles, others can be traded for information about Constance.

*Dinotopia* is intended for children but will certainly appeal to adults, too. Although the game is too easy for experienced adventure gamers, the user-friendly interface, rich graphics and relatively straightforward puzzles make this a good choice for new gamers, or for those who wish to ease themselves into the genre gently. —C. Parfiter  
PC CD-ROM  
Turner Home Entertainment, (800) 294-0022  
Reader Service #309



## HANDS ON

These are the products in development we've actually spent some time with. 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.

### Shattered Steel

Here's a novel idea for a game: giant robots duking it out over alien landscapes! Okay, so maybe Interplay's *SHATTERED STEEL* isn't

that original, but it's more than just a *MechWarrior* 2 clone. It's great-looking, challenging and has enough twists to justify its existence.

It's 2132 and you're a mercenary sent to investigate disturbances at a mining compound on a distant planet. You discover a hostile alien race, and you need to bring them flowers as a way to start peace negotiations. Just kidding. Actually, you get to blast them all to smithereens with 30 weapons over 70 non-linear missions.

Designed by BioWare with an engine developed by Pyrotek, *SHATTERED STEEL* features beautiful



3D VGA graphics, with fully textured, topographically varied terrains for you to fight on. Lighting and motion effects are first rate, and the alien robots have a bizarre, insect-like appearance, like something William S. Burroughs might have created in metal shop. The game offers a variety of goals, including escort, rescue and decoy missions, as well as head-to-head modern and network play.

Best of all, for some, will be the fact that, unlike *MechWarrior*, you can jump into this

game immediately. I was able to blast my way through the first few missions without one glimpse at a manual. Though one snotty CGW staffer called it "MechaWussie," that really doesn't do this promising game justice. —J. Green  
Interplay Productions, (714) 553-6655.

PC CD-ROM

### Blood & Magic

Interplay's first *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* game is a little different from the usual real-time strategy fare, with its new twists on building and troop recruitment.

Everything in the game hinges on the Basal Golem. This is the basic unit you start with, and is also the only unit that can build structures and collect mana (the game's only resource, used in building structures and recruiting troops).

Structures, though, can't be built just anywhere. They can only be built on Mystic Sites, and most of these are already occupied by enemy structures. This means you'll have to engage your foe and wipe out his structure before you can plant your Golem at the Mystic Site for construction. There are five different structures, and each allows up to four different types of troops.

Troops can't be recruited at whim, either. You



need to research them first by expending experience points, which are gained by creating Basal Golems and defeating enemy troops.

The beta version we played did have a few problems. The game speed was too slow—there were no controls for speeding up gameplay—and the troop AI also needed work. Another annoyance was a high-pitched laugh that sounded each time we clicked on a new unit.

While *Blood & Magic* does have a few flaws, most of which will probably be fixed, the game looks quite good. This short preview can't really do justice to the game, because there's quite a bit of complexity here. The important thing is that real-time strategists looking for something different will want to keep their eyes peeled for this one. —E. Cain  
Interplay, (714) 553-6655.

PC CD-ROM

## PIPELINE

10th Planet	Bethesda	9/96
Age of Empires	SSI	9/96
Aide De Camp 2	HPS Simulations	Summer 96
Atlantia	In Antera Series	9/96
Blood	3D Realms/FoxGen	Summer 96
Callahan's Crosstime Saloon	Legend	10/96
Crusader: No Regret	Origin	9/96
Daggerfall	Bethesda	Summer 96
Dark Earth	Midscape	10/96
Diablo	Bizzard	September 96
Elk Moon Murder	Activision	8/96
F22	Wave Logic	Winter 96
Guardians of Destiny	Virgin	Summer 96
Hyatt Nightmares 2000	Comtek	Summer 96
Front Page Baseball Pro Series	EA	Fall 95
Heroes of Might and Magic II	New World	10/96
History of the World	Acorn Hill	Fall 96
Interstate 70	Activision	Winter 96
Into The Shadows	Scavenger	9/96
Jagged Alliance: Deadly Games	EA Tech	8/96
Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II	LucasArts	2/97
Jettifisher III	Midway Studios	Fall 95
John Madden Football 97	EA Sports	Fall 96
Last Blitzkrieg	SSI	Summer 96
Leisure Suit Larry 7	Sierra	Fall 96
Magic of Xanth	Legend	Fall 96
Master of Orion 2: Antares	MicroProse	Summer 96
Meridian 59	Artchive/3DO	Summer 96
Myst II	Broderbund	Fall 96
Necrodemus	SSI	8/96
Nemesis	Stratton	9/96
NFL Legends	AtariAge	8/96
Nair	Cyberdreams	9/96
One Must Fall	EA	Fall 96
Over the Reich	Acorn Hill	9/96
Pacific Tide	AtariAge	Fall 95
Privateer	Origin Systems	10/96
Red Alert	Virgin/Warwood	10/96
Return to Knossos	7th Star	Fall 95
Reverence	Cyberdreams	Fall 96
Risk!	Hasbro Interactive	Fall 96
Robert E. Lee	Sierra	3/95
Scrabble	Hasbro Interactive	9/96
Shadows Over Riva	Stratton	8/96
Shattered Steel	Interplay	9/96
SimBalls	AtariAge	Summer 96
Star Craft	Bizzard	Winter 96
Star Fleet Academy	Interplay	Winter 96
Star General	SSI	11/96
Star Trek: Generations	MicroProse	8/96
SuperHeroes	MicroProse	8/96
Syndicate Wars	EA	9/96
The Mindwarp	AtariAge	8/96
Third Reich	Acorn Hill	9/96
TimeGaps	GTE Entertainment	8/96
Tom's Raiders	Daniels/Eidos	Winter 96
Trivial Pursuit	Hasbro Interactive	Fall 96
Ultima Online	Origin	Winter 96
X-Com 3: The Apocalypse	MicroProse	Fall 96
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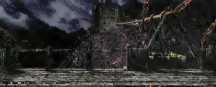
  
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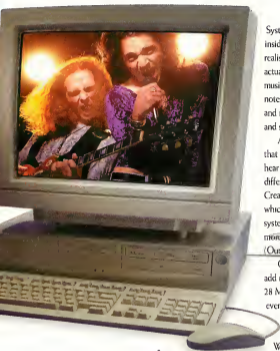
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# BIG GAME HUNT

**A** crack team of *CGW* editors recently set out to track down that most elusive of beasts: the soon-to-be-shipping game program. We stalked the wilds of Silicon Valley and the halls of the Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3), tracking the herd of titles while braving a stampede of marketing flacks. In many cases, armed with only their critical eyes, these editors actually jumped in and tried to subdue these pre-beta beasts, even though many were months from being tamed. ("While Marlon sits back in the jeep and enjoys a nice cool drink, Jim will attempt to run this early alpha version with only 390K of free conventional memory.")

In the pages that follow, you'll find some of the most promising, most exciting, and most anticipated titles slated for release between now and the new year. Many of these aren't far enough along to give a firm estimated ship date, but if you don't see a date listed you can expect to see the program on store shelves by or before the "well, we meant to ship it in time for Christmas" post-holiday season.

Because of the size of this herd, we've concentrated primarily on titles you haven't yet read details of in these pages. Separate safari guides are leaving now for each of the gaming genres, so strap in and get ready to pick your targets.



## QUAKE

Since our preview in the July issue, there have been a few additions to id's latest demonic property, *QUAKE*. The weapons are even more crudely rendered now; for instance, the super-railgun now has two barrels. *Quake* boasts levels far more elaborate than the *DOOM* series, and is set to challenge all comers in both single and multiplayer outings.

Since our visit to id several weeks ago, a back story has been revealed to set the carnage in context, courtesy of id's John Romero. As a commando for the good guys, you've been briefed on a new device called a Sliggate, which can crack a hole in the time continuum, allowing time travel. But there's one problem: An evil fiend, or group of fiends, called "Quake," has figured out how to use Sliggates as well, possibly in an attempt to launch a surprise invasion of Earth. Your mission: find Quake, and take him—or them—out, using any means necessary. While you embark on your hunt, Quake pays a visit to your headquarters and turns it into a morgue. Upon returning to the grisly scene, you discover that Quake has escaped through the Sliggate. Seeing that the coordinates on the Sliggate are still set to their headquarters, you teleport through the Sliggate, arriving at the Quake hideout, where your odyssey begins.

*Quake* should be shipping around the time you read this: id Software/3D Interactive, (800) 801-1930, DOS

*Quake* should be shipping around the time you read this: id Software/3D Interactive, (800) 801-1930, DOS

## JEDI KNIGHT: DARK FORCES II

*Jedi Knight*, the amazing-looking sequel to *Dark Forces*, has all the good qualities of the original, and then some. Set in the seedier side of the Star Wars universe, our hero from *Dark Forces*, Kyle Katarn, has now begun a quest to become a Jedi Knight. As his training and the game progresses, he encounters the Dark Jedi Jerec and his six Jedi lieutenants. Soon Kyle must choose whether he will join the Dark Side or save the forces of good to battle Jerec and his minions, who wish to harness the power of an old Jedi burial ground to enslave the galaxy.

LucasArts, heeding the cries of disgruntled gamers, has added multiplayer play over network, modem and direct link, and even a save-game feature. There will be new weapons—including a Light Saber—and now monsters. As a Jedi Knight in training, after you finish each level you will gain experience points and Jedi powers. Jedi Katarn isn't just a run-and-gun spru through level after level; since there is a cast of recurring villains as well as the possibility of branching to good or evil Jedi training.

*CGW* saw a 3D-enhanced version of *Jedi Knight* running on a Rendition board, and we found that the graphics in this mode look even better than *QUAKE*. Look for the game to ship in late winter. LucasArts, (415) 444-8330, Windows 95

## CRUSADER: NO REGRET

This title isn't *CRUSADER 2* (Origin's working on that), but *No Regret* is a mouth-watering morsel to hold us over until the true sequel. *No Regret* continues the story of *No Remorse*, this time bringing you to the moon to stop an evil corporate consor-

tium. There are only 10 new levels here, but the length of gameplay will probably be the same, because each level is packed with even more cool weapons and nasty enemies. Some of the new weapons will freeze and shatter opponents, melt the flesh from their bones or literally reduce them to a pile of bones and body parts. New enemies include at least three new mechs, including a morphing mech that will lie in ambush in the form of a soda machine, table, or other mundane object. The enemy AI has also been beefed-up. Now, enemies have access to the same weapons and same moves as you, so watch out for troops who roll in and out of cover, blasting you with freezeguns. Origin/EA, (512) 335-5200, DOS



## TOMB RAIDERS

Playing Indiana Jones could be fun. Playing a mean, pistol-packing, tomb-robbing "Indiana Jane" is probably even more fun. That's the theory behind Eidos's *Tomb Raiders*, a 3D shooter played from a behind-the-back perspective. The graphics in this game, especially in the 3DX version we saw, are beautiful,



consisting of texture-mapped, gouraud shaded polygons, amazing light-sourcing and full 3D effects for a breathtaking, immersive world. In this shooter, you play Lara Croft, a tomb raider who is exploring various ruins around the world in search of an ancient artifact called the Scion. Her search takes her to various tombs in Peru, Egypt, Cambodia and other exotic locales. There, you'll find clues, solve puzzles and blast away any beast or man who stands in your way. Though only in its early stage of development, this game is already noteworthy for the rough and tough female lead and the amazing graphics. The main character has thousands of frames of animation; she can run, jump, swim, ride, pull herself up onto ledges, and has incredibly fluid and realistic movement. The game is slated for a winter release.

Eidos, (415) 616-2022, Windows 95

## ECSTASIA 2

*Ecstasia 2*, from Psygnosis, is an action game with a heavy dose of adventure elements. The environments are all pre-rendered, so movement isn't as flexible as in a polygonal world like *Quake*. But the graphics are highly detailed, and the character has a range of fluid, realistic moves. More so than in the original, the viewing area changes according to what you do, and you'll sometimes play from a close-up side view, a top-down view, or even an isometric view.



*Ecstasia 2* also has a few fighting game influences, allowing you to perform special attacks like spinning slashes. The game is set in medieval times; once again you play the young warrior from the original *Ecstasia*, who must battle an evil Archmage who does what evil Archmages do best: threaten to destroy the universe.

Psygnosis, (800) (800) 438-7794, DOS

## INTO THE SHADOWS

Boasting a true 3D engine with impressive light-sourcing and high-res graphics, *Into The Shadows* is a remarkable advancement over previous dungeon romps. The O&D-style action game is set in a detailed castle laced with shadows and light, where the player battles ugly denizens with a variety of medieval weapons. Dynamic panning has been used to deepen the sense of immersion, to better effect than that seen in *Acad: In The Dark*.

Although there is the usual key- and item-searching, the main focus is action: large, motion-captured characters stab, slice and clobber each other like many arcade-style fighting games. Not only are the



movements fluid and realistic, but special doubling techniques create the illusion that the polygonal characters are more detailed than they really are. The game's graphics

engine has been in development for three years, and it looks superb—if a little short on blood and gore. *Into The Shadows* should support up to eight players over a network.

Scavenger/ST Interactive, (800) 601-1930  
DOS and Windows 95

## VIRTUA FIGHTER PC

When *Virtua Fighter* first hit the arcades, it revolutionized the fighting game genre with its 3D graphics and panning camera. *Virtua Fighter PC*, a port of the game that started the 3D fighting craze, looks poised to do the same on the PC.



VFPC will have two graphics modes: the original, blocky arcade mode and an enhanced, hi-res texture-mapped

mode. All of the *Virtua Fighter* arcade gameplay is intact, including all eight characters, numerous special attacks, throws, ring outs, and poisoning attacks. Using DirectX, VFPC will retain a high frame rate, high polygon count and the smooth fluid motion found in the arcade version. The good news is that special 3D hardware is not required to run VFPC. However, to achieve VFPC's visual excellence, you'll need at least a Pentium 90. So, while the game will be incredible, so will the overhead. The only other quibble with VFPC is that it's not *Virtua Fighter 2*. Unfortunately, we'll have to wait a few more months for that one.

Sega Entertainment, 415-508-2800, Windows 95



## DAYTONA USA

**T**his arcade racer allowed Sega to take the lead in the arcades and became the standard by which other racers were measured. Now, the same thrilling, high-speed racing of *Daytona USA* will be available for Windows 95 users packing a minimum of a Pentium 90. This port retains all the gameplay of the arcade classic, including four separate views, three race courses

and end-over-end crashes. The graphics are nearly identical to the arcade version, and will retain most, if not all, of the original's high

frame rate and polygon count. Sega Entertainment will also be adding network play to this title so that you and your friends will be able to burn rubber in a pulse-pounding race of *Daytona* stock cars. *Daytona USA* was an instant winner in the arcades, and looks qualified to place as the number one arcade racer when it hits the PC this fall.

**Sega Entertainment, (415) 508-2800, Windows 95**



## MDK

**M**DK, the first PC game from Shiny Entertainment, the creators of *Earthworm Jim*, looks quite promising. You play a black-clad warrior, equipped with a sniper helmet, who drops from his perch in orbit into various locations on Earth—locations infested with aliens and evil creatures. The 3D shooter has both third-person and first-person view modes. The hi-hats graphics

are polygonal, with good light-sourcing, making for more immersive and beautiful visuals. Players used to the usual gun-blasting shooter, though, will instead have to use their wits. MDK often requires that you use your sniper helmet to take out enemies with stealth from far away, or from an ambush position. The emphasis on stealth and ambush will make play in the multiplayer mode very interesting. Shiny is also working on making the alien creatures react more intelligently to your actions. If you shoot an alien's firearm from its hand, rather than continue to attack mindlessly, it will duck behind a wall, and then stick its hand out to search for its dropped weapon. If

Shiny can actually pull off this dynamic thinking in its enemies, MDK could be a killer action title. Look for MDK in early '97.

**Playmates Interactive, (714) 562-1743, DOS**



## ALSO IN THE WORKS

**A**long with the 3D titles mentioned above, there are several other games in development that deserve mention.

*Virtua City PD*, is a port of Sega's arcade hit *Virtua Cop*, a 3D polygonal shooter on rats that takes you behind the badge of a Virtua City police officer. With great graphics and amazing detail, VCPD is sure to carry its success over to the PC. See this month's action column for more on this title.

*Outlaws*, by LucasArts, is a Spaghetti Western action-adventure, using the *Duke* Flixos engine, but with animated cartoon characters. It's a first-person western shooter, but has heavy adventure elements, including foes and allies with distinct personalities.

*Space Business Must Die*, a game by Flux, could be described as a science-fiction *Waterloo* Down with an attitude. Don't worry—we'll explain that further in an upcoming issue.

*Soulstorm* is a sidescroller from GT Interactive that is nevertheless impressive for its beautiful visuals and a panning camera that zooms in between breaks in action.

Aside from *Estimote 2*, *Prognosis* is also working on *Wipeout XL*, the sequel to the PlayStation hovercraft racer, *Wipeout*. It looks very good, with high frame rate for fast action and beautiful, 3D graphics.

Activision is working on *IndyRacer '76*, a driving game with lots of action and a *Sewerides* setting. Look for lots of aros, bell bottoms, burning cars, and chunks of burnt rubber in this...uh...shooter featuring heavily armored muscle cars.

Also from Activision is *PERLUDE*, a fast-paced, polygonal take on sports in the 19th century. It's two on-two roller-blading through a tunnel arena with body checks, power-ups, and arm cups for catching an opponent's ball into a goal.



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## CALLAHAN'S CROSSTIME SALOON



**T**hink of the friendliest, happiest bar you know, and then imagine it populated by vampires, time travelers, aliens—and some very drunk punsters. That's what you'll find at Callahan's Crosstime Saloon, the setting of Spider Robinson's cult-classic science-fiction short stories, now being adapted as an adventure game by Legend Entertainment. As the game begins, the fate of the universe is at hand. In six separate adventures, you'll start from

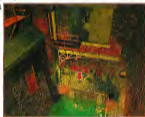
Callahan's and travel from Pennsylvania to Brazil to outer space and beyond in an attempt to set things straight. Because Robinson's stories tend to end in punchlines rather than deep philosophical statements, it's a great sign that Legend enlisted jokester Josh Mandel (of Frizzy Phoenix fame) to design the game. Expect much of Robinson's groan-worthy punning to make it into the game itself. (One example: you'll be flying to Brazil on *la Reseacin Airline*.) As a bonus, a number of big names are rumored to possibly be providing music for the game, including Leon Redbone and Harry Nilsson—and, we just learned, Spider Robinson himself, who will sing some of the songs that originally appeared in his stories. For Callahan fans this game is a sure bet. But the uninitiated should be excited, too. There's a mountain of talent at work here, making it our most-anticipated adventure game of the coming season. **Legend, (703) 222-0500, Windows**

## THE CITY OF LOST CHILDREN

**P**sygnosis' *The City of Lost Children* is a 3D adventure game based on the 1995 French film of the same name. Though the film, created by Jean Pierre Junel and Marc Caro

("Delicatessen"), only had a brief run in U.S. art houses, it was one of the best movies of 1995, and easily one of the great film fantasies of the past 20 years. A macabre yet beautiful mixture of Fritz Lang, Charles Dickens, Jules Verne and David Lynch, *The City of Lost Children* is the story of the evil scientist Krakir, who, having lost the ability to dream, is kidnapping little children in order to steal their dreams. When a circus strongman's little brother is kidnapped, he teams up with a little orphan girl to find the lost children. Along the way they encounter everything from evil Siamese twins to a talking brain to a mind-poisoning tick. Psygnosis' game follows the same plot, in 3D-rendered sets modeled after the film sets. The movie's director, Marc Caro, is overseeing the game's design, and after seeing some of it he reportedly asked that it be made "darker and grimmer"—a good sign indeed. Should the gameplay match the visuals, look for this to be one of the more memorably surreal adventure games of the year.

**Psygnosis, (415) 655-8000, Windows 95**



## LEISURE SUIT LARRY 7: YANK 'EM AWAY

**H**ard to believe, but it's now been 10 years and six releases since Larry, that loveable *loser de l'amour*, first swaggered onto our computer screens to begin his hunt for female companionship. That's longer than most software franchises (and even some computer platforms), which just goes to show you...well, we don't know what exactly. Suffice it to say that Al Lowe's comic creation is now that most unlikely of things—an institution. This year's model finds Larry aboard a cruise ship, the HMS Bouncy (commanded by one Captain Thigh), in pursuit of the usual gaggle of gravity-defying babes. LSL 7 boasts new 3D animation, and Sierra is also promising "scratch-and-sniff" puzzles\*—the possibilities of which are truly frightening. Sexist and neanderthal draw for immature guys? Of course it is.

But creator Al Lowe's humor is so deliberately, uh, broad, that—as with the films of Russ Meyers—there's simply no point in being offended. Offensiveness is the point. Not a family game by any stretch of the imagination, LSL 7 will appeal to those who like their adventures laced with ribald humor and a hearty lack of taste.

**Sierra, MS-DOS, Windows 95 and 3.1  
Sierra, (800) 757-7707, Windows 95**



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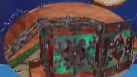
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## THE SPACE BAR

Steve Meretzky has hitchhiked to a different part of the galaxy for his latest offbeat adventure: **THE SPACE BAR** is a murder mystery, where you play a detective interviewing bizarre creatures in a sort of sanitized, beautified version of the Cantina in *Star Wars*. Navigating through the spotless, 3D-rendered environment, you come across creatures who look freshly extruded from a disturbed Taiwanese toy-maker's mold, engaging in strange conversations using telepathy.

Oftentimes the player assumes another character's perspective, such as a large bug-eyed insect, viewing the world through multiple lenses and compelled to carry out missions in order to advance the plot. It's an odd convergence of Meretzky, *Myst* and rubbery-looking aliens, but the story and script should prove strong enough to please puzzle-lovers of all shapes and eyes.

**Rocket Science Games, (415) 442-5000, Windows 95 and Macintosh.**



## PHANTASMAGORIA 2: A PUZZLE OF FLESH

Sierra's follow-up to its grisly horror adventure of last year is not so much a sequel (Don and



Adrienne are gone) as a brand new story. **PHANTASMAGORIA 2: A PUZZLE OF FLESH** tells the tale of Curtis Craig, a man who, one year out of a mental hospital, begins experiencing a series of bizarre, horrific events that lead him to question his sanity once more. The biggest change over the original game is that all of the live action shots are being filmed entirely on sets and location, rather than blue screen, which promises to give the game a much more movie like feel.

**Sierra, (800) 757-7707, Windows 95**

The first computer game from actor Robert DeNiro's company, Tribeca Interactive, **9** is an off-the-wall adventure set in a delayed-released resort for aging rock stars, which you've just inherited. Your job is to fix up the place and, with the help of the various characters you'll meet, help get the musicians back on their feet. Befitting the glamour attached to this project, the game features the voices of James Belushi, Cher and Christopher Reeve, along with Aerosmith's Steven Tyler and Joe Perry. The latter two are said to have contributed

"creative input" to the project, although we can't say if that's a good thing or not. We haven't seen much gameplay yet, but 9's wonderfully surreal 3D animation, reminiscent of Jim Ludke's work in *The Residents' Bad Day on the Moon*, is impressive indeed, and makes it a title to watch for this fall.

**Tribeca Interactive, (212) 696-2000, Windows and Mac.**

## TITANIC: ADVENTURE OUT OF TIME

This suspense thriller places you in the role of a British secret agent aboard the doomed luxury liner the night it went down in 1912. No, you can't stop the ship from sinking, but what



you can do, in the time you have left before drowning, is complete a mission that would alter history by preventing the outbreak of World War I. As in CyberFlix's *Dust*, much of the gameplay focuses on your interactions with the myriad non-player characters; how you communicate with them will ultimately affect how well you succeed. The artwork that we've seen is beautiful, and is apparently a completely faithful recreation of the actual ship, down to the smallest details. CyberFlix has promised that they've toned down the over-the-top humor that turned off some gamers from *Dust*, in favor of a more suspenseful and realistic tone.

**GTE Entertainment, (619) 431-8801, Windows and Mac**

## FURTHER ADVENTURES

**BURST BURNER**, expected in early 1997 from Westwood Studios, is not just a rehash of the movie, but rather a new story that unfolds concurrently with the film's plot. Every action the player takes has ramifications throughout the game, so multiple experiences are possible. The title we were able to see so far is impressive, with high 3D environments and surreal characters. Also scheduled for an early 1997 release is Activision's **PUMPHLING**, a 3D animated sequel to Infocom's classic text adventure. You will once again be a member of the Stellar Patrol of the Third Galactic Union, involved in a completely new story that promises challenging gameplay and laughs. **PSYCHOSE!** *THE ISLAND OF DR. MOREAU* is a real-time, 3D graphic adventure based on the H.G. Wells horror story that pits you against the insane doctor and his island of mysterious "manbeasts." **TELEON LOVING CARE** is the intriguing new project from Tribeca (7th Guest, 11th Hour). More "interactive movie" than standard adventure fare, **TLC** is a psychological thriller about a young couple who, after losing their baby in a car crash, hire a live-in nurse—who complicates their life even further. Your decision-making will help determine how the story is played out.



COMING IN SEPTEMBER

Commander Zed is waiting <http://www.vie.com>



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Virgin Rainier Beer. 1996



## RETURN TO KROKODOR



**7**th Level's *Return to Krokodor* is an adventure set in the world created by novelist Raymond E. Feist. It's the reign of Prince Arutha, and a religious artifact called the Tear of the

Gods has been lost by the Ishpanian Church. *Return to Krokodor* will feature a new 3D engine from 7th Level which will enable gamers to participate in real-time combat with several different enemy armies. The game will also feature ship-to-ship combat as your character sails the Bitter Sea. And though it will incorporate full-motion video of more than 50 non-player characters, Feist says it will incorporate some of the lessons he learned from Jerry Luttrell (now at *Interplay*) and John Cufre (now at *Starwave*) when working on his role of *Fame* member and Premier winner, *Dynamix's Betwixt & Between*. Feist felt that the award-winning game had too many mini-quests in the early going, which bogged down play and gave the impression of weak game design. *Return to Krokodor*, stretching over nine chapters, will have a better sense of pacing, where even the mini-quests will add to the sense of climax and will add an AI routine to keep track of the player character's actions and attitude.

**7th Level, (800) 884-8863 x-126, Windows 95**

## BETRAYAL AT ANTARA

**T**he members of the design team of Sierra's *Betwixt & Between* at *Antara* consider their product to be a spiritual descendant of *Betwixt & Between* at *Krokodor*. When Sierra realized the mistake they had made when the former president of their Dynamix subsidiary killed the *Krokodor* sequel, higher management decided to create their own intellectual property. The *Antara* design team recognized that they couldn't use any of Feist's world, but they set out to create a world that they believed would make Feist proud. For example, instead of having the requisite orcs, trolls and elves of many post-Tolkien fantasy worlds, they developed cultures based on anthropomorphized like forms. *Betwixt & Antara*, like *Return to Krokodor*, also uses a new 3D engine. It also uses the most unobtrusive interface we've seen yet in a CRPG. The interface only takes up about 1/3 of the screen when maximized (with the usual character portraits and color-coded graphs) and, most of the time sits minimized at the bottom of the screen so that you can get a full-screen view of the action. Unlike *Return to Krokodor*, *Betwixt & Antara* will feature a disguised hex-based tactical combat system. It is also a skill-based system in which characters can work on improving one-to-five skills at a time and an intricate magic system where characters can research spells by combining areas of knowledge.

**Sierra, (800) 757-7707, Windows 95**

## THE ELDER SCROLLS: DAGGERFALL

**O**f course, CRPG fans are still awaiting *The Elder Scrolls: Daggerfall* from Bethesda. The sequel to the Premier-winning *The Elder Scrolls: Arena* features a smoother, faster 3D engine with plenty of special lighting and weather effects. It also

features more detailed character generation (including advantages and disadvantages), richer conversational capacity, ability to



own/store/discard object-oriented possessions, opportunity to join guilds, addition of lore and skill-based clues and activities, and option of customizing your on-screen avatar more than ever before (throughout the game as opposed to only at creation). If that weren't enough, Bethesda dipped into the TSR brand-trust to find a producer that has made sure that even the mini-quests add to the experience rather than toring you to assume the role of medieval Fed-Ex courier.

**Bethesda (301) 926-8300, Windows 95**

## LANDS OF LORE II: GUARDIANS OF DESTINY

**L**ANDS OF LORE broke new ground for RPGs, and its sequel, *Guardians of Destiny*, looks like it will do the same. With impressive 3D graphics and an intelligent gaming environment, *GoD* looks as if it might play more like an adventure game. As in the first *LANDS OF LORE*, players won't generate characters; instead, they take on the persona of Luther, a reluctant hero passed into odding the Lands of an evil curse. Though *GoD* is plot-driven, the designers at



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— John Sellers, Time Out NY

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— Scott Gohrs, Computer Game Review



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## ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

Westwood Studios are taking care not to reward or punish behavior; it's up to the player to provide personality for Luther, so there is no "right" way to complete the game. As Luther moves through the landscape, other characters will remember how he treats them and the plot will proceed accordingly. GoD promises to be a very good-looking, first-person perspective RPG.

Virgin Interactive Entertainment (714) 833-8710, 005

### DEATHS OF ARKANIAN: SHADOWS OVER RIVA

Lovers of intricate role-playing systems are probably already familiar with Sir-Tech's *REALMS OF ARKANIAN: SHADOWS OVER RIVA*. Based in the German role-playing universe, *Das Schwarze Auge* (The Black Eye), the *ARKANIAN* series features a 3D look and a rich, complex role-playing system. The universe is very fleshed out, as readers of the novels just released by Prime's Protos division (*The Chavkutan* and *The Lioness*, reviewed on CGW's AOL edition) can attest. The universe has a unique pantheon, egalitarian attitude toward gender, and an intriguing mix of cultures to commend it. This incarnation also features a new tactical style of combat reminiscent of X-Com or the upcoming *Super Heroes* from MicroProse.

Sir-Tech (800) 447-1230 Operator 75, Windows 95

### DIABLO

**D**IAULO, from the folks who brought you *WARCRAFT 2*, is a spiritual offspring of the ancient (in computer years) *ROGUE* game and its more recent descendant, *SSI's DUNGEON HICK*. Gamers choose from three distinct character classes: fighters, archers and wizards. Then, they descend into a crypt and onward into a monster- and trap-laden



labyrinth. Like its predecessors, *Diablo* features random dungeon construction and object/monster/trap placement so that you never play the

same game twice. Add impressive 3D characters, light-sourcing, and special effects, as well as multiplayer play on a free Internet site, and you've got an irresistible combination. (See Sneak Preview, pg. 118.)

Blizzard (800) 953-SNOW, Windows 95

### DUNGEON KEEPER

**P**reviewed in CGW #137, *Dungeon Keeper* turns the tables on traditional role playing and allows gamers to assume the role of the Ultimate Bad Guy. Gamers get to be dungeon archi-

tricts, monster handlers, first-person fighters, resource managers, and, in at least one campaign, the destroyer of an *Ultima*-style avatar. The game is rife with wonderful multiplayer touches such as audio cues to indicate where the "good guys" are trying to dig their way into your dungeon, shadow-sourcing so that you can detect when those dogooders are trying to sneak around corners, torture rooms where you can unleash your frustration on hapless foes to glean new info, and best of all, the ability to change every parameter in the game through an Excel spreadsheet.

Electronic Arts (800) 245-4525, Windows 95

### DARK EARTH

**D**ARK EARTH (previewed in our June issue) is an incredible new role-playing universe from Mindscape's development unit in France. A combination fantasy/science fiction game, *Dark*

*Earth* puts you in the role of a Guardian of Fire—literally the tender of the flame that heats the entire urban structure (Stalite) where he lives and a combination fireman/police-



man. The graphics make much of the juxtaposition of light vs. darkness, and the 3D sets are reminiscent of the illustrations for Jules Verne's novels or the sets of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*. The culture is extremely robust and the game has a surprisingly agile combat system that comes close to some of the best lighting games on the market. Even the monsters are different in this game, since the design team avoided the classic monsters in favor of monstrosities mutated from the familiar flora and fauna of our world.

Mindscape (800) 601-7529, Windows 95

### NEW DIMENSIONS FOR 1997

**W**HILE ALSO looking forward to some games that will probably not arrive until '97, *The Indestructibles* from EA/Buffalo looks like a fabulous superhero game. 3D heroes and villains engage in combat across the skies, over the rooftops, up the walls, and down the streets and alleys of a major metropolis. Now player Rollins Entertainment is working on *StreetView*, a role-playing game set in a future created by Neal Stephenson, author of the cyberpunk classic, *Snow Crash*. The game is anticipated as a '97 release. Another '97 release, *New World Computing's* newest *Might and Magic* game will also feature a new 3D engine with light-sourcing and beautiful texture-

maps...Mindscape, not previously known for role-playing, has staked out intriguing new ground in its '97 CRPG. Right now, we can't tell you anything more than its title, *Sense of Strangeness*, but the early design concepts are definitely intriguing.





nd on the 3<sup>th</sup> day,  
He split to Maui.





**Don't forget  
to feed the fish.**



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GOODHALL HELP YOU KEEP TRACK OF  
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MICROSOFT SIDEWINDER GAME PAD

which looks considerably more promising. Fully digital, the new game pad reduces GPU overhead associated with having to poll the game port, and has programmable buttons, good for multi-button combination moves on fighting games. The unit will ship with DirectInput drivers and, for multi-player games, you'll be able to daisy-

**M**icrosoft continues to make inroads into the gaming market. Last year the company introduced its first game controller, the Sidewinder 3D joystick, which landed with more of a thud than a bang in gamedom. Now they've unveiled a Batman-shaped Sidewinder game pad controller

chain up to four SideWinders together. The SideWinder will also support "hot-swapping," which will hopefully eliminate the need to reboot each time controllers are swapped or added to the daisy chain. Guestimated street price: about \$39.

Microsoft, (206) 862-8060

## THRUSTMASTER/CYBERNET DRIVING WHEEL

**T**hrustmaster took top honors at E3 in the Most Absurd Tradeshaw Chalchica category with boxer-shorts underwear bearing their name. In a more serious moment, Thrustmaster teamed up with Cybernet to build a force-feedback driving wheel that ships in October. The controller, as yet unnamed, will be priced under \$200 and should make the ride on driving games a lot bumpier.

Thrustmaster (503) 639-3200

## FIRST PERSON GAMING ASSASSIN

**F**irst Person Gaming (FPG) is a new kid on the block headed by a former Logitech joystick designer. FPG's first controller, the Assassin, looks like a track-ball mouse, but when used with a joystick, lets you "free-look" in first-person shoot 'em-ups like Duke Nukem 3D. Free-looking is important in 3D games with six degrees of freedom (up/down, forward/backward, left/right), because you're dealing with unrendered on different levels above and below.

Your joystick plugs into the digital Assassin, which in turn connects to your joystick port. The Assassin controls up/down and left/right movement, while the joystick handles forward/backward and strafe

## CH FORCE F/X

**C**H has established itself as one of the best stick makers for "flight jockeys and roolin' tootin' shooters. Now CH has a force feedback joystick in the works called the Force F/X, which should be shipping sometime in September. The Force F/X will have support for five kinds of programmable feedback. Jolt simulates collisions or vehicle feedback, like lowering landing gear. Jolt-Button Reflex will provide feedback similar to weapon recoil. Vibration (X&Y) will mimic driving over a rough road surface, or a vehicle engine revving. Buffeting will simulate airplane turbulence and explosions. And testy, Vector Force will give feedback similar to a G-force pull in tight car turns.

CH Products, (519) 598-2518



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	Sex: male	
	Height: 5' 9"	
	Weight: 157 lbs	
	Eyes: Under Sunglasses	
Hair: Flaming Red		
Age: 20-Something		
The Normality Police Can Be Contacted At: <a href="http://www.interplay.com">http://www.interplay.com</a>		



left/right controls. The device currently supports Duke Nukem, Doom II, Heretic, Descent II and MicroWarrior 2. FPG is also working on a Quake driver that should be ready when the unit ships in August. In addition to drivers for DOS titles, the Assassin will also have DirectInput support for Windows 95 games as well. Street price is slated to be about \$99.

**First Person Gaming, (510) 264-9577**

### SPACETEC SPACEORB 360

**W**e've seen a lot of devices touted as the ideal 3D game controller, but this is one design that actually works pretty well. It offers common-sense control input for 3D games like Descent II with a pressure-sensitive ball attached to a console-style controller. Based on Spacetec's earlier Spaceball Avenger I, the new controller seems to have overcome the Avenger's awkward design and prohibitive price.

By moving the SpaceDrib's flexible control ball with your left hand,



you can move forward/backward, look up, down, or side-to-side, strafe, jump, squat, pitch or roll. The digital device supports six-axes of control, so these moves can be combined to do nasty things. Like circling an opponent in Duke Nukem while continuously firing at him. The right-hand part of the controller has six buttons for shooting, punching, opening doors, etc.

According to Spacetec, the SpaceDrib supports Doom II, Descent, Descent II, Duke Nukem 3D, Heretic, Heretic, MicroWarrior2, Quake and others. It reportedly works with Windows 95 games, using either the standard Microsoft joystick driver or through a SpaceWare optimized game driver. It is also supposed to be compatible with any 2D or 3D game that supports a mouse.

The SpaceDrib should be out by the time you read this, for approximately \$85 street price.

**Spacetec IMC, (508) 970-0330.**

### NEC POWERPLAYER 2000/2001

**N**EC's first gaming rig made a fairly respectable showing in our Ultimate Gaming Machine feature earlier this year. NEC is now coming out with a hell-bent-for-gaming rig called the PowerPlayer, which should be shipping by the time you read this. If specs are any indicator, this one should pack a wallop, with a 166 or 200 MHz Pentium CPU, 32 MB of EDD RAM, a 256 KB synchronous pipeline burst L2 cache, 2 GB hard-drive, NEC's 4x6x CD-ROM drive (a 6x drive that holds four CD-ROMs), ThrustMaster Flight Control System joystick, Advent AV370 speakers, and Yamaha audio system. What's really noteworthy about this system is its graphics subsystems. Out of the box, the PowerPlayer comes with an ATI Xpression 3D board for 2D and DOS graphics, and a board based on 3dfx's smokin' Voodoo chip to handle the 3D graphics. This venerable combination should make all your graphics boogie, especially Direct3D-based action titles that we should be seeing by year's end. The PowerPlayer is supposed to ship with a full payload of games, though the bundled titles have not yet been decided.

Perhaps the most interesting spec on this system is its price: about \$4000 with a 17-in. NEC monitor. The PowerPlayer should be shipping in late August, and we'll take a first look in the September issue to tell you what we find.

**NEC, (415) 528-6000**

### 3D GRAPHICS: FOLLOW THE YELLOW BRICK ROAD

In the ongoing FUD-test (Fear, Uncertainty, Doubt) that has become the customer 3D graphics market, there weren't any new players joining the 3D+ hardware vendors already slugfesting it out. But, we did find some new titles running on 3D silicon that looked very impressive. Most notably, LucasArts' Duke Rascals, Japa Nukeer runs on Rendition's versatile chip. And EOSOS has an accelerated version of its upcoming Thru Rascal running on 3DFX's Voodoo chip that also looks very promising. Both chips should be stepping as you read this, with Rendition on Creative Labs' PCI 3D Blaster, and 3Dfx on Orind's Righteous 3D board.

Matrox's new Mystique chip runs several accelerated titles, and their bundled titles will reportedly include Sony's Tekken Tactics, Activision's MechWarrior 2, and Criterion's Scorched Planet.

Several boards are now shipping based on S3's VIRGE part. See our reviews of Diamond's Stealth 3D 2000, and Hercules' Terminator 3D in this issue, page 106.

ATI's Xpression 3D is shipping as well, with an accelerated version of MechWarrior 2. Look for our review of the ATI board in the September issue.

Meanwhile, computer manufacturers who don't want to be left behind are weighing in with 3D card-equipped models. In addition to NEC (above), Compaq has announced that it will be featuring the NEC/VideoLogic PowerVR 3D chip in a version of their Presario rig, which will ship sometime this fall.

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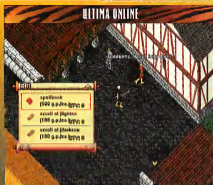
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**B**ritannia, the fabled setting of Lord Britain's landmark Ultima series, has become a living, changing kingdom in cyberspace. In Ultima Online, gamers will assume characters within a medieval fantasy kingdom. The size of Britannia itself is expected to be larger than the combination of maps for all of the previous Ultimas combined.

The graphics use the oblique overhead perspective associated with

Ultima. But these worlds go far beyond that, as the full extent of the world is explored. Players will be able to customize their characters with equipment and abilities as well. But for now, players can't look detective. They will also be able to buy and sell trade goods with each other. Unlike the sword game, characters will not be forced into battleships and, though the "quest" caught in the boxed games will be encouraged, characters will be living a world with a greater bandwidth of moral choice.

Characters will be able to fight with each other, kill each other and steal from each other. In fact, during beta testing, an informal "guild" was formed.

When Ultima Online finally becomes a fully commercial project, right now, the beta is limited to around 100 people at a time. It will feature two types of quests: major quests and resource quests. The former will be story lines designed by a team of Origin. The latter will be determined by what characters do with the virtual resources of Britannia. For example, Lord British postulates that

dragons tend to dine on cattle and sheep, since they are much faster and easier to kill than humans. But, should the virtual humans of certain areas within Britannia decide to deplete their livestock too much, it could be that they'll see incursions against the towns by human-devouring dragons. Naturally, this is likely to incite a dragon hunt. In this way, the world will be shaped by both closed-ended and open-ended plots.

Origin, [www.origin.com](http://www.origin.com), Windows 95

## MERIDIAN 59

**L**ike Ultima Online, 3DO's Meridian 59 is designed to be a dynamic universe. A fantasy realm where on-screen characters can buy, sell, trade, cheat, and steal from each other, Meridian 59 has become a fascinating sociological study. Some characters have elected to follow the dark side and prey upon other characters as denizens of the virtual underworld, while others have built impromptu guilds of bodyguards, and still others have

become cyber-barbers. You maneuver through the environment using the arrow keys and chat with other characters using a chat line. In many ways, Meridian seems like a cross between Sentinetic's



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## Rise To The Challenge...

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GenStove II and VOR Technologies' *The Dragon's Tale* since it uses a command line like *GenStove* and allows you to navigate through a 3D graphics window like *The Dragon's Tale*.

300, [www.3do.com](http://www.3do.com), Windows 95

### THE REALM

**T**HE REALM is Sierra's multiplayer role-playing game on the Internet. Though the game looks like merely a sticker version of the standard Sierra graphic adventure, it is significantly more open-ended than that. You select the name and character class of your character from a typical fantasy assortment. Then, you create the look of your character as with *INN's* avatar creation and adjust your attribute points in typical CRPG manner



prior to play. Once you arrive in the land, you have to locate shops where you can buy clothing, armor, weapons and food. Then, you are liable to stumble across combat and get wasted before you know it. Fortunately, you can be resurrected as easily as you can with a generous *Dungeon Master* in a face-to-face game. Of course, that may be simply because the game is in beta test on the web at the present time.

Sierra, <http://www.sierra.com>, Windows 95

### AIR WARRIOR

**T**he great granddaddy of graphic multiplayer games has had reconstructive surgery amounting that of the six million dollar man. The latest *Air Warrior* has SVGA graphics, new cockpits for the British, German and U.S. WWII vintage air-

craft you normally fly online play (as well as new cockpits for the WWI and Korean era missions you can fly solo). The software will even be available in an enhanced format (with more than 100 additional solo missions) to be published by Interactive Magic as *Air Warrior II: Online*.

*Air Warrior* allows you to choose aircraft from one of the three main combatants in the European theater of war and join a squadron of other virtual pilots in dogfights, escort missions, bombing runs and more. If you're currently on AOL, you can get info and jump right to the game with Keyword: Kesmai. You can also access the game from CompuServe using this month's CG-ROM software.

Kesmai, [www.kesmai.com](http://www.kesmai.com), Windows, DOS



### BATTLETECH: SOLARIS

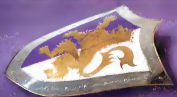
**T**he main problem with the original and award-winning *MULTI-PLAYER BATTLETECH*, as it appeared on GEM, was that the FASA universe was too spread out. It was often hard to find where the action was and to get your mechs (the giant robots from the original *MechWarrior*) to the right planet



before the battles were over and the other human combatants had logged off. Further, it was always human mech pilots versus AI mech pilots. Now, all of the action takes place on one planet: Solaris (the

# HEROES II

## of Might and Magic II



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## BIG GAME HUNT

### ONLINE GAMES

gaming/gladiatorial planet where Justin Allard became the premier gladiator Justin Xiang in Michael Stackpole's *Warrior* series of novels). Now it's teams of human pilots versus human pilots in a variety of missions.

**Kesmai, [www.kesmai.com](http://www.kesmai.com), Windows, OOS**

### CASTLE INFINITY

What if dinosaurs weren't really extinct? What if they avoided their post-meteoric demise by holing up in a castle in another dimension? What if they wandered about singing, wearing maroon lezes, and fighting the monsters from that dimension which threatened their survival? What if ordinary kids could find that dimension via cyberspace and help those dinosaurs against the monsters? What if ordinary kids could cooperate with each other in helping the cute, cuddly dinosaurs? What if they occasionally learned something when they helped the dinosaurs? That's what you have in **CASTLE INFINITY**,



Starwave's latest venture into web-based entertainment. The game uses a videogame style interface and combines animated cartoons (on a CD-ROM published every six months or so) with game action via the web. Even technical difficulties can be fun in **Castle Infinity** because the program is set up so that should a child accidentally get disconnected, a cartoon plays while the modem redials.

**Starwave, [www.starwave.com](http://www.starwave.com), Windows 95.**

### ONLINE EXPECTATIONS

Some new computer and desktop publishing game releases.

Second Nature Interactive, Inc. of Cambridge, Massachusetts has given us a demo of *Bureaucracy*, their multi-player 3D role-playing game that features the richest, cutest we've ever seen in a computer game. We'll show and tell you more as it gets closer.

Another new entry World's Apart Productions, is testing beta on their fantasy role-playing game *Ascension*. The cool part of *Ascension* is that the players will be able to control every facet of the political, economic and military life of the virtual kingdom.

Virgin's Best Division is currently working on *Sussex*, sort of a multiplayer version of an updated *American-style* shooter. Electronic Arts is hard at work on their *Jane's Online* products, still trying to resolve the key missions will be generated out of previous results within ongoing campaigns. It sounds extraordinary.

Finally, Kesmai has just begun work on *Avions vs. Predator*. This multiplayer game will let you play either a space marine, Alien, or Predator. It appears that much of the work is being done by the folks who did the graphics for the Jaguar version (the best product on that system).

**"Strategy Game Of The Year"**

-Computer Gaming World

**"Turn Based Strategy Game Of The Year"**

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**"It's one of the BEST strategy games  
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-Mark Asher

**"Heroes of Might and Magic is an excellent game"**

-Tony Damiani

**"It's great, wonderful, long term play value  
(Win 95 version), and highly addicting"**

-Barbara Christensen

**"An excellent and entertaining game"**

-Darrin Fesperman

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DIABLO/STARCRIFT

**B**oth Blizzard's role-playing game, *Diablo*, and real-time strategy title, *Starcraft*, are being designed with multiplayer gaming in mind. In addition to modem, direct link and IPX network support, Blizzard will allow players to compete online with their free Internet gaming service, battle.net. Battle.net, set to go live in September, will include arenas for players to chat and challenge each other in either *Diablo* or *Starcraft*. (Unfortunately, battle.net will not be backward-compatible with *Warcraft II*, but every multiplayer title after *Starcraft* will have battle.net support.) The best part is, Blizzard will charge no hourly, monthly, or startup fees. To reach the Internet site, both games will have a battle.net option built into their main menus. If you've got a modem and on-line service provider, just click on the battle.net button to jump onto the service.

ICPIP Internet access is required for the connection, and gamers will still have to pay their Internet Service Provider for the connect



time. Blizzard, though, will not charge a fee for its service. Once connected, players will be able to compete against others of similar ability, because the service segregates arenas by skill level. Battle.net will be accessible 24 hours a day to gamers throughout the world.

*Diablo* will be the first game playable on the service. There is no practical limit to the number of *Diablo* games that can be played, though each game can only have a maximum of four players. (For more on *Diablo*, see this month's Sneak Preview on page 118.) *Starcraft* will follow in the Winter of 1996 and will be the second game to support the on-line service. The space strategy game will support up to eight players per game. For more information on the game, see the Strategy Games section of this month's Big Game Hunt Feature.

Blizzard Entertainment, [www.blizzard.com](http://www.blizzard.com); both titles Windows 95



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**I**t seems that the Chessmaster line has been with us since the prehistoric times of computing, that's more fact than myth. However, the latest in the award-winning series hardly tries to rest on its predecessors' laurels. The computer opponents—always a Chessmaster strength—this year represent playing styles of Grandmasters from the nearly-forgotten

the wide range of opponents, Internet play, the vastly improved analysis functions (you can import data from Chessbase, for example), and the wide range of teaching tools. It would be hard indeed to find a more comprehensive and enjoyable chess package.

**Mindscape, (800) 234-3088, Windows/Win95**

giants of the 19th century to the latest kingside stars, all painstakingly researched by GM Eric Schiller. If your only interest is in learning the game, you might prefer Maurice Ashley Teaches Chess. But given



rates fleets and castles from Castle Risk, and all versions (both the original French and the newer North American rules are supported) will be playable over modem. Light, enjoyable and addictive fun.

**Hasbro Interactive, (508) 921-3700, Win95**

### YOU DON'T KNOW JACK: SPORTS

**A**re tennis racquet strings made of: 1) catgut, 2) monofilament nylon, 3) leftover strands of Andre Agassi's fake hair? Regardless of how you might answer, Berkeley shoots and scores with this one. The follow-up to our Premier Award Winner for best Puzzle/Classics game promises to skewer legendary sports figures with the same fresh invariance as the original—and hopefully more questions this time around. You have to wonder why those math-masters at ESPN didn't think of it first. Our win, their loss.

**Berkeley Systems, (510) 540-5535, Windows/Mac**

### MONTY PYTHON & THE HOLY GRAIL

**A**lthough we are the Editors Who Vary Often Say Silly

Things, we would be remiss if we didn't laurel you again with this fine puzzle game. For the full scoop, see the Puzzles/Classics column on page 157.

**7th Level, (214) 437-4858, Win95**



### RISK!

**O**ne of the great parlor games finally gets the royal treatment, a la Monopoly. The version we saw featured a solid AI (unlike previous computer attempts) and some very crisp, miniature-style graphics for the battles. The advanced game incorpo-

ocean—move your fleet, perform searches with radar/sonar, and even shoot torpedoes from hidden submarines. Being able to launch cruise missiles over the Internet gives "you sunk my battleship" a whole new sense of fun.

**Hasbro Interactive, (508) 921-3700, Win95**

### SCRABBLE

**I**f you're looking for new ways to describe how Hasbro interactive is attempting to dominate the Classic arm of the industry, you can

probably find those words in Scrabble. The accessibility of this classic game is enhanced by the elegant graphic look, and by the ability to design your own custom dictionary. Playable by wordsmiths, linguists, or just those who enjoy spelling "kleptomaniac," this could be the sleeper hit of the year.

**Hasbro Interactive, (508) 921-3700, Win95**



### OTHER PUZZLE PIECES

**D**avidson looks to follow up its Maurice Ashley Teaches Chess success with Extremis Chess, while Interplay partners with USCF Chess (endorsed by the U.S. Chess Federation, of course). Hasbro Interactive's ambitious schedule will also include computer versions of Othello and Yatzee. Roll those dice!

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## F-22 LIGHTNING II



**T**he Lockheed Lightning II is promising to soon become as ubiquitous as the F-16 Fighting Falcon in the sim world. Helping this trend along will be Novalogic, with F-22

Pathfinder II. This freshman simulation from the producers of the Command: Modern Airborne Sim series has the top-notch visual and sound effects you'd expect from Novalogic, as well as an authentic flight feel that might surprise you. Novalogic has worked with Lockheed to accurately model the plane's performance and instrumentation.

Although F-22 promises to be a more "serious" sim than previous Novalogic efforts, expect some compromises in the name of gameplay: in the preliminary multiplayer mode we played, for instance, your plane is simply disabled for a period of time after being "destroyed," saving you the long flight back to the battlefield. The terrain model is reminiscent of EF2000, but has a richer color palette and changes with the seasons. The texture-mapped aircraft are among the best looking we've ever seen. Look for the full scoop in next month's CGW.

**Novalogic; (800) 858-1322; Win 95**

## TFX 3: LIGHTNING STRIKE

**T**FX 3 builds on the foundation of Ocean/DID's EF2000, but this sequel puts you in the cockpit of the ubiquitous F-22. The new version of the WarGen dynamic campaign generator promises multiple scenarios and changing political and tactical alliances. Sim pilots will now be given full control of mission planning, as well as the ability to man an AWACS control screen to direct air-



craft and evaluate the tactical situation.

DID is researching many of the advanced systems

under consideration for inclusion in the EF2000's cockpit, which should lead to a very user-friendly control environment without sacrificing realism. The aircraft are now texture-mapped, and the terrain looks even better here than in EF2000, thanks to enhancements such as dynamic lighting and shadowing that changes as time passes. Desert missions should be a little less gloomy than the fjords of the first game, and there's more of an emphasis on maritime warfare here. Serial and modem play will be included, and net play should support more than eight human pilots. TFX 3 should arrive this winter.

**Ocean/DID; (800) 289-1411; Win 95**

## FALCON 4.0

**T**he much-awaited Falcon 4.0 may finally be cooling down from the vapor. At the recent E3 show, an early demo version of this F-16C Block 50 sim featured some amazing Future Unlimited-style digitized terrain graphics and head-to-head play. What we saw was more a technology demo than even an Alpha version, however.



The flight model promises to be as impressive to today's fliers as Falcon 3.0's was six years ago. Cockpit systems have been fine-tuned to better compensate for the limitations of a computer monitor; along with the traditional full instrument panel, you can fly with just the HUD and superimposed MFD displays. The avionics are much more advanced, with new details such as HARM targeting systems. At this point it looks like the original Falcon 3.0 padlock view may give way to a Back to Back-to-Back-style floating target box, a move sure to upset Falcon purists.

Falcon 4.0's designers plan to model a million square miles of Korean terrain. Although the very early demo we saw showed obvious texture-map tiling, the overall effect was dazzling, especially on the version that took advantage of the 3DFX graphics board. You should have more control over resources in the air and on the ground here. MicroProse promises significant enhancements in multiplayer play. The one promise the company won't make is a ship date—first half of 1997 is as close as it will commit.

**MicroProse; (800) 879-PLAY; Win 95**

## EUROPEAN AIR WAR

**T**he upcoming European Air War will be a welcome respite to the recent drought of historic flight sims. This sequel to 1942: The Pacific Air is reminiscent of its predecessor in





structure and general feel, but the improved SVGA simulation engine does a much better job of pulling you in to the experience. Along with the improved terrain and aircraft, the cockpit instrumentation is now much more readable—it should now be useable even in virtual cockpit mode.

As with its predecessor, you'll be able to fly over 20 fighter and attack aircraft, but bombers are off-limits. Depending on which side you choose to fly for, you'll escort or attack formations of B-17s as the Allies inch into German territory. Up to 32 planes will be in the air at once, a big improvement over earlier sims, but only a taste of the action that occurred in the gigantic WW II bomber formations. A mission film recorder will allow you to review your performance.

**MicroProse; (800) 879-PLAY; MS-DOS**

## F/A-18 HORNET 2.0

The popular Mac simulation will come to Win 95 in early fall with a number of enhancements. These include a highly accurate force-vector flight model and improved graphics, with support for resolutions up to 1024x768. You'll fly carrier and land-based fighter and attack missions in the Navy and Marines' premier strike fighter, against a variety of targets in three theaters of operation. If you're not too good at hitting ground targets, you can always drop one of the available nuclear weapons. However, a more civil response would be to take advantage of F/A-18 Hornet 2.0's classroom training guide, designed by an active-duty Naval aviator.

**Graphic Simulations, (214) 386-7575; Win 95**



## M1A2 ABRAMS

Ever notice how in a lot of modern era games, technology for the bad guys stops around 1990, while all the cool U.S. equipment is readily available? Well, such isn't the case here, as designer Arnold Hendrick (co-designer with Sid Meier of several classic MicroProse games) has done his homework to include all the latest Ukrainian, Russian, and other former Soviet Bloc weaponry. The flashpoints include the U.S. intervening in a Russian/Ukrainian conflict, as well as fighting in the Middle East, with scenarios tied together by a branching campaign. All the high-tech toys you expect are included for these armored behemoths: infrared sights, wire-guided anti-tank missiles, even BMPs and the occasional infantry squad. The views from the tank were still pretty rough at press time, but at least you can tell a tree from a tank at 100 yards (unlike, say, *Annozero First*).



Overall, this is a game that prizes substance over style. If you're tired of blowing the dust off that old copy of M1 Tank Platoon, this new tank sim might just re-align your treads.

**Interactive Magic; (919) 461-0722; Win 95**

## ALSO IN THE WORKS

Interactive Magic will be jumping on the 4.22 bandwagon soon for a preview period. *Armadillo* has redesigned the *Wolf Space* tech (*Wolf*) support (high res, clouds, and numerous other improvements) and the early copies we saw of *Down* (see *Start Review*, Part 2) were patching. *Rep-00002* has undergone an interesting (if not the attract-o-verse interface shown in our report) preview, the sims still on track for a pre-Christmas release.

Of course, it's hard to tell if *Armadillo* (the *Grav Pix*) should be shipped shortly, and look for the online versions of the *Papyrus* racing sims to finally surface soon. A patrol disc will add new missions to *SSK's Super Hunter*, and we hear a modern sub sim is in the works from a well-known San Mateo software company.



## STAR TREK: STARFLEET ACADEMY

LUCASFILM



**F**inally, gain the rank of Lt. jg. by going into the Academy, waiting to go the whole tour, on an interstellar journey in the command chair of the Starship Enterprise. Actually, *Starfleet Academy* puts you at the helm of an Enterprise simulator, as you work through 27 missions that include battles, diplomacy, and the fabled "no-win scenario," the Kobayashi Maru. William

Shatner, George Takei, and Walter Koenig reprise their roles as Kirk, Sulu, and Chekov and act as your Academy instructors.

Portions of the game take place on the ground at the Academy, where you'll interact with other cadets and deal with academy internal politics, and possibly a mystery or two. But the real action takes place on the bridge, where you'll command your crew in diplomatic and research missions, as well as in combat scenarios against 20 different types of starships. The combat looks true to the Star Trek "battleship duel" style, rather than the goofy crosshair-based phaser wars found in earlier Interplay Trek games.

Even more exciting is the network play mode, basically a starship vs. starship mode. Take the helm of the Enterprise, a Romulan Bird of Prey, a Klingon battlecruiser, as well as Game Thrones, and other ships in space combat. Beautiful light-sourced polygon graphics will add to the pleasure of photon-torpedoing your enemies to death. This game will hopefully beam in before Christmas.

**Interplay; (714) 653-8655; MS-DOS, Win 95, Power Mac, Playstation.**

## X-WING VS. TIE FIGHTER

**E**ither you loved Tie Fighter and X-Wing so much that you've played the games and the mission disks all the way through, or you quickly tired of the *Leviathans*-like puzzle elements of the popular space sims. Either way, you're itching for a new and different Star Wars experience. *X-Wing vs. Tie Fighter* should fit the bill nicely no matter which camp you're from, because this multiplayer entry in the Star Wars series lets you engage real human players in

space dogfights. Both modem and net play will be possible; there are also some solo missions designed primarily as practice for the multiplayer action.

You can fly for Imperial, Rebel, or Pirate teams, and you'll have over a dozen kinds of starfighters to choose from. If your side is short on players, you can command multiple computer-flown wingmen (and jump into their cockpits if your own ship is destroyed).

An enhanced graphics engine adds texture maps taken directly from Lucasfilm's Star Wars archive to the ships, dramatically enhancing the look of this fall, 1996 game.


**LucasArts; (800) 99-LUCAS; MS-DOS**



## MECHWARRIOR 2: MERCENARIES

**A**ctually a prequel to the original *MechWarrior 2*, *Mercenaries* takes place 18 years earlier. As Inner Sphere Mechwarriors, you're in the game not for loyalty and honor, but for money, fame, and power. As a gun (or LRM) for hire, you'll work to earn C-Bills to build new Mechs, hire additional pilots to assist you in future missions, and pay for ammo, technicians and repairs.

If money's tight, *Mercenaries* borrows a page from Sierra's *EarthSiege 2* and allows you to salvage parts from damaged Mechs from the battlefield and use them for your own repairs and enhancements.

A close-up photograph of a large ground squirrel sitting upright on a gravelly surface. The squirrel is holding a piece of green grass in its mouth with its front paws. The background is a soft, out-of-focus landscape of dry grass and earth. A black horizontal bar with white text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

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The enhanced graphics engine features texture-mapped mechs, and the Win95 version will use Direct3D to further enhance the graphic environment. **Activision; (310) 473-9200; MS-DOS and Win 95**

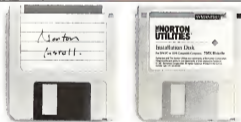


### PRIVATEER: THE DARKENING

This isn't *Privateer 2*, which is still in the works, but rather an all-new European sequel to Origin's original trade-end combat space game. Although the game starts with the incredibly overused "you're starting the game with amnesia and going on a voyage of self-discovery" plot, *The Darkening* actually looks promising. The video sequences star the creepy Christopher Walken, along with John Hurt and David Warner.

As usual, you'll need to bring in cash as a legit cargo hauler, scout, bounty hunter, courier, etc., to finance your adventures. This time you're not flying the cargo ships, but rather escorting them in hot new fighter designs. Up to 18 different ships and a wide variety of add-ons should keep things interesting. The SVGA space combat engine was one of the most impressive we saw at the recent E3 show.

**Origin; (512) 424-6620; MS-DOS**



**They're exactly the same, but somebody just paid \$100,000 for the one on the right.**

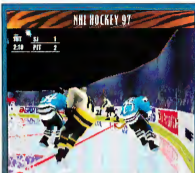
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Any time you see a group of journalists drop their legal eye-veils and go into full-blown gee-whiz mode, you know you've got something hot on your hands. That's exactly what happened at E3 this May, when we saw a preview of Electronic Arts' upcoming NHL Hockey 97. EA already set a new standard for hockey games with the '96 version, but, happily, they're not letting this 356 get fat and lazy on the player's bench. Instead, the '97 version constitutes a major graphic boost, with awesome, realistic 3D polygonal players based on motion-captured moves from Tom Pederson of the San Jose Sharks. If you think you've played a cool-looking hockey game already, just wait until you've been body-checked by Claude Lemieux in this game, with his name and number clearly visible on his back. In terms of gameplay, six types of checking, variable slapshot speed, as well as modem and LAN play will all be doing on the cake. This is our must-have sports pick of the season. **Electronic Arts, (415) 571-7171, MS-DOS**

### NFL LEGENDS 97

This ambitious new title from Accolade boasts the freshest premise of any computer football game in years—letting you take virtually any player or team in NFL history and place them in any one of four eras: 1932, 1950, 1968 and 1996. With a humongous array of statistics and faithful adherence to the rules of each era, NFL Legends lets fantasy football freaks go wild. How would the '68 Packers match up against the '96 Cowboys? And how would both teams do if forced to play under 1932 rules, when there were no separate offensive and defensive units? Customizable playbooks, variable weather and field conditions, and trading options all contribute to the game's impressive strategic richness. Beautiful SVGA graphics and solid gameplay should keep action fans satisfied as well.

**Accolade, (408) 985-1700, Windows 95**

### FRONT PAGE SPORTS BASEBALL PRO 95

This new Windows 95 version is Sierra's first update of their venerable FPS baseball franchise in two years, and it looks like it was worth the wait. As in previous versions, gamers can choose to play in an arcade, managerial or career mode—the lat-



ter giving you the ability to track players' performance over their entire career up through retirement. The new version includes realistic 3D models of every current major-league stadium, while the action on the field incorporates the same great-looking, high-res, motion-captured animation found in FPS Pro Football 96. Overall, the game promises a nice balance between arcade action and stat-based strategy. **Sierra, (800) 757-7707, Windows 95**

### ABC'S MONDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL

Yes, the television institution that's been destroying marriages for years is now making its way to the computer screen. This is the first release from OverTime (OT) Sports—but don't expect a scrawny rookie. OT Sports is a division of Capital Cities/ABC Inc., itself a subsidiary of Disney and you can bet that the money is there. The game will be hosted by real-life broadcasters Al Michaels, Frank Gifford and Dan Dierdorf, with extra commentary by Lynn Swann and the loveable Brent



Musburger. Nine TV camera angles and on-field mikes will help simulate the look and feel of a television broadcast. All 3D NFL teams with their stadiums and 1996 rosters will be in the game, which will feature motion-captured 3D polygonal players. Along with all the glitz, the gameplay looks promising, with editable playbooks, weekly downloadable stats and more. One problem we foresee: all but one of the six players used for the motion-capture were from the AFC. So though your team may look realistic, don't plan on winning the Super Bowl any time soon.

**OT Sports, (410) 771-8550, Windows 95**



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## NCAA CHAMPIONSHIP BASKETBALL

**N**BA players may make the big money, but everyone knows that the real, pure basketball action happens on the college level—especially these days. GTE's NCAA CHAMPIONSHIP BASKETBALL looks like a winner that will bring some much-needed college hoops action to the PC. The game will include 64 Division 1 teams along with their home courts, colors and even mascots. More importantly, the statistical model of each team is based on each college's hoop history as well as the playing style of the current coaches. We especially like the recruiting aspect of the game: pre-season



action lets you study all the top prospects and compete against other coaches for recruitment. Based on the player's desires and your school's program, you may or may not succeed in attracting the talent you want. Once you have your team together, you can track players' development over the course of their college career. No word yet on whether your best players will leave for the NBA after their freshman or sophomore year—now that would be realism.

**GTE Entertainment, (619) 431-8801, MS-005**

## MADDEN NFL '97

**W**ell, we included this game in last year's fall preview when it had a '96 moniker, and again in last year's holiday issue, but EA tumbled the release. Now it's been renamed for '97, and EA promises that we'll see it this fall. Let's hope so, because this is a long-overdue update to one of the classic football titles. More action game than sim, Madden '97 will boast a of host new features, including situational substitutions, nine audibles, modem and LAN play, downloadable weekly stats and a new instant replay feature that lets you track the ball or any player. A second CD includes the "Madden University," where the inimitable Mr. Madden takes you through the fundamentals of the game and offers strategic guidance.

**Electronic Arts, (415) 571-7171, MS-005**

## NBA FULL COURT PRESS

**A**BC isn't the only 800-pound gorilla entering the computer sports scene this year; 98-pound weakling Bill Gates and his humble startup, Microsoft, is hustling onto the digital parquet with NBA Full Court Press—and you can stop laughing now. We

checked this game out at E3, hoping to be able to mock it for this roundup, but were stunned to see that it wasn't as lame as we were hoping—not at all. Along with the now standard-issue motion captured animation (which needed work), the game boasts a slick interface and, based on what we saw, not half bad action-oriented gameplay. Best of all is an easily accessible and surprisingly deep playbook that diagrams each play and describes when and why you might want to use it. A thoughtful touch from a name you normally don't associate with sports, to say the least.

**Microsoft, (206) 882-8080, Windows 95**



## TROPHY BASS 2

**S**ierra's Trophy Bass was one of the oddball hits in computer sports of the past year: a fishing simulation that reeled in gamers who previously hadn't been any closer to the sport than a sushi bar. Now Sierra is prepping a sequel, Trophy Bass 2, with enough new features to keep things interesting. Five new lakes



(for a total of 10); improved AI for fish, lure and lake; and new full-motion video tips from bass fishing pros are all being added to the stew, but the real draw this time will be the multi-player capabilities. You can fish in tournaments with others over modems, LANs and the Internet, which adds a nice competitive edge to the title. Now all that's missing is the virtual beer.

**Sierra, (800) 757-7707, Windows 95 and 3.1**

## ON THE BENCH

**V**irt Sports is releasing the next two titles in its lineup, VR Golf—which should be out by the time you read this—and VR Baseball, scheduled for fall. The graphics on the first release, VR Soccer, were outstanding, the gameplay less so—but these are intriguing titles well worth watching. Ascotade is hard at work on the follow-up to Havoc 3.5—and is thinking about whether to continue the franchise or branch out in a new direction. (We vote for the latter.) SPX isn't the only company working the college circuit. Mindscape is hard at work on two titles, NCAA Basketball Final Four and NCAA Football. Soapbox Showdown. Finally, look for Sierra to expand its Front Page Sports franchise with FPS Golf this fall.

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Jury Standby Pro City 1912 3.5, Rise to the Peak 3.5, Game the Senator 3.5, Star Trek Journeyman 3.5, Billux 3.5, Tyrant 3.5, Elements 3.5, Arcade Action Km 3.5

**SPEND \$200**  
Pelican 3.0 3.5, Harpoon Classic CD or Wolf, Jutland CD, Better a 9100s Mac OS, Universal Network



**F**or those of you who were finally able to put Civ II aside, prepare your willpower for another sleep-depriving assault.

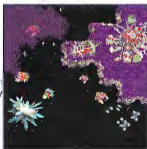
Since our sneak preview, the game has undergone an SVGA facelift, but it's more than new graphics that entice. The well-defined alien races are possessed of even more personality than before, and what was already the best diplomatic AI in gaming has been improved, so that those Darjows are sneakier than ever. Limitations on ship design have been lifted, and there are more tactical options in space and planetary combat. One of the few weaknesses of MOO, the tedious and confusing interface, has been totally revamped for easier navigation. Heroes make an appearance, but unlike those in *Master of Magic*, they don't totally dominate play. And our best sources tell us that we'll finally have multiplayer for humans (or Buirath, or Pailons...). The closest thing this year to a sure-fire sci-fi hit—our compliments to both Steve Barcia and MicroProse for not rushing this one.

**MicroProse, (800) 695-4263, DOS.**

## STARCRAFT

**T**aking a temporary hiatus from Aztecra, the talented folks at Blizzard have decided to venture into the final frontier for their next real-time foray. In the endless debate between

real-time and turn-based strategy titles, Blizzard's *Warcraft II* has always been held up as the right step in real-time wargaming. *STARCRAFT*, of course, will be better. Not much of the back story is known, but what we do know is that there will be three sides to



the conflict and each side will have units that play differently. In *Warcraft II*, only looks, magic and a few abilities of the upgraded troops created any difference in the two sides. *Starcraft*'s three different races will each have distinct advantages and disadvantages. There are other improvements as well. You can group up to 12 units, and attacking from troop transports will be easier now. Instead of clicking once to unload your units, then grouping them and finally issuing a command to attack, you can now simply right-click on the carrier and its fighters will disembark and start shooting at the nearest enemy. There promise to be other changes to make the game more manageable and fun as well. Graphics are, of course, top-notch, and gameplay can only get better. Await this real-time winner in Winter of 1996.

**Blizzard, (800) 953-SNOW, DOS and Windows 95**

## STAR GENERAL

**F**ANTASY GENERAL was a good sequel to *PANZER GENERAL*, but *STAR GENERAL* will be even better. In this fourth incarnation of the GENERAL series, the venue is outer space, with both space battles between ships and land battles on planet surfaces. There will be seven races in the game, though only the human



player is available in the campaign. There will be mini-campaigns, though, for each race, which gamers will be able to play. Unlike the previous games, there will be network, modem and direct link play, as well as play-by-email. For multiplayer games, players can choose any of the seven races. *Star General*'s interface will be a little better, with the addition of the split screens: In *Fantasy General*, when you opened up a unit-purchase screen or looked at a unit, the non-combat screen would cover up the combat screen, meaning you couldn't look at your units and check out the enemy stats at the same time. In *Star General*, non-combat screens are only half-screen size, so they won't obscure the combat view. There will be six levels to each unit, depending the level of technology you possess, and terrain and celestial bodies will figure significantly in gameplay (watch out for the black holes). Prepare to be blown away by the best *PANZER GENERAL* sequel yet. Coming this winter.

**SSI/Mindscape, (800) 601-7529, DOS and Windows 95**

## AGENTS OF JUSTICE: SUPER HEROES



Imagine the old paper RPG *Champions* finally emerging from the head of Jack Kirby but with more emphasis on a tactical combat system reminiscent of *X-Com*, and featuring the strategic network of secret agents from *Rocket Raccoon*. *Agents of Justice* is all this, and more—because it takes vigilantes in bizarre costumes quite seriously, thank you. The artwork is a nice cross between the classic *Marvel/DC Comics* and the modern “realistic” comic styles. The super powers—energy blasts, leaping buildings, invisibility, enough strength to make Arnold cry in his Austrian beer—cover the gamut of comic-book fantasy. Best of all, since the villains and their insidious plots vary with each new game, there’s always another reason to don your cape and cowl for another night of costumed heroism. Kryptonite shake, anyone?

MicroProse, (800) 695-4263, DOS.

## HEROES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC II

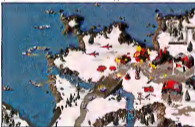
The goal of the designers at New World Computing is to make everything bigger for *Heroes of Might and Magic II*. The original was a great strategy game, with RPG elements, a good magic system, exploration and tough AI. *Heroes II* will keep all that, but add a lot more for a better, more consistent game. Now the campaign will have more continuity, as you choose to champion either the good or evil side and then vanquish the enemy forces. Cut scenes will hopefully advance the story between scenarios in the campaign, and victory or failure in one scenario will affect what happens in the rest of the campaign. Aside from the welcome and more integrated campaign, *Heroes II* will have two new classes: the Wizard and the Necromancer. The Wizard will have more fantastic units, like haffings, while the Necromancer will command undead. There will also be more spells and a new level to the mage guild. The battlefield will double in size, and all the monsters from *Heroes I* will undergo a major facelift for *Heroes II*. The designers felt that the troops in the original were too light, and have made everyone look a lot tougher. This sequel should arrive around October.

New World Computing, (818) 889-5600, DOS and Windows 95



## RED ALERT

COMMAND & CONQUER has been running neck-and-neck with *Warcraft II* for the title of most popular real-time strategy game, and *Red Alert* looks poised to follow *StarCraft* closely into the next level of real-time gaming. The premise is a World War II that never happened. Hitler never came



to power, and Stalin is instead the enemy of choice for the Allies. *Red Alert* will be VGA and support up to six players over modem, direct link or network. There will be sea and air units, an updated fog of war, more espionage, sabotage and special units, and a wider playing field. The enemy AI will be even tougher than in *Covered Ops*, and the AI of your own troops will be upgraded slightly. They will find paths more intelligently and defend themselves better, but will still perform best when you take direct control. Enhancements in the gameplay will include the ability to save formations and a new harvesting model. Now, you will mine for copper, tin or iron. Each metal will contribute a different value to a pool of money, from which you draw cash to build structures and units. Two sides will be available for this battle. Allied and Soviet. As usual, each will exhibit different strengths and weaknesses, with the Allies having superior naval power and the Soviets enjoying air superiority. Be ready to rewrite history this October.

Westwood/Virgin, (800) 360-7455, DOS and Windows 95



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Computer Game Review

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Strategy Plus, June '96

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PC Power, April '96



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## WAR WIND

It will take a lot to dethrone Warcraft II as the king of fantasy real-time wargaming, but War Wind, from SSI, just might be up to the task. This is

SSI's first real-time strategy game, and it will have four distinct races, each with different abilities. There will be a more consistent campaign here than in either the Warcraft or C&C lines; you'll be able to carry forces from mission to mission, so if you upgrade a few particularly nasty troops, you can take them with you into the next battles. There will also be a few RPG elements: magic items and other goodies will be sprinkled over the mission maps for explorers to take, and rather than being an abstract commander, you will now be a leader who gains in stats, such as prestige. The more prestige you have, the more heroes will come to join your campaign. All the great gameplay



## MORE STRATEGY CHALLENGES

Bizzard's P.I.X.I.N.F.E.R.A. 2 is the sequel to the classic Mac space strategy. It's a definite contender for most expansive space title. P.I.X.I.N.F.E.R.A. 2 can be played either real-time or turn-based, and will have all the features of a MASTER OF ORION-style space strat: diplomacy, research, exploration and conquest.

LORDS OF THE REALM 2 is the sequel to Impression's classic. This strategy game sees you as the ruler of a small fief in England. The object is to conquer all the British Isles while managing your fiefdom.

of real-time warfare will be here as well, such as numerous units and structures to build and command, lush SVGA graphics, on-the-fly strategy and fast destruction. SSI assures us they'll also be trying to take AI in this game to a new level, making troops more intelligent and not so dependent on direct control. Look for this strong new entrant this winter.

SSI/Mindscape, (800) 601-7529, Windows 95

## X-COM: THE APOCALYPSE

The Big Question: will the tactical combat in X-Com: The Apocalypse be turn-based or real-time? Well...it's both.

The developers hope this will enable them to build on the brand loyalty of X-Com while simultaneously moving into C & C and Warcraft II territory. Certainly they needed to try something other than simply pumping up the hill points of the aliens, as in X-Com: Terror From the Deep. This newest invasion from afar sports even nuclear alien grenade explosions, scouts crawling around sewer pipes, etc. But it seemed as if the flow of the tactical module was designed first for real-time, then had turn-based play retro-fitted to keep X-Com vets from revolting. Also, the idea of setting the game in a future metropolis where you search for aliens in human form looks, at least for now, more like X-Files than X-Com. When we asked why they didn't let you play from the alien side, they wondered why anyone would want to. Moreover, the final assault on the alien home world (it isn't in the game yet) sounds even more anti-climactic than the ending of the first X-Com. Where are Scully and Mulder when you need them?



MicroProse, (800) 695-4263, DOS

"Johnson? Do you copy??...  
Johnson, we have a situation...  
Over!"

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## STEEL PANTHERS II: MODERN BATTLES



**G**ary Grigsby uses modern—more high-tech toys of destruction, more explosions, different terrain—but still featuring that surprisingly brisk turn-based play. Gary and Keith Bros are also working to improve the AI, while the mysterious SSI Special Projects Group continues to weave its magic on interface and graphics. Only slightly more complex than the original (due to the newer technology of the weaponry), Modern Battles looks to be another direct hit from the SSI juggernaut.

SSI, (800) 601-7520, DOS

## OVER THE REICH

**F**LIGHT COMMANDER in WWII—on steroids—and every bit as realistic: British Spitfires fly circles around German FW 190s; B 17s take incredible amounts of damage and still deliver their payloads; every weapon from machine guns to cannon to rockets is but a mouse click away. While the dogfights are fun, it's really the campaign game that sets this turn-based flight



strategy game apart, as you don the goggles and scarf of RAF, USAAF, or Luftwaffe pilots, to decide the world's fate in the skies of Europe. (For more, see Terry Coleman's Strategy/Wargame column on page 179.)

Avalon Hill, (800) 999-3222, Windows and Mac

*"Your report said the villa was lightly guarded. My people are getting torn to pieces in this HELLHOLE!"...*

*"WHAT?! I don't care what it costs! ...*

*SCREW the damn budget—we need*

*SUPPORT!"*

**NEW WORLD COMPUTING, INC.**

**WAGES OF WAR**  
THE BUSINESS OF BATTLE

## AGE OF RIFLES

**N**orm Koger's done a lot of pacing, because his latest offspring has been in labor even longer than most sequels. But he might actually get to hand out those celebratory cigars, because the extra time has given Norm the opportunity to craft some 60 scenarios from the Mexican-American War to the turn of the century, liberally spiced with some nose-looking American Civil War



battles. Shock and fire combat vary according to the restraints of each conflict, and the game, while not as attractive as say, *Stoltz Pawns*, fairly oozes historical flavor in an easily digested, entertaining format. Finally, the design-your-own function is a boon for those whose favorite obscure 19th century battles aren't included.

**SSI, (800) 601-7528, DOS**

## THIRD REICH

**T**he word from The Hill is that this monster WWII European-theatre wargame will finally ship (after reportedly going through three major re-designs). Even with the computer handling a lot of the economic and support functions so tedious in the boardgame, this is one intimidating product—mainly because the abstract, yet complex nature of the board game has been faithfully recreated, even to niggling details like *Land Lease* and those strange breakthroughs from beach heads. Nonetheless, *Third Reich* offers a grand strategic look at WWII that's available nowhere else, and sen-

## MORE ROUNDS IN THE CHAMBER

**H**PS Simulations is putting the finishing touches on *Tizias* on the Pacific II, bringing it up to Panthers in the Shadows standards. Designer/towner Scott Hamilton is also hard at work wrapping up *Age Of Civil War 2* to give your old board games new life on the computer. Speaking of old board games, AH's *Arkay Keeps*, designed mainly for e-mail play, is shaping up nicely. If the old *Desert Fox* does well enough at the box office, AH plans to revamp *Valentino*, the original *D-Day*, and perhaps even *Quadrabans* for the PC crowd. For even more WWII fare, there's *Pacific*, first from Arsenal (due late Fall), and the epic *The Last Burozoo* from SSG—whenever Roger Keating, Ian Trout and the lads feel they've finally captured the Bulge (enough to release the game). And for those who need a "last stand" fix, *Zuikawa* will continue the tradition of *CUSTER'S LAST COMMAND* from Incredible Simulations.



ous wargamers are far more likely to finish a game via e-mail than over the board. And where else can you conquer (or liberate) France in one or two (admittedly long) turns?

**Avalon Hill, (800) 999-3222, DOS**

## BATTLEGROUND: SHILOH

**A**s the Talonsoft crew continues to hone its craft, these "battle-grounds" increase in both realism and sheer fun. The terrain here is a major obstacle for the Rebels, who must drive Grant's troops into the sea before General Buell arrives on Pittsburg Landing with fresh troops. The fighting around the Hornet's Nest is appropriately bitter, and even in this early stage, the game captures the ebb and flow of "Bloody April." Even Gettysburg fanatics are well-advised to march down south for this one. **S**

**Talonsoft, (410) 933-9191, Windows**



"Listen you **BASTARD**, all **HELL'S** breakin' loose!  
Lord Salvatore and his boys have us pinned down. If I don't  
get **SOME** back-up by 03:00, your client will **NEVER** see  
his precious little angel **AGAIN!!...** And Johnson,  
I don't care **WHAT** it does to your  
**F@#\$!\*** in' bottom line!"



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# WAGES OF WAR

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"SEE YOU NEXT  
WEEK, SUCKER."

"OH, #S@!+."



**Hayes**  
The Inventor  
Of The PC Modem.

# Dirty Video

*Why Interactive Video Isn't, And What's Being Done About It*

**I**nteractive Video may very well be a contradiction in terms, but the use of digital video in computer games is on the rise. The use of DV (as it's commonly called) is somewhat controversial in the game community because good video requires a serious expenditure of resources, and many game designers worry that video shorts—and the associated costs—are adversely affecting the quality of new game titles.

But that's not what this column is about. Like it or not, digital video is here to stay. Even games that don't purport to be "interactive movies" are now using digital video technology. These games might not even use live actors—opting instead to use 3D animation. But rather than render the animation, it's often delivered to your screen as video. So let's dive into the underpinnings to better understand what's going on underneath the hood.

Remember the first digital video clip? At best, they had a resolution of around

160x120, they were jerky and the sound was often unsynchronized. Lately, I've been playing a lot of CIVILIZATION II, and I have been quite impressed with the quality of the embedded video clips depicting the Wonders of the World and the civilization advisers. An even more impressive game (in its use of digital video) is ZORK NEMESIS, which segues between video and (incomplete) animation on the fly. Even a year in this business can make a big difference. WINE, COMMANDER IV's video clips are vastly improved over those in WINE COMMANDER III.

Nonetheless, video on a PC has tended to look pretty awful. Most of us have seen videos spike with large, blocky pixels moving around the screen, or bizarre color changes occurring on the fly. These distortions happen because of the high degree of compression used in most video streams

## ONE MOTHER OF A LOAD

Delivering video to the computer screen is one of the most demanding applications a PC encounters. NTSC is the standard video delivery medium (your television is

tion technology. It's exactly this kind of short-sighted approach that quashed widespread acceptance of DAT (Digital Audio Tape) players. If the movie business refuses to release their content on DVD, it could tremendously slow down the acceptance of DVD technology, and keep prices of DVD drives too high for most consumers.

The movie industry has had some other notable memory lapses. In the early '70's, they cried wolf when VCRs appeared on the scene. In the end, though, sales of pre-recorded videos have added enormously to the revenue and profit stream of the media business. Those who do not observe the lessons of history



NTSC), and is an analog format. Digitizing NTSC can result in gargantuan amounts of data. Raw, uncompressed NTSC video has a resolution of 752x486. If you figure that each frame is 24-bit color, and there are 30 frames in each second of video, you're suddenly faced with a data stream of 32 MB per second—4800 miles your average CD-ROM spins downright pretty.

Even if you had the storage space, you couldn't get 32 MB/sec from your computer out to the video screen without specialized hardware. And your average EIDE disk drive certainly couldn't move data that fast.

There are some clever ways to lighten the load. Developers often decrease the frame size and color depth, reducing storage space enormously. But the real secret to delivering high-quality video to your computer screen is compression. The software engine that handles the compression and decompression is called a codec (coder-decoder).

There are two types of compression: lossy and non-lossy. Lossy compression simply means that some data is thrown away during the compression phase, which isn't necessarily bad since much of the video data is redundant. But lossy compression, poorly done, results in compression artifacts—blocky pixels, weird color blending, and "sparking" around the edges of areas with high contrast. Almost

“ As 3D graphics and video begin to converge, the idea of ‘interactive video’ might really become viable. ”

## LAB NOTES

### Copy Protection Fight Threatens DVD Release

DVD disk technology has the potential to truly cement the convergence between the media business (movies, television and music) and the computer industry. With capacities in excess of 4 gigabytes, DVD disks can hold entire movies, higher resolution music and all of Wine Commander IV on a single disk. DVD drives will even play current CD-ROMs.

Now a consortium of motion picture companies, led by the Motion Picture Association of America, is creating anti-copy technology, while urging the U.S. Congress to pass legislation to prohibit DVD player sales that do not include copy pro-

all video codecs on PCs use some form of lossy compression.

#### FROM SMALL BEGINNINGS

One of the early attempts to put video on PCs was Apple's Quicktime technology from the Macintosh side. But Quicktime never really took hold in the Intel world, mainly because Microsoft decided it wanted to go its own way, and developed Video for Windows (VfW for short). Some of the early releases of VfW exhibited very poor quality, but things have since gotten much better. There are a host of codecs available for Windows, including Microsoft Video 1 and RLE compression (neither are particularly good), Cinepak (from Radius, and originally developed for Quicktime) and Intel Indeo.

The latest twist in the codec game comes in the form of QuickTime VR and Intel Indeo Interactive. Indeo Interactive is interesting, because it features branching video streams and video sprites, allowing video to respond faster to user input.

Certainly some Windows games use standard Video for Windows files and technology (Civilization II being an example). However, things never remain the same, and Microsoft has announced its ActiveMovie technology, which will sit on top of the DirectDraw API. At the heart of ActiveMovie is the MPEG-1 (Motion Pictures Experts Group) codec, which can deliver fairly high-quality, full-screen video. MPEG is a lossy compression system, and is also asymmetric, meaning that it takes longer to compress than decompress. On

today's fast Pentiums, an MPEG-1 file can be decompressed in software, delivering respectable frame rates. Only a couple of years ago, MPEG playback required dedicated hardware.

Interestingly, however, many games are not delivered with freely available codecs. For one thing, most DOS games couldn't use VfW, and had to implement something else. Companies like Real Software came to the rescue with a product called Smacker (Smacker video files will have an SMK extension). No one can claim that Smacker's video display quality is stellar, but it's fast and the files take up very little space.

Another company getting more involved in PC games is Duck Corporation, with their Trimension S technology. Zix's, Nimbus, among others, uses Trimension S, and the Windows 95 version of the game looks gorgeous. But why would a game developer pay to use Trimension S when they can use Video for Windows for free? The answer lies in two areas: cross-platform development and video quality. Trimension S runs on PCs, Macs, Sega Saturn and Sony Playstation. For a game developer looking to maximize their development dollars, this versatility is attractive. Duck has implemented Trimension to be a self-contained video playback engine and codec—independent of QuickTime or VfW—which developers can embed in their applications. On top of that, Trimension S, which is a software-only scheme and looks very good, even compared to MPEG-1

#### HELLO DOWN THERE?

Finally, there's the issue of graphics cards. In the Windows environment, at least, your graphics card can have a big impact on the quality of digital video. Hardware can come to the rescue in two important areas: the first is colorspace conversion. Video color encoding differs from the standard RGB (red, blue, green) used in computer monitors and graphics cards, so there has to be a conversion from one color "space" to another. The second thing hardware can accelerate is scaling. When you enlarge a video clip, the pixels often get jagged and the overall effect is pretty ugly. Newer graphics cards offer XY scaling; the hardware handles the scaling up of video resolution (which is fixed in the file) and interpolates between the pixels to make the image look more pleasing.

So the next time you boot up a game, and notice that the animation looks a bit strange, remember that it's probably an older file you're seeing. Maybe someday—when DVD disks arrive and we're running on SuperIntel/Colossal Pentium Pro 900 MHz CPUs—we'll have full screen, full resolution video on our computers. As 3D graphics and video begin to converge, the idea of "interactive video" might really become viable since hardware will exist to render video-like 3D worlds. Until then, we'll have to content ourselves with coded, compressed video whose image quality still isn't quite convincing, and whose interactivity—through making slides—is also less than ideal. ☞



#### Backing up the Windows 95 Registry

The Windows 95 registry is a database that contains all the information about your system, including what hardware is in your system, what software is installed and a host of other options and settings. The registry consists of two hidden files, USER.DAT and SYSTEM.DAT. Lose the registry, and your Windows 95 system is hosed.

You can back up the registry using REGEDIT, but there's a better way. On the Microsoft Windows CD, in the directory \OTHER\MS\CFGBACK is a program called CFGBACK. It allows you to keep up to nine dif-

ferent backups of the registry, all with different names.

#### More Memory Without Spending More Money

If you can't free up quite enough memory under the Windows 95 MS-DOS prompt (or that big OOS game, but don't want to spend \$60 or so for a third-party memory manager), then you can always use MEMMAKER. Wait a minute, you say, I can't find it anywhere. As it turns out, MEMMAKER is squirreled away on the Windows 95 CD-ROM, under the directory \OTHER\OLOS\OOS. Just copy the files into your \windows\command directory and type MEMMAKER at the DOS prompt.

#### Configuring Your Default Configuration

On Microsoft's web site, there's a section called "Free Software" ([\[softwares/ken/hay.htm\]\(http://www.microsoft.com/web-softwares/ken/hay.htm\)\). One nifty little tool that's been added is a program called the MS-DOS Mode Configuration Wizard Customization Tool \(or DOSWZCFG\)—now we know what happened to those delusé department engineers\), which is part of the Kernel Toys package. Despite its unsexy name, DOSWZCFG is actually useful for gamers. If you've ever nift-clicked on a DOS game icon and tried to configure its memory setting, you've probably been frustrated by the minimal entries that are added to the CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT options. DOSWZCFG allows you to add lines to these default configurations. Although you're limited to adding a maximum of ten lines, with a little judicious fiddling, you'll never have to copy and paste from a configuration file again.](http://www.microsoft.com/web-</a></p>
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# Gaming On The Big Screen

*Gateway Moves Computing Into The Living Room*

by Dave Salvatore

It's a dessert topping. No, it's a floor wax. Don't argue, this one's both. Gateway wants their Destination to be your next home entertainment system and home PC/gaming rig. For all the talk about "convergence," Gateway has actually taken steps to bring a great idea to fruition. What makes the

Destination any different from other systems? For starters, there's the big horriku! 31-in. monitor that wears both the TV and VCA monitor hats, and wireless keyboard and "Field Mouse" remote controls. Because their design focus was on home entertainment and more family-or-

ient computing, there are some rough edges that gamers will have to tolerate. But Destination's performance numbers and smooth frame rates running action titles make it a respectable, though not optimal gaming rig.

First, here's the plumbing. Destination ships with a 133 or 166 MHz Pentium CPU, 256 KB pipelined burst L2 cache, 16 MB of RAM, a 12 GB hard-drive, six Weavers CD-ROM drive, a 28.8 Kbps internal fax/modem, a 31-in. VCA monitor (can you say "big picture"?), an STB graphics board based on Bioscience's Bv chipset with 2 MB of VRAM and a TV tuner, and an STB sound card based on

AMD's InterWave chipset. A Harmon-Kardon Dolby Pro-Logic stereo amplifier with five speakers and a sub-woofer is optionally available with Destination for an additional \$700.

On the software side, Destination ships configured with Windows 95, and comes with a mess o' multimedia titles, and some game titles ranging from so-so (THE HIT) to good (YOU DON'T KNOW JACK).

Installation was fairly straightforward, with a large, step-by-step manual to guide you through the process. You'll definitely want to conscript several burly friends to help set up the monitor unless you're really fond of hernias. If you get the Harmon-Kardon audio system, you'll need some wire-stoppers as well to cut and strip the speaker cabling.

Some of Destination's noteworthy features include an Interactive TV Guide where, with a subscription, you can download the weekly TV Guide via modem for quick reference. Double-clicking on a running TV program's entry in the Guide will take you immediately to that program. You can also set reminders that a certain program is coming on. Yes, you can run your VCR into the Destination since it has two video inputs, but unfortunately, there's no way to interface the Interactive TV Guide and your VCR's programming features, so you'll still have to face the dreaded task of manually programming the VCR. Since the TV viewer is a Windows 95 application, you can run it full-screen or save the TV picture so you can pretend to do work while watching. *Love Boat* review.

continued on page 112 **MM**

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# On The ViRGE

Testing The New Hercules And Diamond ViRGE 3D Boards

by Loyd Case

After much anticipation, game-oriented 3D graphics accelerators are finally beginning to hit the streets. I had the opportunity to take a close look at two cards, both based on the S3 ViRGE 3D accelerator, both with 2 MB of video memory (the same brand and speed of memory chips, no less) and both shipping with some titles that take advantage of the onboard 3D acceleration.

## THE ViRGE: BOLTING ON 3D

As we noted in last month's 3D technology overview, the S3 ViRGE is based on the "TriofV+ chip, which is used in a number of multimedia accelerators, including those from Diamond and Hercules. The "TriofV+ is a fairly speedy chip in Windows and even has respectable, although not stellar, DOS performance. Although the ViRGE has all the features that game designers would want to use, there is a worry that the 3D acceleration may bog down when many of the features are turned on. The ViRGE's feature set includes perspective-corrected texture maps, MIP mapping of textures, bilinear filtering, z-buffering, alpha blending, and fog effects. Unfortunately, the few 3D games around don't make extensive use of all features, so

only time and titles will tell.

The first wave of ViRGE-based cards will have 2 MB of EDO DRAM onboard, and will not be expandable. Although the ViRGE's specs call for potential expansion up to 4 MB, the initial product offering only supports 2 MB.

This lack of expandability may have some ramifications for geometry and performance. Most DOS games (and even Windows games) these days will typically run at 640x480. But if the game needs to have a lot of textures loaded into the video memory, there's not enough memory left over for double-buffering, a technique for fast, 3D frame-rate performance. It's likely that we'll see resolution scaled down a bit (500x384 is the "sweet spot" here), but color depth can be increased to 16-bit (65,536 colors), which is far better than the old DOS VGA standard.

## THE HERCULES TERMINATOR 64/3D

A few years ago Hercules stumbled into the game market by shipping graphics cards that had very fast DOS performance. Word spread through the gaming community, and Hercules began to realize how important the game market was to their success. The "Terminator 64/3D is Hercules' first entry into the soon-to-be-crowded 3D accelerator market.

The "Terminator 64/3D has 2 MB of single-cycle, EDO DRAM on board. Like most of the new 3D graphics accelerators, it's bundled with a set of software, but Hercules hadn't determined which titles to bundle when we reviewed the card.

Installation was pretty straightforward if you're running Windows 95, you bypass the "New Hardware Found" message and run the "Terminator 64/3D setup program, which installs the Windows drivers, and the Hercules Touch 95 utility for managing refresh rates and changing the resolution and color depth.

We did have one minor problem installing the DirectX drivers. (DirectX is the Microsoft software interface for fast Windows games.) Initially, the installation failed, but a quick perusal of the readme file uncovered problems installing from the CD. A quick copy to a floppy, then using the floppy as the installation medium, solved the problem.

Although Hercules hadn't released their PowerDrive Windows drivers when we tested the card, they did ship us their version of the S3 ViRGE driver set. On a P166, the "Terminator 64" racked up fairly fast Windows 95 scores (see table 1). DOS performance was a cut above past S3 chips, and about on par with the Matrix/Millennium in VCA.

## DIAMOND STEALTH 3D 2000

Diamond has taken the ViRGE's percentage as a "TriofV+ to heart, and has essentially built a replacement for their own Stealth Video 2200 card. The card looks very similar to the 2200, including connectors for the TV tuner and MPEG decoder. The only difference is the use of single-cycle, EDO DRAM.

Installation was the easiest we've seen, following all the conventions for Windows 95. When you boot Windows 95, you'll see a message box saying a "PCI VCA compatible adapter has been found." Just click on the "Install new driver" point to the correct directory on the Stealth 3D installation CD, and Windows 95 handles the rest. If you're installing for Windows 3.1, make sure that Windows is in VCA mode before running Diamond's install program. One minor annoyance was installing DirectX, which requires you to run the setup utility inside the DirectX directory on the CD, an additional step not handled by the installation process. Diamond bundles DISCENT 2 DESTINATION QUARTER and



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## Bench Test

	Stealth 3D 2000	Terminator 64/3D
<b>Winbench 96</b>		
1024x768x256 colors	31.4	25.9
640x480x65,000 colors	21.5	30
<b>Chench SVGA</b>	35.6 fps	35.6 fps

**DESTRUCTION Derby**, both versions take advantage of the Stealth 3D's features. As we noted in our 3D overview last month, DESCENT 2 looked markedly better than the standard version because of the filtering of the wall textures.

The Stealth 3D scored very high on Winbench 96—about the highest score we've seen for an EDO DRAM card. The DOS Chench scores are identical to the Hercules, as you might expect for an unaccelerated DOS benchmark running on the same chip with the same DRAM. (Chench is a shareware DOS-based 3D benchmark that renders shaded 3D objects, and reports the frame rate.)

to its more straightforward installation and faster Windows performance. However, Hercules has an excellent reputation for support and upgrading their drivers, and their Touch 95 utility for managing video modes has some nice features, such as being able to measure the monitor's refresh rate.

However, we can't really comment on 3D performance until more 3D titles ship and a good 3D benchmark arrives.

Many game developers will be supporting the VRCE, and more will be supporting Direct3D. Until then, either of these cards will perform quite well for the current crop of DOS games and run

Windows applications pretty quickly to boot. But like Crdod, the 3D-accelerated games are still yet to come—and we'll be waiting. ☹

## DIAMOND STEALTH 3D 2000

**APPEAL:** Gamers looking for great 2D performance and good 3D performance.

**PROS:** Good bundled titles, well-priced.

**CONS:** 3D performance isn't stellar.



## HERCULES TERMINATOR 64/3D

**APPEAL:** (same as above)

**PROS:** Handy Windows 95 configuration tools. Great 2D performance.

**CONS:** 3D title bundle is still unannounced; 3D performance probably won't be stunning.



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# Oil Those Weapons

*CHRONICLES OF THE SWORD Offers Creaky Plot, Rusty Characters*

**O**f the many computer games focusing on Arthur, the Knights of the Round Table and even

Merlin, none of them, really, were particularly good (although *Clinty Man XXX* ran a step in the right direction—ed).

*CHRONICLES OF THE SWORD*, the latest adventure game from Pygmalion, is sadly more of the same. In this outing, you maneuver Sir Gawain, newly-created Knight, through a series of episodes beginning in Camelot and ending up in Morgana's castle at Lynesse.

The game opens with an automated sequence of Gawain being knighted alternating with Morgana's brutal murder of a priest in the cook's chapel. As something must be done about that, Gawain is dispatched to deliver a magical indictment

to Morgana. This results in her banishment, and, not pleased, she attempts to kill Arthur. The king, in turn, is not pleased, and now Gawain is sent off to take care of Morgana once and for all



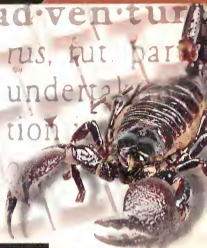
**IRON PUMPING** Beefy heroes are OK, but when even Merlin and Arthur look like refugees from weightlifting contests, it's too much. And isn't that fellow in the back moonlighting from *Stomaxx*?

Typical for adventure games, the interface is simple. The basic cursor is an arrow that changes to a pair of blue footprints when over an exit, or red when it moves over something of interest: an item to look at or pick up, a person to talk to,

system to the computer. Ironically, the time seems ripe for the introduction of tried-and-true systems into the market, given the recent dearth of quality CRPGs.

► Sierra has just announced that design work has begun on both *Shivers II* and *Quest for Glory 5*. More on this as details become available.

ad·ven·tur  
rus, fut. part  
understa  
tion:



etc. Items are used by putting them on the cursor and clicking them on other items or on a person. If the object is not appropriate to the situation, nothing much will happen. You can't lose something inadvertently, and there is no

way to drop anything.

Moving Gawain around is equally simple; he always walks automatically to the item, person, or exit clicked upon, if that is possible. You can also click elsewhere on the screen to move him, although that is rarely needed.

Game solvers are an important part of the game; this is about the only way to obtain clues and information. Talking follows the familiar pattern of choosing questions or remarks from a list of topics. Topics can change over time as things happen in the game, or Gawain learns new information, so it's usually necessary to talk to people more than once as the game progresses.

Unlucky for those whose sound cards are not supported, are hard of hearing, or

“**CHRONICLES OF THE SWORD** is a mediocre product. For a taste of the real thing, read *Le Mort d'Arthur* instead.”

CRYSTAL BALL

► At press time, 3DD (believe it or not) had just purchased New World Computing. Our sources tell us that this will not adversely affect the next installment of the award-winning *Morr & Macic* series.

► Contrary to any rumors you may have heard, *Avallon Hill* currently has no plans to convert the classic *Runequest* paper RPG

may just want quiet playing, text is automatically presented along with speech. Every spoken word can be seen as written words, and this includes the several automated sequences, so nothing will be



**A PETAL PLUCK'D** There's little of the "flower of knighthood" in *Chronicles of the Snow*, despite the well-rendered beauty in the foreground.

missed if you're playing silent.

There is a small amount of combat in the game, a few situations where Cawain must wield his sword. You have the choice of directing the fight yourself or letting the computer do it for you. I preferred the automatic combat myself, especially as this awakes Cawain of warning.

I did not come across any bugs in *CHRONICLES*. The game played without trouble all the way through, no crashes or lockups, no bizarre happenings. The animation sequences were smooth, and the graphics overall quite decent. Sound quality on the Game Max (supported via the Ultimate driver) was good, and clear.

As adventure games go, this one is not particularly difficult. Most solutions tend to be obvious, especially once you've found the right item to use. What could make for difficulty is finding that "right item"

#### I AM SIR FED-EX

More imitating a Cawain's role in the game, which is to act as fetch dog for other people. Since he has an armor (a knight without armor, what a concept),

Merlin must make a magical ring for him. Naturally, Cawain has to do the running around to obtain the ingredients. Later, on the way to Ljoneise, his traveling companion becomes ill, and once again, Cawain has to go fetch her and you go fetch the necessary healing items for her.

These two sets of actions comprise the mid-section of *CHRONICLES*, and they are essentially without purpose, except to pad out the game. No sooner is Helic well

again, then Morgain pops in and kills her. As for the magic ring, Cawain has to go that up to reach Morgain's castle.

It's frustrating to gamers to see their efforts go for nothing, and that is what happens here. One or the other of those incidents could be accepted, but both together are too much. There is no pleasure to be derived from watching much of what you've accomplished go down the drain. It makes you wonder what the designers were thinking of here, to present such a slap in the face.

You're not always told what you need to know, right out, either. For example,

Merlin sends Cawain to get water from Corneve's Well, which happens to be sealed shut, and Merlin knows this. Does he say anything about that? No, you have to parade through the woods, find the well sealed, then return to the castle and talk to people to find out why it was closed, and

what will break the seal. This is just so much busywork, and not real gaming.

#### MULTIPLE ANNOYANCES

The game is on two CDs. The events (through forging the ring are on CD 1), the remainder, starting with the journey to Ljoneise, are on CD 2. Guess what? No sooner have you begun on CD 2, then you have to turn around and go back to Camelot, which is on the first CD. Why? Why set up a situation that makes you switch from 1 to 2, and then immediately back to 1 again? And this after having sat through a long automated sequence, too.

Adding to the dreariness is a distinct lack of potted flavor, of any of the excitement and adventure associated with Arthurian legends and the Knights of the Roundtable. Along with several teeth-grinding anachronisms, and a Merlin who looks more like a weightlifter than a Dend, this did not in any way seem like the glory days of knighthood and chivalry.

The save game feature leaves much to be desired. You have only sockets for save positions. As each save takes less than 20K, there is no reason to be so cheap. Worse, there is no description allowed for the saves. You check on a slot, and a small picture of where you are is all you get. Since you can easily have two or more saves in the same spot, but at different times in the game, you have to keep track of the saves on your own.

Overall, *CHRONICLES OF THE SNOW* is a mediocre product at best, a mechanical exercise in "find the hot spot" and simple puzzles, with flawed design and little in the way of "when knighthood was in flower." Anyone wanting a taste of the real thing is better off reading *Le Mort d'Arthur*. ☞

## TIPS!

#### CHRONICLES OF THE SNOW Hints

► In some instances, you can miss an object because it's in a very dark part of the screen; while in other circumstances, you may well miss an out to

another screen that has what you need. The "hot spots" are far from consistent. Sometimes, they cover a generous area, and sometimes the area is narrow, so be patient. (And you thought the days of "look for the hidden pearl" were over!) ► It's likely you'll have trouble with the dragon egg, for instance. It's hard to

see that the exit to the next wave is a small hot spot at the extreme right of the screen (even I missed it the first time). At the Skull Bridge, to avoid a similar problem, don't bypass the necessary pole two screens back, it is extremely difficult to see on the dark screen, among all the other poles



SCRATCH 'N SNIFF

*"I fart in your general direction"*



### MONTY PYTHON AND THE QUEST FOR THE HOLY GRAIL

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\*\*\*Continued from page 104

The picture quality is good overall, though the TV tuner was less than stellar. VCR picture quality was better, but we did see some aliasing ("jaggies") during close-up viewing caused by the Brookstone's video scaler chip. However, the aliasing became much less noticeable when viewing from more typical distances. Destination's monitor has a maximum resolution of 800x600, though you probably wouldn't want to sprint at tiny fonts displayed at 80x40.

#### YEAH, WHAT ABOUT GAMES?

For the gamer, Gateway didn't quite get all the finishing touches on the Destination. We had to manually configure the DOSSTARTUP file so that real-mode drivers for the CD-ROM, mouse, and sound card would be there for playing DOS titles in MS-DOS Mode. And though Gateway provides several batch files for setting up the STB sound card's Sound Blaster emulation, they're too many in number, and not necessarily intuitive. Also Destination's mixer applet has confusing labels on its controls that don't clearly indicate what they're controlling. For example, there are redundant folders that control Wave audio output.

Destination's wireless controls are a great idea, and work pretty well most of the time. Both the keyboard and the Field Mouse can control the TV tuner, enabling spacial remote control duels.

Rather than using infrared, which requires line-of-sight alignment of transmitter and receiver, Destination's controls use radio-frequency signaling. The controls didn't quite require line-of-sight, but they did get sluggish at times when they weren't aligned in sight of the receiver. The keyboard's track-pad mouse control and the remote controls' roller-ball are good for little more than menu navigation in action titles, but Gateway did put a PS/2 mouse-port on the keyboard where you can attach a regular mouse, though they didn't include one. Destination doesn't ship with rechargeable batteries for the keyboard and Field Mouse, though they would be a welcome addition, as would a recharger.

For joystick users, Gateway provides a six-foot 15-pin "extension cord," which

allows two joysticks to be connected. But we found that one of the connections didn't work at all, and the other didn't provide a CH Flightstick Pro with full functionality. The Flightstick Plus hat switch didn't work correctly in DOS, and the stick didn't work at all in Windows 95 when connected through this extension cord. Running direct solved the problem, but it defeated the purpose of the cord.

Now, the good news: Destination turned in some good WinBench numbers, though graphics performance was pretty sluggish (see table). In DOS, Destination did well running *E3/2000*, *LOXAROW*, and *DUNE NUBS* 3D, delivering smooth frame rates, and playing

configuration that shouldn't have been necessary. Gateway's other problem is that all of their business is through mail-order, so the Destination might be a tough sell because of its dual role as computer and home entertainment system. Most home entertainment equipment buyers want to go into a store and bang on the box before they buy it. Sony announced at PC Expo that they're getting into the personal computer market and, given their established presence in the AV retail channel, they're natural to develop a Destination-like system. Other players are almost certain to bring out similar systems, though we've heard no announcements to date. So while others are scheming, Destination is here now.

Another concern is the glaring absence of any 3D graphics hardware. And because of the integrated TV tuner, Gateway's only option with this configuration is a 3D-only solution, though no such plans were announced at press time.

In summary, Destination will get you most of the way there, leaving you to tighten the last few screws. The 34-in. monitor and beefy audio system can really take action games to another level, and though its TV-specific components and controls weren't the best, they get the job done. If you've got a hankering for a really big picture and thundering audio—and aren't afraid to shell out major cash—you may have a date with Destination. ☺

**APPEAL:** Home theater and gaming enthusiasts who want a PC they can drive from the couch.

**PROS:** Big picture, great audio with optional amplifier, speedy performance running DOS games.

**CONS:** Gamers will have to contend with some annoying rough edges. Not for the financially impaired.



### WinBench96 Test Results

	CPUBank16	CPUBank32	Graphics WinBench	Disk WinMark
Gateway Destination 166 MHz	343	325	27.5	363
Zephyr 166 MHz	306	300	28 <sup>1</sup>	701
Priceco Northwest Mach V 166 MHz	328	300	26.4	700

<sup>1</sup> screen resolution: 640x480x256 colors

<sup>2</sup> screen resolution: 800x600x256 colors



**MISSION CONTROL:** Destination's keyboard and Field Mouse are ideal for the couch-inclined.

these titles on a 34-in. monitor with big screen sound was pretty exhilarating. One sour note here: *FLIGHT UNLIMITED* crashed repeatedly. And because we couldn't resist, we put in a network card and ran the *Quake* Deathmatch (repeatedly), and again Destination delivered.

In Windows 95, *MPC:WARREN 2*, which uses DirectDraw, ran very smoothly, and here, again, the big picture and big sound really make the game that much more visceral.

#### THE BIG PICTURE

Gateway has gotten a lot right with Destination, though its absence of rough edges made for a fair amount of manual

# Get A Clue

*The Queen of Arachnids Decrypts Those Puzzles For You*

**W**ell, the mail sacks were overflowing this month, so let's rip 'em open and jump right in! **AVAIL OF DAWN**—There are two ways over the chasm, by going through Gorge Keep or by way of the Elder's tree. It doesn't especially matter which route you take, although if you go the tree route, Gorge Keep becomes superfluous. It has nothing important, except maybe experience if you need some. However, if you cross by the tree and enter the Keep by the back door, do not operate the witch. Early versions of the game have a bug that will prevent you from leaving by re-ent again, and you'll have a very long walk to the tree to get back over the chasm.

**DARK SLEED 2**: Those who have managed to get into the back room of the

Morgue (cheery place) are having a bit of difficulty in obtaining the key from around the corpse's neck. This is an instance (one of many in the game) where conversations with the right people can help a lot. The criminal is the place for the answer here. Especially for seeing double and looking into the future. When you've taken care of that, getting the key won't be a puzzle.

**THE OF THE BEHOLDER II**: A number of people have asked about the "nightmare level," where the party can't rest. Sorry to say it's true; there just isn't any place down there where it's safe to sack out. Once you enter the level (preferably at max health and spells), you must go through the entire thing as quickly as possible (with plenty of saves!), and with as little damage to the party as you can manage. There is no other way. Fortunately, this is the only time you have to worry about being unable to rest in the game.

**GUARDIAN KNIGHT 2**: Some of you are having a hard time getting into the basement of the Hunt Club. The key to the door is, of course, in the desk, but how to get rid of Xaver? You'd be cuckoo to try for the keys while he's around. So I guess you'll just have to plant something in the vicinity, and hope for the best.

**HAVE NO MOURNING CORNICK** (and a few adventures) are having some difficulties in landing the airship safely. Just ripping open some of the gas bags isn't quite enough, as they've found out the hard way (heh). A little sabotage is called for here. You have to gain up the works, only there's no gun, so it's time to think of something else.

**REARME** Decrypting Catherine's journal can be a problem for a number of people. First, you won't find the key until Act II of the game. Second, it isn't in a very likely spot; you could easily look at

the word and not realize what it is. So, as you read various items in Act II, keep in mind that you want something astrological, no matter where you see it.

**SHANNARA**: Some folks may be having a little trouble heading up King Merion to Leah. Most of the ingredients are easy enough to come by, but the cloves are another matter. They don't seem to be around anywhere. Remember that cloves are a spice, and sometimes spices are used as air fresheners.

**STONEKEEP**: Here's a handy tip for those times when you don't want to get up close and personal with some of the critters: throw around My friend Peter Schunk (whose work you've seen right here in these pages) told me about this, and it works amazingly well. The anons are much better than rocks, and kill monsters faster. Once you've gathered a few, try it out for yourself. I think you'll like the results.

For those who haven't started this game, or haven't gone too far with it yet, there's a terrific easter egg, right at the beginning. When

you're standing at the lever to open the door, pull it three times in a row. Turn around, step into the hall, and go around the corner left. About three or four walls down, on the left side, is a panel. Pulling the switch there opens a secret passage behind you. In the passage, on a left wall as you enter, is another panel. Behind that is a very powerful dagger, that will make most of the early (and even not-so-early) combats much easier. Note, however, that this weapon is available only if you have not yet gone down the stairs! Once you've entered Stonekeep proper, the dagger is lost to you (my thanks to Roe Adams).

Until next time, happy adventuring!



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# Diabolical Role-Playing Action

*Blizzard Conjures What Could Be The Year's Best Action-RPG*

by Elliott Chin

**CC** SNEAK  
PREVIEW  
GAME STILL IN DEVELOPMENT

Let's be honest. Role-playing games have been pretty bad these past few years. In fact, CCW could only find two RPGs to nominate for the 1995 Premier Awards, and we had to do a lot of digging. The good news, though, is that the drought will end soon. This fall, a host of great RPGs will be coming to the PC, some of them sequels, like *RETURN TO KROGNOR*, and some of them incredible originals.

Leading the renaissance is Blizzard, the folks who brought you *WARCRAFT II*, who will be taking the plunge into the shallow waters of RPGs with their first role-playing game, *DIABLO*. Due for a September release, *DIABLO* is an action-oriented RPG that is beautiful, full of depth and yet



**THE REAL DIABLO** All those red demons you've seen before aren't Diablo, they're his minions. Here's a first look at Diablo himself, and he is one mean sucker.

fully accessible to non-traditional gamers. Many have been waiting for this game with bated breath, and now that we've had a chance to play the alpha, we are too

## SO WHAT'S THE STORY?

As of this preview, Blizzard had yet to create a back story to *DIABLO*. What is known so far is that your village and family have been annihilated by a demon called Diablo, whose foul presence has unleashed a horde of evil upon the world. Your quest is to venture into his lair, battle his minions and vanquish him. As with any good RPG, many mini-quests will pop up along the way which you are free to solve or ignore in any

order you choose.

Before you begin, though, you must choose your alter-ego. There are no alternate races, only humans, but you can choose your class. Previous reports indicated that the three classes would be Warrior, Sorcerer and Archer, but Blizzard notes that the Archer class has been removed. Most game testers either favored the brute force of the Warrior or the magic of the Sorcerer, and Blizzard felt that there was nothing to distinguish the Archer. He has since been replaced by a female Rogue who is fairly good in both magic and melee and possesses a few unique talents, such as a larger sight radius and the ability to detect traps and secret doors better than the other two classes.

## INTO THE DARKNESS

*DIABLO* is a different RPG for many reasons. The first one that will hit you is the gorgeous graphics. *DIABLO*'s look and the first-person perspective of modern-



**MONSTER MASH** *Diablo*'s monsters are tough and varied. A quick sword and swift magic might save you from the monstrous circle at the right, but the Butcher will require more thinking to beat.

# From the people who wrote the book on fantasy role-playing



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**A WELCOME SPLIT** Both the character stats and inventory menus are half screen, allowing you to access them without disturbing the flow of the game.

day RPGs, but an sometime view as an **GRISAFOR NO REMORSE**. The graphics are SVGA and the characters and monsters are 3D rendered, with a beautiful and very realistic appearance. I found this view both refreshing and immensely satisfying, especially when I got to see my Warrior in crisp SVGA, lifting his mighty

ax over his head and cleaving a shuddering zombie in half.

Monsters also move in great detail. Zombies creep slowly down corridors, the impish Hellion Ours jump up and down like the frantic little pests they are, and skeletons, when destroyed, scatter into loose bones on the floor. And because the graphics are high-resolution and clean, you can see every little detail in the creatures, not to mention the block-by-block textures of the walls and floor.

**DIABLO** also employs impressive light-sourcing to create a dungeon environment that is dark and gloomy. But your character has a range-of-sight that illuminates the darkness as if he carried a torch. As you move, your illuminated range moves with you. Torches and lamps also cast their own spheres of radiance; you can see the flames flickering and the shadows from the light dancing on the walls. Fireballs and lightning bolts likewise can dispel the darkness, casting their own

ridges of light as they fly down corridors.

The sounds I heard were excellent, especially those of the clattering bones when you destroy a skeleton. Although there was no music in our alpha version, it will be added in the final version.

#### MENUS FOR THE MASSES

The interface in **DIABLO**, unlike in many RPGs, is very natural. You move around the dungeon by mouse-clicking where you want to go. In combat, you attack with the left mouse click, and cast spells with the right mouse button. Changing equipment is simply a drag-and-drop procedure in the inventory menu. At the bottom of the screen is a bar with a red globe for health, a blue globe for mana, and an icon for your currently selected spell. There's also a display for information on items you pick up, monsters selected and movable objects, life doors or chests.

Diablo's inventory menu and charac-



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ter stats menu are pretty straightforward. Best of all, each menu only takes up half of the screen, so you can switch equipment or look at your stats without disturbing the flow of the game.

#### REAL COMBAT

DIABLO's combat is in real-time and is very action-oriented, meaning battles can get pretty frantic at times. However, just because the combat is real-time doesn't mean it's a matter of who clicks fastest. Different weapons and different monsters have to observe different speed factors. The sabre is faster than the ax, but slower than the shortsword. If you think you'll be able to click on the mouse really fast to make yourself hit faster, think again. Every click begins a new strike, so if you keep on clicking, you'll just be interrupting your swing before your weapons connects. Also, if you get hit while taking a swing, you'll be knocked back and your attack will be interrupted. Many monsters

#### Magic Mania

At the time of this writing, Diablo's spell system was being overhauled. In an earlier version of the game, characters gained spells automatically with each level advance. But that's been changed, so that you'll start out with one or two spells and have to find the rest on your own.

There will be two ways to expand your repertoire of spells: by locating spell books, which you can find in the various levels of the dungeon, or by studying at the mage guild in the town. After a period of memorization, the spell will then become available to you. Since Diablo is in real-time, this will probably mean that once you discover a spell book, you won't be able to cast it until a certain period of time has passed. More powerful spells will, of course, also require that you be at both a certain level and have sufficient ability scores to handle the magic.

You'll also be able to cast spells from items such as scrolls, rings and staves. These spells won't draw any mana from you but will use up charges from the respective item. With all the types of spells at your disposal, spell-casting could get confusing, but

Blizzard will implement a spell inventory akin to the character stats and inventory menu. The spell inventory will be divided into separate categories for spells in memory, in scrolls or in staves. Each spell will be represented by an icon, which can be dragged and dropped to your current spell selection. In this way, you can choose to either cast a spell from memory, exhaust your scrolls first or use up your magic staves. You will also be able to simply cycle through spells without having to go through the menu by hitting a hot key.



<b>2</b> LEVELS OF PLAY	<b>3</b> MULTIPLE ENDINGS	<b>1</b> DIFFERENT MONSTERS	<b>THE PANDORA DIRECTIVE</b>	<b>23</b> UNIQUE CHARACTER CLASSES	<b>58</b> PLAYABLE HOURS	<b>360</b> HOURS OF HISTORY
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**THESE DUNGEDN WALLS** Diablo's levels will have several looks. The first few levels will be stone dungeons, but the lower levels will be volcanic caverns and pits battling a devil.

will also gang up on you and hit you repeatedly from all sides, so that you won't be able to muster a swing at all. To say the least, combat will probably be frustrating for the less action-oriented RPG fan.

In those cases where the enemy is too fast or numerous, you'll have to employ your wits to win battles, leading your opponent to a door where you can hack them down single-file or casting spells from a distance. And if the enemies are still too powerful, no one says you have to fight them at all. Just ignore them and move onto the next mini-quest.

When you do down a creature, though, sometimes you'll see it release a few coins or items as it collapses. Click on them to gain treasure and new weapons and armor.

Aside from the real-time component, combat is also very challenging thanks to a tough monster AI.

Even in the alpha, monsters exhibited good intelligence—attacking in numbers, ducking behind walls to shield themselves from possible fireballs, and employing surround tactics to beat me repeatedly from all sides. The monsters

will even wait for you to cast spells, and then dodge until you catch on or lose your mana.

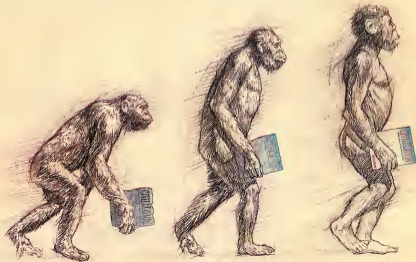
To help you with the challenging combat, Blizzard has decided to regenerate your health automatically. The regeneration is still slow, so you will have to hide in a room for a few minutes to recover all your health. I had this, though, because otherwise it would be impossible to get past the first few monsters you encounter. This feature may tankle a few role-playing purists, but I look at it as the real-time equivalent of spending a night resting in a turn-based RPG.

#### MY GENERATION

DIABLO has two other features that really set it apart from the rest of the role-playing pack: random dungeon generation and multiplayer support.

The dungeons in DIABLO are never laid out the same way twice. There is a randomizer that places monsters, chests,

## THE EVOLUTION OF CIVILIZATION



rooms and even NPCs at random, so that each time you play, you get a different dungeon to roam through. What will lure you coming back to play over and over, though, is the random quest generation. Blizzard says *DIABLO* will have a database of 30 mini-quests, and from six to eight will be randomly generated from this pool per new game. While the quest to destroy Diablo is constant, each individual game will be different because you could have entirely new mini-quests to complete.

The biggest of *DIABLO*'s many amazing features, though, is its multiplayer support. *DIABLO* will support up to four people over a local-area network or on Blizzard's upcoming, free "battle net" getting service, meaning you and your friends will be able to delve into *DIABLO*'s dungeons together. Yes, you can engage in death matches, backstabbing your friends and stealing their treasure, but, even better, you'll be able to quest through the whole game together as one

party, mixing character classes and teaming up on the bosses and tough monsters along the way, until you all face down Diablo together.

This is really one of *DIABLO*'s most exciting selling points, bringing back the interaction that has thus far only been found on true tabletop RPGs. *DIABLO* will be the first stand-alone RPG to offer gamers a chance to roam a dungeon with a friend and collectively hack evil minions to death, just like in a classic *Dungeons & Dragons* campaign session.

Blizzard was very successful in mixing genres with *WARCRAFT* and *WARCRAFT II*. *DIABLO*, with its mix of action and role-playing, also looks like a winning formula. Non-RPG gamers, and many action gamers in particular, are sure to feel right at home with the real-time combat, friendly interface and rich, beautiful SVGA graphics. Traditional RPG fans needn't worry about a diluted role-player either, as *DIABLO* has a healthy dose of



**CLOSE-UP** The characters and monsters are rather small, but for close-range fights or to inspect objects close-up, you can zoom into the map.

non-linear adventure, side quests, character development and dungeon exploration. When you mix in the incredible multiplayer support and random level and quest generation, you end up with a game that, if it lives up to its promise, will definitely going to be in the running for Best RPG of the year. **S**



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# Four Funerals And A Wedding

Activision Takes Venerable Text Adventure Franchise Into Mysty Waters

by Charles Ardai

First things first: I promise that for the remainder of this review I won't bitch about how remote the connection is between *Zork Nemesis* and any of the classic text adventures that proudly bore the Zork name many years ago. What's the point? It's like complaining that they don't write novels any more the way "Indigo used to, or that roadways sure were safer before you had all these homeless carriages zooming across them. Time moves on, and so must we.

Modern gamers want (or at least game companies think they want) to play MMSI over and over again. Give 'em a gorgeous photorealistic environment full of fantastic landscapes, some quasi-lingual grunting on the soundback, and a simple puzzle every so often to keep their brains engaged, and you'll

be off to the bank to count your riches. Throw in some ghastly visions and a hint of the horrific and you can snag the 7TH GUEST crowd, too.

Anyway, that's how I explain *ZORK NEMESIS*. The story here—part fantasy, part horror—is that a quartet of alchemists has been murdered and is now in some sort of magical suspended anima-

tion, being tormented by a demon called "the Nemesis." The alchemists ask you to go on a series of quests to free them. Along the way, you get to chop the head off a corpse, handle a severed hand, receive shock therapy and watch some acts of really awful violence. You get to soar over a waterfall, race through a rocky trench, drive a tank and ride a mine cart. You get to explore catacombs and corridors, conservatories and caves. And you get to face off against four or five dozen of the nastiest monsters it's ever been my pleasure to encounter. Mostly what you do is unlock doors. This is usually a matter of hitting up a pair of astrological symbols, or

Anderson. Do we really have to abandon the cleverness, style and wit of the former in order to get the voluptuous visual appeal of the latter?

## RETURN TO ZORK

The last time we saw the Great Underground Empire, it was in the clutches of a fiend called Morphius. The game was Activision's *RETURN TO ZORK*, their first revival of the three-mountain Zork franchise. That game had some pronounced design weaknesses—navigation was choppy and disorienting, the scheme for communicating with other characters by clicking on "emotion icons" was indecipherable—but it was visually stunning and developed quite a following. So what if no one could make sense of the story? This may be the picture-postcard way of looking at things, more graphic design than game design, but heck, millions of postcards are sold every year, so it can't be a bad business to be in.

For *ZORK NEMESIS*, Activision has kept their "pretty pictures uber alles" philosophy, but they've eliminated or smoothed over all the problem areas that made the earlier game such a chore. For instance, movement is now more fluid than before; each location allows the player to view the surroundings in a fluid, 360-degree pan. Forward movement, from one location to another, still occurs in discrete leaps, so this is not a *DOOM*-style (or *UNDER A KING MOON*-style) environment that you can explore freely, but it's still a great improvement over *RETURN TO ZORK*.

As for character interaction, there isn't any. There are barely any characters other than the four alchemists, and they're dead. While they still talk to you from



**DIE YOUNG, STAY PRETTY** This fetching spirit is one of the characters—mostly dead—who urge you on in the game. You can't talk back, though, and spend most of your time alone.

something similarly uninspired. You've also got the usual sorts of adventure game flourish: pull the levers in the right order, push the buttons in the right order, turn the locks in the right order and so on.

What I want to know is, when did adventure games become so beautiful and so dull? Over the past 10 years we've gone from Dorothy Parker to Patrick



Price: \$54.95  
System

Requirements: 16M compatible 486-DX2 or better, 8 MB RAM, 35 MB hard disk space, 2x CD-ROM drive, 16-bit SVGA graphics, mouse, supports Sound Blaster 16-compatible sound cards

Protection: None (CD must be in drive)

Designers: Cecilia Berajas, Laird Melamed, Mauro Borrelli

Publisher: Activision  
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time to time, it's only in non-interactive video segments that play when you click on their sarcophagi. You do meet a few other stray characters—such as a monk in a monastery who goes mad before your eyes—but they aren't characters so much as set decoration.

What *ZORK NEMESIS* does have is graphic excellence: The five main areas for you to explore—the lair of the Nemesis and each alchemist's denesse—are beautifully rendered. Every room in every location, including

to another—your heart races.

The only downside to the abundance of graphic detail is that it's sometimes hard to notice everything in a scene that you can interact with. Some important objects blend into the background and go unnoticed. As in most games, the cursor changes shape when it passes over a "hot" spot on the screen, and this does help a little, but some of the cube of hot spots are still too easy to miss.

A bigger problem is that, when you do find the hot spots, the interactions are very limited. Almost all the objects you pick up (and there aren't a whole lot) are used on the same screen or one of the very next screens you come to. So, when you find a coin on the ground outside the monastery, you can be pretty sure you'll find a coin slot just inside the front door. If you find a key, you can be confident the keyhole is somewhere nearby.

While a little of this is good, the extent to which *ZORK NEMESIS* uses this simplifying tactic is disappointing.

When a puzzle doesn't require the use of an object, it's almost invariably a purely mechanical exercise. The game is full of very simple codes that aren't much fun to decipher and very simple processes that aren't much fun to step through. There are occasional moments of cleverness, but too few. You find a long-lost treasure by opening a coffin, lying down inside it and pulling it shut over you. (The treasure is on the underside of the coffin lid.) In the Nemesis' temple, a time travel room allows you to collect an icicle in the Ice Age and melt it in a volcanic era to get the pure water you need for a ritual. This is good stuff. But the bad puzzles outNUMBER the good by at least five to one.

The final element in the game is the story, which unfolds in video vignettes triggered by clicking on various objects and documents. Aside from the bad acting and the fact that they are not interactive, the video segments are fine. But the

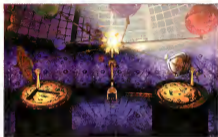
documents—mostly personal letters from one alchemist to another, plus some diaries and books—are far too numerous and mind-numbing. You sometimes find a half-dozen letters in a single room, and pretty much have to read all of them.

A family saga of sorts unfolds, something about how one alchemist's daughter wanted to marry another's son, but the intricate family politics the designers try to craft misfires—you end up merely confused. Whose son is Lucius? What is Sophia's relationship to Kaine? It's all like a particularly ornate soap opera of which you have missed the first few episodes. You're continually racing to catch up and, worse still, the nice rhythm of the gameplay stops dead whenever you run across large chunks of text to read.

#### ZORK ETHIC

It's ironic that a perennial defender of text adventures would complain about having to wade through text. But there is a difference between text that paints a scene or tells a story and text that merely lards on extra layers of exposition, just as there is a difference between a puzzle that challenges a player's resourcefulness or imagination and one that merely challenges his patience.

*ZORK NEMESIS* is a pleasure to watch and has glimmering moments of promise, but a well-told story and a consistently inspired caliber of gameplay are two things it hasn't got. You'll probably show off your favorite scenes to your friends—I did—but I doubt you'll tell them about your favorite puzzle, the way we used to talk, in the old days, about catching the Babel Fish or the death of Floyd. ☹



**WHAT'S YOUR ORRERY?** Virtually every frame of *Zork Nemesis* is a highly detailed, beautifully rendered work of art, such as this colorful orrery.



**TEXT ADVENTURE** Despite all the hi-halufin' graphics, you'll actually spend a lot of your time reading text to figure out the story. Who says text adventures are dead?

secret passageways and laboratories they all seem to conceal, is like a miniature painting. It's all rendered with great care and skill, down to the smallest architectural details. And when the occasional animations kick in—for instance, when you soar from one of the major locations

**APPEAL:** Fans of *Myst* and *Dawno Is Tare* will gobble up this photo-realistic fantasy adventure.

**PROS:** The visuals are truly stunning and the feeling of immersion in another world is delivered well.

**CONS:** Too many dull "filler" puzzles, the too-ornate-to-care-about story-line, and too much text bog down the game. Some strong horror content feels inappropriate.



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# A Compact Ford

*Indiana Jones Meets His Doom In DESKTOP ADVENTURES*

by Charles Arday

**F**or a genius, George Lucas sure has a lot of bad ideas. *Howard the Duck*, or *Raiders of the Lost Ark* screenwriters to pen the script for *Temple of Doom*. When will Lucas learn to recognize a bad idea when he sees one? Not soon enough, I say. Some time ago, someone from his computer game division must have come to him and said, "Hey, let's put out a really simple, randomly generated RPG-style adventure game, stick a whip in the hand of the main character, use the Indiana Jones name—and make it look really ugly." And Lucas must have said, "Sounds good to me."

## DOWN MEXICO WAY

INDIANA JONES AND HIS DESKTOP ADVENTURES looks like one of the early ULTIMA games. Everything has a strange perspective, a sort of cross between an overhead and side view. Indy is a little, spazzy kump in a forested forest, and your main activity is moving that kump across a grid-like terrain. From time to time you can cross across buildings, which you enter by lurching against the doorway; the scene then switches to a blueprint-style overhead view reminiscent of the original CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN, showing top-down images of walls, tables, beds, Nazis, rugs, chairs, and so forth.

The setting is 1930s Mexico, so in addition to Nazis you've got bandolered bandits and lionel-doffed natives to contend with, plus—oooh—great scorpions and spiders. Marcus Brody assigns you the inevitable quest: those bad Nazis are after a jade jaguar mask, and you have to find it fast. Also, Pascal Blume has been kidnapped and you have to rescue him (never mind that you have no idea who he is). To get you started, here are... a metal



**FORGET SHORTY** Much like the old pop ditty, Indy's *Desktop Adventures* sounds funny and looks out of place in today's market.

file, bamboo pole and a funeral mask. Thanks a lot, Marcus. Then you're on your way, lurching through screen after screen of desert, forest, and jungle, dodging attacks from various and sundry monsters, in pursuit of your goal.

Like the quest, the landscape is randomly generated anew each game. As you explore, you run into random fights, puzzles, and sub-quests. So, there are "literally billions of possible games" as the game's package proudly proclaims. Problem is, it isn't worth playing even once or twice. To fight, just point Indy in the direction of an adversary and click the right mouse button, unless the bad guy moves, he's a great-littley. Puzzles are equally "challenging." A branch moves a boulder out of your path; a key opens a locked door. Sub-quests are a parody of customary adventure game banter: "I'd be happy if I could be playing my favorite songs," says one jungle dweller, "but I need a GUITAR." Your assistance would be worth a small fortune in gold DOUBLOONS." Fetch and carry, lindy.

What else is there to do? Some of the forest scenes are maze-like, while other locations require you to pull huge stone

blocks into position or push them out of your way. Some runes teleport you from one part of the map to another. You find herbs and bananas when your life meter goes from green to yellow or red. A looting Mexican named Bonifacio dispenses gameplay tips from the town square, a barmaid named Gabrielle pours tequila, and a hut dweller named Jose hands over medicinal plants with great reluctance. With these cautions, be thankful that LucasArts didn't set the game in Africa. There's almost nothing redeeming about the game, except maybe the picture of Harrison Ford on the splash screen—and even that is a steal from *Temple of Doom*. You need a 4MB and 8 MB of RAM for this? ☹

**APPEAL:** Indy fans may get a kick out of the familiar theme music.

**PROS:** Games are short, if you're that hard up for a lunchtime diversion.

**CONS:** Embarrassingly retro; overly simplistic gameplay; crude visuals and sound; ludicrous ethnic stereotypes.



**Price:** \$19.95

**System Requirements:** IBM compatible 486-33 or better, Windows 3.1 or better, 3 MB RAM, 256-color graphics, 3 MB hard drive space, Windows compatible sound.

**Protection:** None  
**Designers:** Hal Barwood, Wayne Clinic, Mark Crowley, Paul Lefevre, Tom Payne  
**Publisher:** LucasArts  
 San Rafael, CA  
 (800) 935-8227  
<http://www.lucasarts.com>  
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# Phasers On Annoy

*Arcade Sequences Make This Trek Drone On Too Long*

by Denny Atkin

**W**hen a game sorely tempts you to toss your new, really expensive laptop out the window, that's

a good sign that there's an infuriating design flaw. When that single design flaw ruins what would otherwise be a very enjoyable game, it's doubly annoying. Such is the case with *STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE 9: NINE-HARBINGER*, from Vivacoin New Media. An intriguing storyline, a decent set of puzzles and voiceovers from many of the actors from the television show set the game up as one of the better attempts at adventure gaming in the Star Trek universe. Unfortunately, a series of repetitive, out-of-place and just plain frustrating arcade sequences bring the game down.



**STONEFACED SIKSO** The 3D-rendered characters are a bit stiff, but the effect is better than in previous attempts.

## HABITAT RING

It's a real shame, because parts of this game are extremely good. You play the role of Emory Barrick, sent to space station Deep Space Nine to assist the crew in a first-contact situation with the

Scythians. As you approach the station, you're attacked by a huge flock of drone spaceships. As the story unfolds, you'll work with the DS9 crew to solve the mystery of the drones, catch a murderer or two, and ensure the survival of another race. All in a day's work for a Federation envoy.

Most of the DS9 actors appear here in voiceover roles. Only O'Brien, Bashir and Jake Sisko are raising

The "guest star" design works very well—it's a lot of fun to interact with Sisko, Quark, Dax and the others. Overall, the voice acting is very well done, with the odd exception of your character, Barrick. Whether his life is in danger or he's flirting with a Dabo girl, his tone remains equally uninterested. Annis Shimmstein puts in a particularly good performance as Quark, whose greed—not surprisingly—ends up making your journey more challenging than expected.

The characters, like all the elements in the game, are 3D rendered. Their stiff movements and static faces make them look like puppet refugees from the old Conny Anderson *Flowerbush* Super-Man cartoon TV series. That said, they look a lot better than the 3D models used in *STAR TREK: FINIS UNEN*. Interactions of the "pick from



**QUARK'S QUARKS** The Ferengi bartender is a troublemaker, but he may hold the key to solving the Scythian mystery.



Price: \$49.99

**System Requirements:** 486-66 or better, DOS 5.0, 8 MB RAM, 10 MB hard disk space, VESA-compliant SVGA graphics, 2x CD-ROM, mouse, Sound Blaster-compatible sound card.

**Protection:** None (CD must be in drive)

**Designer:** Stormfront Studios

**Publisher:** Vivacoin New Media  
New York, NY  
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**Reader Service #:** 322

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Continued from page 120

a group of responses," type, with a small real-time element added, some characters will react differently depending on the pace of your responses.

### The Trouble With Klingons

It is hardly surprising that Klingons now walk the decks of *Star Trek: Voyager* and *Deep Space Nine*. At first considered a minor addition to *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, the Klingons have emerged as favorites among *Star Trek* fans. Now, in their continuing series of *Trek*-ware, Simon & Schuster has published *Star Trek: Klingon* for those who simply cannot get enough.

In this combination tutorial and role-playing adventure, you are Pok, a young Klingon on the verge of adulthood. You are to take part in a ceremony known as the Rite Of Ascension, a major family event made even more significant by the presence of Gowron, leader of the Klingon High Council. Unfortunately, a horrible act of sabotage mars the celebration, leaving you to uncover the dishonorable wrong-doer and bring him to justice.

But before you begin, you are advised to take a tutorial on a separate CD designed to teach you some Klingon language and expressions. However, despite packaging advisories to the contrary, it is quite possible to complete the adventure without sitting through the rigorous tutorial. In fact, it is somewhat of a dead-end, and probably not worth your time. Once finished, your only reward is the ability to speak to your Klingon buddies and advise them that the ship's engines are on fire.

The adventure itself contains lush production values, and was directed by the talented Jonathan Frakes, who plays Will Riker on *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. The sets, music and special-effects are full and lavish, and reflect the same care that is taken with any of the television episodes. Indeed, the adventure flows like a television episode, except for certain "decision points" at which a cursor appears so that you can make a choice or manipulate an object. Unfortunately, there are far too few of these points, so that old feeling quickly sets in that you are watching the game rather than playing it.

Though it may be enjoyable to watch, there is simply no challenge here. The game can easily be completed in one sitting, after which you are left with no feeling of accomplishment, only Gowron's invitation to run the program again sometime. And that's not much of a reward—by Allen Greenberg

The game's dialog is very well done, and there's some real humor here. HARBINGER's writer, Sarah Stocker, worked with prolific *Trek* scripter Hillary J. Butler on the script. The result of this collaboration is a story with consistent plotting, unexpected twists and humorous breaks from the action. In fact, HARBINGER's storyline is one of the better original pieces of science fiction I've encountered in a computer game—if a better story than most regular *DS9* episodes.

### OPS AND COMMAND

Unfortunately, while it's a great story, it's also a very linear one. There's only one path in this game, winning or otherwise, and there are no big decisions to make along the way. You'll do four things in the game: explore *DS9* and an alien station, interact with other characters, solve puzzles and brave a barrage of arcade sequences.

The puzzles are well done. At first I was a bit disturbed, as they appeared to be *Trek*'s *7th* Guest-style puzzles disguised as efforts to repair Starfleet equipment. But surprisingly, they work in this environment—what is to say repairing an ODN Conduit wouldn't be a little like playing *Pit-Dream*?

Unfortunately, the exploration doesn't hold together as well. You use arrow pointers to navigate a series of *MSS*-style pre-rendered frames. It's not always obvious which path you need to take to get around an object—early in the game, it took me about three minutes just to get from one end of Ops to another to talk to Dex. You'll get the hang of it

after a few hours of play, but it certainly could have been made more intuitive.

Where the game really falls apart, though, is in the arcade sequences. You'll start the game being attacked by drones, you'll spend the middle of the game fighting drones and you'll end the game attacking drones. You'll fight real drones, and you'll battle drones in holodeck simulations. You'll fight drones in space and you'll fight them in hallways. Worst of all, you'll fight drones while you try to find your way through a multi-level maze. Even though the drones are convincingly integral to the plot, after a few encounters you'll hate drones.

It wouldn't be so bad if the arcade sequences were fun. But at their best they're rail-shooters, where you move your mouse pointer and click to destroy drones while Kam pilots your runabout. At their worst, they're simple duck-shoots, where you stand in hallways and point the mouse at drones as they fly in from the sides of the screen. Add to that the fact that they're poorly programmed, with many dead-on shots left unregistered, and you have a very annoying game element that pops up just often enough to suck most of the fun from the game quicker than the self-vampire from Planet MIB.

### BEAM ME UP

It's a shame the arcade sequences are so poor and so ubiquitous, because otherwise HARBINGER is an enjoyable game. There's actually a really good story lying under the constant barrage of mouse-hand reflex tests and linear adventure quest. **B**

**HYPE!** Star Trek fans, gamers who need practice hitting the icons on the Windows desktop.

**PROS:** A great plot, original aliens, and good dialog; humor that works; beautifully rendered space station.

**CONS:** The linear storyline has lots of searches and puzzles, but little in the way of decision making. A near-endless barrage of dull, frustrating arcade sequences mars what could be a nice adventure diversion.



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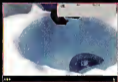
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# There's A New Sheriff In Town

...And He's A Damn Good Shot: *Virtua Cop* Targets The PC



**E**ven Rodney Dangerfield could look down his nose at this genre. The shooting gallery has never gotten much respect, and

probably to this point hasn't deserved whatever respect it did get. Among computer-game genres, none is more like operating an interface—or participating in some modestly interactive demo—than this cyberbrawl and its high-tech heir, the rail shooter. When these games have thrived, it has been chiefly on novelty value: *Operation Wolf* and *TimeSplitters* offered the novelty of a sideways-scrambling playfield; *Mao Doo Mac Coo*; and its many children offered the novelty of FMV and novelty by itself is never enough.

For the truly best in

shooting gallery games, though, we need to go to the arcades, where the most spectacular games of this genre thrive. But for those gamers who can't or won't go to the arcades, the good news is that it will be coming to you. The shooting gallery market is about to have its toll twisted as



*Virtua Cop*—a huge arcade hit and a best-seller on Sega's 32-bit Saturn console—moves to the PC; this fall is a native Windows 95 version. An early version, christened with the ominous working title of *Virtua City PD*, suggests that this

October release from Sega Entertainment, Inc. (Sega's PC arm) should be a blast. This is the first immersive shooting gallery. This is the first one that genuinely matters.

It's the "kill 'em all and let God sort 'em out" approach to police work. Armed initially with nothing but a revolver, you're a cop assigned to break a gun-smuggling ring and your task is to penetrate three 3D levels: a check-side warehouse, a quarry and the gang's glass-walled HQ.

You don't choose your path through this environment. It's scripted by the program. It moves you in short, smooth steps, stopping every few yards to allow you to exchange fire with unfriendlies. And there are lots of them—observed behind glass in the truck cabs, hopping out of that trailer in the background, just barely visible at the top of the stairs. The levels aren't especially large, but they are densely inhabited—populated with hundreds of textured polygonal enemies apparently on parole from *Virtua Fighter* and dressed alternately like hoodlums, mechanics, special-forces troops and music-industry executives.

They don't like you much, these men in sunglasses, and if you don't take them

“ This is the first immersive shooting gallery on the PC. It's the first one that genuinely matters. ”

## INSIDE ACTION

What was originally planned as a big patch has turned into a whole new suit.

Bethesda's *Future Shock* follow-up, *SkyNet's* *Revenge*, is now just



*SkyNet*. Look for this stand-alone autumn release to include new missions, multiplayer support, SVGA graphics and a neat new gadget: a motion detector similar to the one in "Aliens."

## PETER OLAFSON

out, they will eagerly ventilate your visor. Five holes in your visor, and you can begin looking for a new line of work—as a medical cadaver—or just hit the left mouse button again to use another credit, of which you have a maximum of nine (barring any cheat codes).

Finally, at the end of each level, you'll find a robust "boss" who makes a little gruff-voiced speech and fires salvages of

missiles, rifles and machine guns are out there for the finding—and, if you're exceptionally quick off the mark, you can also pick up the odd *extra* life. Some of these can be grabbed after you've ginned down the owner, and others lie hidden in crates, which first have to be destroyed by gunfire.

Oh, yes, the environment is highly customizable. You can shoot out the win-

NING CITY PD something special?

Well, the 3D is a huge plus! It effectively puts you into this most renowned of games. You won't be able to think of anything else. Moreover, while rail shooters like *CRYSIS 2* and *WETLANDS* like to throw vehicles into your path, here you're dealing with polygonal people. When shot, they recoil, or go down in a heap, as though they've really been shot, and sometimes go down on one knee, or hold an arm as though they've just been wringed. This is personal, and that makes it compelling.

But what I think makes *VCFD* most exceptional is the methodical, very police-like way in which you progress through the levels. You don't miss the ability to move around yourself so much when the game runs as much as you would—protecting your flanks, stopping to scan the horizon for a hint of movement, waiting for the opposition's next move.

Of course, the game is likely to suffer from the limitations inherent to shooting galleries. It is the same creature every time you play it. But that is a complex creature, and in some respects, the IBM version is likely to represent an improvement over the Saturn. The final version is expected to support two-player modern play, which means that you'll always have an opponent when the solo game finally wears thin. (Two-player play on a single machine is also available.)

The mechanics have been subtly improved. The Saturn game forced players to re-load by aiming off-screen and firing. In a sense, this was realistic. But it also returned the player from the game's focus-on flow—your aim was consistently bouncing back and forth—and in a *D&D* version, Gohr's stand-off of this sort, that would get you dead in a hurry.

In the computer version, you'll reload by just double right-clicking with the mouse. While this ability does make the game a little easier, you can double the auto-target mechanism, ramp up the difficulty (there are nine levels) and play *VCFD* in minor mode.

You'll be pleasantly surprised by the challenge, and make a little more respectful **S**



**BULL'S EYE** The game will have an unrivaled level of detail, as enemies react realistically and specifically to the spots where you shoot them.

missiles at you. Survive all three buses, and...well, I've no idea. Playing on "hard," I haven't survived longer than one full level at a sitting. Typically, I get massacred by music-industry executive types in Level 3's computer-chattered secretarial pool. I love that for verisimilitude.

#### KILLING TIME AT THE OFFICE

It looks as though everyone's come to work, and gunmen are behind every article of cover. The game likes to throw them at you in sequence—enemies appearing one after the other in nearby positions—but you'll also find them erupting in the foreground, appearing in clusters, launching grenades and knives from distant cover and running across your field of fire. The bodies always sink out afterward—the better to keep up the 30 frames-per-second scrolling, I suppose—but the game keeps meticulous stats on your successes.

You'll start with just a sissiest revolver. Shotgun, automatics, mag-

azines of cars and set off a volcanic detonation of the gas tank sure to take out an one droid enough to be standing nearby. You can blow up certain barrels, which release nice explosions, which, in turn, can knock out nearby scenery. And even scenery you can't destroy often registers your fire in some unique way—making backboard or giving off a metallic rattle.

And then there are the chies. These pitiful, weaselly creatures rise into your line of fire with hands raised, or scuffle, bent over, across the background, muttering "Don't kill me!" Hold your fire entirely, and you risk taking heat from the less-sympathetic gunmen who are invariably positioned behind the hostages. Kill them—and I've been tempted to kill them out of simple frustration—and you'll lose a life to watch the innocent one you've taken.

And yet, these are no more than marks of a good shooting gallery. They don't suggest anything extra. What make



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Circle Graphic Reprints #193



# Lots Of Mayhem

*Eidos' CRUSADER Clone Falls Short Of Expectations*

by Jack Rodrigues

**E**idos, formerly Danish, is hyping *TOTAL MAYHEM* as a multiplayer equivalent to Origin's *CRUSADER: NO REMORSE*, but it doesn't even come close. It is a real-time, squad-level, tactical combat action game, set in a richly detailed isometric perspective world, but it is riddled with technical and design problems and falls far short of expectations.

The premise, like in other action games, is deceptively simple. In *TOTAL MAYHEM*'s world, amidst a raging war between corporate syndicates, technologically advanced robots have overthrown and enslaved their masters. As a rebel human fighter, you've decided to fight back by taking command of a team of cyborg soldiers, called Mayhem, in order to defeat the ruling robots.

*TOTAL MAYHEM* (sample) lies somewhere between a real-

time combat and strategy game. The preparation for combat is similar to *X-COM* or *JAGGED ALLIANCE*. But unlike these strategy games, the only aspect you control on the field is the action. The mis-

sions and objectives are issued to you by the computer, and all the research and development is done by higher command. Even the soldiers are assigned to you. However, you have full control of the order in which you complete your objectives and in how you accomplish them. Along with the combat, missions are spiced up with the addition of keys, switches and hidden buttons to unlock secret doors that sometimes are essential

You start the game with two soldiers, but as they gain experience, you get additional troops. After a few missions, you'll end up controlling up to six soldiers for each mission, with replacements available at the base. The soldiers are promoted based on experience points, and their rank determines the individual soldier's skills.

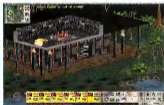
## HOWLIN' COMMANDOS

The game's ten early missions range from easy to overwhelming. The missions start off easy, but near the middle missions, things start to heat up. Keys become more scattered and hidden switches soon become essential to finding vital secret rooms. The later missions see you combatting mobile weapons platforms and robots who are better armed, protected, and more numerous. At this point of the game, the task of finding keys or switches should take a back seat to clearing the perimeter of robots.

*TOTAL MAYHEM* lets you vary the aggressiveness of your troops. Controlling this aggressiveness, which ranges from cowardly to berserk, figures prominently in the success of your mission. Selecting the right attack mode is crucial when controlling troops with heavy grenade and rocket launchers. Giving these guys an itchy trigger finger will end your mission prematurely. The highly aggressive mode, *Berserk Attack*, sets the soldier mowing with guns blazing at the enemy regardless of life or limb and should be used judiciously. Sometimes it's best to reset to wimp mode or "Defensive Attack," in order regain control after a heated offensive.



**CROWD CONTROL** There is strength and superior fire power in numbers, but be warned that a crowd gets unwieldy when the action gets fast and furious.



**THESE AREN'T COPPER TOPS** As the troops join forces to obliterate the last objective, James Lewis #6 runs out of juice.

time combat and strategy game. The preparation for combat is similar to *X-COM* or *JAGGED ALLIANCE*. But unlike these strategy games, the only aspect you control on the field is the action. The mis-

sions and objectives are issued to you by the computer, and all the research and development is done by higher command. Even the soldiers are assigned to you. However, you have full control of the order in which you complete your objectives and in how you accomplish them. Along with the combat, missions are spiced up with the addition of keys, switches and hidden buttons to unlock secret doors that sometimes are essential

to the completion of a mission. After the game's video introduction, you find yourself at the Mayhem base. There, you can arm your soldiers at the armory or modify their armor at the repair facility. The briefing room is where you receive your missions and then teleport to the mission screen. The soldiers are not nimble, fully articulated individuals who can run and jump as in *CRUSADER*. Instead, they act like dumb cyborgs who betch their orders, splitting up and getting stuck behind trees and machinery.



Look for the *TOTAL MAYHEM* demo on this month's CD-ROM.



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### Status Report

Total Mayhem's technical difficulties are abundant. The first is the high system overhead. Windows 95 users with a Pentium 166 system, and fast CD-ROM drive, have all options available to them. Cinematic scenes and multiplayer mode are exclusive to Windows 95, which leave Windows 3.1 users, and gamers with modest systems, dry.

Getting the game to run after installation was a major obstacle. I had to fiddle with my video card and download a patch to run the game. Once I got the game running on my Pentium 166, I was rewarded with a high-resolution graphic screen with rich detail and cool CD audio background music. However, this minor triumph was offset by further problems.

Some missions could not be finished on the first try because of blatant bugs. In Mission 10, the green fail-safe key turned all the force fields back on, so I could not complete the mission. It was supposed to turn them off. On the subsequent replay of the mission, everything worked properly. After the transition video for Mission 20, the last mission, the game would cause the computer to hang up while loading, causing a Windows



Protection Violation—a fatal error I could not enter this mission, even after playing the 18th Mission three times.

Look for the latest patch at

<http://www.domark.com/>

There are only five types of weapons you can request during the game, but these are augmented by different types of ammunition. Your inventory is further supplemented by explosives and robot control devices. Be aware that if the soldier is lost in battle, you'll only be able to recover door and fail-safe keys, not his armament.

During missions, you can exchange any equipment, except for personal armor, shield, and power generator. However, the individuals involved in the transaction must be near each other. Be sure to load up on fast aid kits and batteries. Yes, batteries. The use of these two items must be controlled

manually, while armor and weapons are automatically swapped as needed. I found the requirement for replacing each soldier's battery tiresome, and more than once I felt like I was playing with toy soldiers. This was a major disruption in the suspension of disbelief, and was reminiscent of spoon feeding your party in *Ultima: Siamore Isle*.

### INSUBORDINATE SOLDIERS

There is strength and fire-power in numbers, but a crowd can be unwieldy. Combining the weapons of a large team and concentrating their fire on one target in a fire fight has a quick and decisive outcome. Directing that same team through a zig-zagging corridor is a disaster. The soldier's AI lacks the ability to negotiate any obstacle without getting hung up. In passageways, where objects are scattered everywhere, your team disintegrates into a directionally challenged rubble. Tightening straits can be just as chal-

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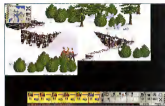
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**WHERE'S THE SWITCH?** Some doors open with remote switches, which are hidden in obscure places, instead of keys. In the last few missions, you can only find hidden switches by scanning the walls with the mouse cursor

length. You are reduced to having to give commands in short, straight, line-of-sight increments. To add further difficulty in controlling your troops, the individual's experience level determines how well they carry out your commands. The least experienced will shoot sooner, longer, and wander during a combat engagement,

sometimes ignoring cease fire orders.

The AI of your own troops isn't the only AI problem. The intelligence of the enemy BCTs is a disappointment as well. The robots who have evolved, improved, unified and enslaved humanity, respond and fight like preprogrammed zone perimeter guards. The BCTs are stationary in a set area until they pick you up on their sensors. They attack until one of you is destroyed or you waste the area. There are no roving patrols, and they do not pursue you outside of their zone.

Lastly, Eidos is positioning TOTAL MAYHEM as a multiplayer CRUISERS, but CCW couldn't get the game installed in enough computers to play a multiplayer

match. Even with the patch we still couldn't get the game loaded. Multiplayer gaming is fun, but if you can't get the game to run properly, then you can't play multiplayer games.

TOTAL MAYHEM's hi-tech cyborg action adds a new background for real-time combat gamers, but it will only satisfy the few who can get the game to run on their computer system. **C**

**APPEAL:** Gamers wanting combat action with a third-person perspective.

**PROS:** Detailed high-resolution graphics and cool industrial theme save background music; assortment of armament and items that lead to some good pyrotechnic effects.

**CONS:** Installation problems, bugs and poor AI in a simplified action game.



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# Talk First, Shoot Later

*STRIFE Infuses A DOOM Clone With Story And Characters*

by Mark Clarkson

I thought I'd seen it all—DOOM clones in outer space, DOOM clones in a cult, DOOM clones in underground tunnels. Movie-inspired DOOM clones. Funny DOOM clones. But STRIFE is something really different; it's a DOOM clone with a plot and storyline. I know, I know, they've all got a storyline. The Mars base has been invaded—kill everything. LA has been invaded—kill everything. But STRIFE has a real story that unfolds as you play the game.

## ONCE UPON A TIME

It all begins when a comet crashed into the planet and released a plague that decimated the population. From the ruins of civilization, a new power arose. They called themselves the Order, and now rule the city with an iron fist. But there are numbers of discontent. A rebel underground is growing, massing its strength, biding its time until they have enough warriors with the gale, strength and skill to lead them into a brave new day.

At first, I approached STRIFE as another DOOM clone. I killed the first guy I saw, opened a door and killed another guy. When I scored an electric crossbow, I started taking guys out at long range. Soon after, they started shooting at me on sight. Still, all this carnage seemed somewhat pointless. Killing everybody didn't seem to get me anywhere. In fact, it turns out that killing everyone you meet actually makes it impossible to complete the game.

For example, I discovered a very one-eyed stranger lurking in the burnt-out ruins of the old town hall. He was made to me, so I gave him a few crossbow bolts in



**CAN WE TALK?** In Strife, it's best to question first and then blow people away; you don't want to mow down an informant before he gives up all his clues.

the back. When I returned to the street, a gived took a shot at me, so I killed him, too. Then I had to kill his friends, and then their friends. After five minutes or so, the streets were jammed shoulder-to-shoulder with gun-toting acolytes of the Order. But as the body count mounted, so did the forces rallying against me.

It turns out that firing off a gun or an

electric crossbow within the city limits triggers an alarm which calls the local constabulary into action. If you resist the urge to torch off a few tanks every now and then, you can walk around unmolested. Further, it turns out that the rule guy in the old

town hall was my contact with the resistance. With him dead, I never found my way into their secret base. Once I stopped killing everyone I met, the game moved along much more quickly.

To give you an alternate, non-lethal way of interacting with characters, STRIFE lets you talk to them. Most have nothing crucial to say; just, "Move along, peasant!"



Price: \$49.95

**System Requirements:** IBM compatible 486-66 (Pentium recommended), DOS 5.0 or higher, 8 MB RAM, 70 MB hard drive space, CD-ROM Drive, VGA Graphics; supports Sound Blaster compatible sound cards; supports IPX network drivers.

**# of Players:** up to 8 over a network  
**Protection:** none  
**Designer:** Jim Melinets  
**Publisher:** Velocity  
 San Francisco, CA  
 (800) VELOCITY  
**Reader Service #:** 224



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or, "Please don't hurt me!" But many have important clues to offer and several are key to the game. To speak with someone, hit the space bar, just as if you were opening a door. The pseudo-3D perspective is temporarily suspended, replaced by a single cell showing the character's face. No FMV or 3D-rendered character animation here, just the basics. At the bottom of the screen are your possible responses: "Sell me an assault rifle," for example or "Thanks, good-bye." This is not to say that you don't have to kill anyone in *STRIFE*, or even that you should spare everyone who has something to say. You can still kill plenty of evil acolytes, but do it stealthily: a knife in the back makes much less noise than a grenade.

#### CLONING THAT DOOM ENGINE

*STRIFE* follows the DOOM format for action. You can walk, run, spin, look up and down. You can jump but not crouch. As you move through the game, you pick up health, ammo, better weapons, money and the occasional artifact. The layout of the game is reminiscent of *HEXEN*, with its many sub-levels branching out from a central hub. In this case, the hub is a town, where you'll return repeatedly. Between missions, you can visit the town armorer, the weapon smith, or the hospital, to stock up on body armor and bullets, and to get those gaping wounds sewn shut. Roaming out from the town are the levels where the bulk of the game takes place: the prison where you'll lead a jail break, the power plant which you must sabotage, the castle you'll eventually assault, and the nasty sewers.

*STRIFE*'s unusual save-game feature takes a little getting used to. When you start a new game, you select a name for your character. While you can have up to eight characters, each character can have only one saved game; each new save



**A PAIN IN THE ACOLYTE** When you mess with one, you mess with them all, so have your flamethrower ready.

overwrites your last one. The problem is not everyone you meet can be trusted, and not every mission you're offered is a good idea. If you save after making a seriously wrong decision, you may have to restart the game. Luckily, such irrecoverable dead-ends are relatively rare. *STRIFE* is forgiving of most mistakes, including most that get you killed.

#### CODENAME: BLACKBIRD

The city missions are simple, but later missions become more convoluted: Smith wants the widget from Jones, but Jones will only trade the widget for the maguffin, but Brown has hidden the maguffin somewhere in the sewers. To keep you pointed in the right direction, *STRIFE* gives you a little help. Complete the first mission, a simple assassination, and you're given a communicator linking you to the resistance through a voice in your ear who calls herself "Blackbird." Unlike the incoherent PED in *ANGEL DAWG*, Blackbird is non-intrusive and usually has something to offer, pointing out clues you've walked by, directing you to people you need to meet and so forth. That's not to say she'll solve the puzzles for you. I got hopelessly lost in the winding sewers beneath the city many times, and all Blackbird had to offer was "I'm lost too. Sorry."

In the end, *STRIFE* suffers from a con-

ple of handicaps, the first of which is a feeling that you've already seen too many DOOM-clones to care anymore. And in a genre that's always on the cutting edge of technology and cool graphics, *STRIFE* isn't. It uses the three-year-old DOOM engine, and after *DAW FORCES QUAKE* and *DUKE NUKEM 3D*, it looks dull. My other problem with the game is that there is considerably less tension in it since everyone

is no longer trying to kill you. Still, *STRIFE* is a solid, fun and playable game with a nice twist. Instead of trying to profit in more bullets, more blood and more explosions than the other guys, Velocity went the other way, offering a plot, characters and a story. Granted, it isn't much of a plot, but it doesn't have to be a Beckett play to stand head and shoulders above the rest of the DOOMish crowd.

Prevailing at *STRIFE* requires not just twitchy reflexes and a hard heart, but also an unprecedented level of restraint. Not only do you not kill everything and everyone, you actually leave the overwhelming majority of people standing. Now what kind of a DOOM clone is that? Well, it's a pretty good one, actually. **C**

**APPEAL:** Anyone looking for a first person shooter with less emphasis on mindless violence and more on thinking, or RPG players looking for a first-person environment.

**PROS:** Story, plot and characters offer a unique twist on the Doom engine.

**CONS:** Unexceptional graphics and level layout, a quirky save game feature. *Strife* is too watered down for Doom 3D-hardened veterans.





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# SPECTER'S Ghost

*A Multiplayer Shooter That Looks Great, Is Less Thrilling*

by Martin E. Cirulis

In the old days of videogaming, there was a little multiplayer arcade action wonder called *SPECTER*. It wasn't much by today's standards, usually a high-speed *BATTLEZONE*-style tank game that could be modified, but it was the first customizable title of its kind, and with eight people zooming around its stylish cyberspace levels, blasting away at each other, it was a sure crowd pleaser. These days, with all the improvements in technology, I've been looking for a title that supplies those same quick and dirty arcade thrills, but with updated, bleeding-edge graphics and sound. And when I first spotted *ASSAULT RIGS* from Pygmalion, I thought I had my super-squad. Unfortunately, from the very opening schip for the game I realized that, once again, I had wandered into the Euro-Zone, where software standards are nothing like those we Colombians are familiar or happy with.

## NOT EXACTLY REVOLUTIONARY

*ASSAULT RIGS* (AR) makes no bones about its arcade origins. In fact, the opening animation is pretty much a statement of AR's place in the evolution of the video game. The entire premise here is to take one of three different vehicles and go from level to level, blasting enemies and collecting gems. Not exactly *ULTIMA*, but hey; it doesn't pretend to be anything more than a twitch game anyway.

Unfortunately, it isn't even particularly good at that. The major problem here is that while things look great and sound pretty darn good, the designers didn't really seem to grasp that vehicle games need zoom. What's the point of being able to careen around and blast away if most the terrain is more closed and claustrophobic than your average *Doom* level? While the ramps, turns, humps and elevation you cruise across are interesting up to a point,

you are supposed to be driving a vehicle and very little of that comes through until you make a bad turn and flip over. AR succeeds at being prettier and more complex than *SPECTER*, but fails to capture that same sense of wide open, fast action.

Despite these shortcomings, this game

splashes mean effects that become unbearably tedious and, of course, the utter lack of save game slots.

So if you want an arcade thrills, dig *SPECTER* out of your attic and save yourself some money and aggravation. Otherwise, for the lone vehicular masochist out there,



**TRON REVISITED** You'd have more fun watching the old movie than playing this beautiful but sorry multiplayer tank game.

could have redeemed itself as a network game if it allowed you to host a couple of guests, as in *WARCRAFT 2* or *CONQUEST OF THE NEW WORLD*. But no, Pygmalion demands each player have their own copy of the CD in order to play a net game. All I can do is wish any fans of this game lots of luck courting five or six of their friends into shelling out \$60 for this dog.

For me, the final nail in the coffin was the fact that once again, the North American consumer is expected to purchase a product that doesn't quite meet North American standards in software. All the clichés of the import biz are here: the annoying techno-pop soundtrack, the

*ASSAULT RIGS* may make a good cartridge game for the PC, but there's nothing here that *ZONE RAIDERS* didn't do better. ☹

**APPEAL:** Those who dig navigating futuristic tanks around close quarters decked out in splashy graphics and sound.

**PROS:** A good-looking game that's quick to jump into and sounds great.

**CONS:** Restrictively small levels, uninspired gameplay and blatant cartridge game-isms.



Price: \$59.00

System:

Requirements: IBM compatible 486-66 or better, DOS 6.0 or higher, 8 MB RAM (16 MB recommended), VGA graphics, 2x CD ROM, supports Sound Blaster compatible sound cards

# of Players: 1-8

Protection: None

Designer: Pygmalion, Ltd.

Publisher: Pygmalion, Ltd.

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soothing of a surge suppressor with the power of a UPS, guaranteed up to \$25,000.

Figure 1: Multiple outlets leave PC vulnerable to voltage differential



Figure 2: Computer protected with common ground

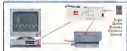


Figure 3: The voltage differential between multiple outlets causes line noise and data errors. In Figure 2, Back-UPS Office's common ground design eliminates the risk of a voltage differential.

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Surge Protection	No	No	Yes
Common Ground	No	No	Yes
Health Check-Up	No	No	Yes
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Surge Protection	No	No	Yes
Common Ground	No	No	Yes

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# A One Track Game

*It's Time To Don Another Straightjacket In Xatrix's CYBERIA 2*

by Elliott Chin

It's not one thing straight: Rail shooters are not inherently bad, they just get a bad rap. After all, there are rail shooters in the arcade, such as the stunning *Virtua Cop 2*, which are incredible games. On the PC, though, if you take a look at the typical rail-shooting fare, you quickly discover why this genre has been getting a bad name. Case in point: *CYBERIA 2*.

*CYBERIA 2* is the follow-up to the original, and takes place three years later, after an evil scientist, Dr. Corbin, has captured you and used the cybernetics in your body to craft a deadly poison. You're broken free of your bondage, though, and now you must put a stop to his nefarious scheme.

On the plus side, *CYBERIA 2* isn't nearly as slow as its predecessor. The action scenes come more frequently and there aren't nearly as many annoying puzzles. The gameplay, though, is still just as tedious. You sit through several minutes of cut scenes, play through a realm of rail-shooting sequences, see a few more cut scenes, solve a few puzzles for good measure, and then shoot your way through another batch of rails.

While there's a lot to blow up, the limited action in *CYBERIA 2* results in a very disappointing experience. All you do is move your mouse over an enemy and click, and the computer mimes you down a rail. You can't move yourself or interact with your environment, you're simply propelled down a corridor, tunnel or road at the same monotonous speed. There is also no freedom of movement



**SHOOT TO KILL** If you like the monotonous shooting, sprinkled with annoying cut scenes and pointless puzzles, then *CYBERIA 2* might be up your alley.

whatsoever. Even *RAIL ASSAULT II*, another rail shooter, lets you move your ship around the screen to dodge attacks and move around a little. But in *CYBERIA 2*, you feel as if somebody has popped your head in a vise and is pulling you along a straight line.

Xatrix further dilutes the gameplay with adventure elements such as cut scenes and puzzles—and there lies the other problem with *CYBERIA 2*. The advantages of rail shooters are that they offer fast, unadulterated, shooting action. But when you add cut scenes to the shooting, you slow down the action, and the game isn't nearly as much of a rush. This is definitely the case in *CYBERIA 2*, because every few minutes, you are force-fed another cut scene, and some of them literally run for minutes. What's worse is that every time you die, you can't just pop back into the same spot you left off. You have to watch the *CYBERIA 2* logo pop-up, sit through the opening animation before the rail sequence and then start over.

The puzzles also distract from the action. Thankfully, there are less of them this time around, but they are still frustrat-

ing and pointless. The dialogue, which you have no choice but to listen to, is especially atrocious, and the voice acting is even worse.

So what is there to recommend this game? Well, the graphics certainly are rich, but that's about it. Fans of the original *CYBERIA* or *The Hunt* might find *CYBERIA 2* to their liking, but those who want more from their action games will find it extremely disappointing. My advice: head to the arcade or target this month's action column for a peek at a good rail shooter. ☹



Price: \$49.95  
System:

Requirements: IBM compatible 486/50 or better, 8 MB RAM, 2x CD-ROM, less than 1 MB hard drive space, SVGA graphics, supports Sound Blaster compatible sound cards.

Protection: None  
Designer: Xatrix  
Publisher: Virgin Interactive  
 Irvine, CA  
(800) 874-4607

Reader Service #: 325

**FAPPEAL:** Fans of the original *Cyberia* who want the same mix of simple rail shooting and adventure.

**PROS:** It's pretty to look at, and the action segments come faster than in the original *Cyberia*.

**CONS:** The gameplay is extremely limited, the cut scenes and puzzles dilute the action and can't be escaped, the dialogue and voice acting are poor.



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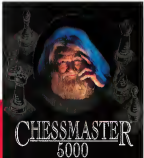
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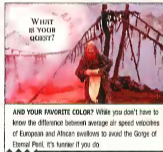
# Something Completely Different?

*Not Entirely, But Grail Is A Game Worthy Of Python's Best*

**T**he mist swirls, muffling the sounds of hoofbeats off in the distance. The music swells with that mixture of pomp and circumstance reserved only for royalty (or perhaps English Church music). Finally, figures emerge from the fog. One has a grim determined visage, accentuated by the soot covering his face from head to toe; obviously, he is a manservant, laden with burdens both literal and figurative. And his master? Clothed in the finest available on this

budget, he is swathed in velvet and a shiny coat of mail. atop his head is the crown—yes!—this must be Arthur, King of the Britons!

Just about this time you notice there are no horses; the manservant (or squire if you prefer) has been hauling two coconuts together. Unless you've been living in a very dark cave—with no cable telly at all, mind you—you'll smile, knowing that you are about to plunge headfirst into the rampant, creative silliness that is Monty Python.



**AND YOUR FAVORITE COLOR?** While you don't have to know the difference between average air speed velocities of European and African swallows to avoid the Gorge of Eternal Peril, it's funnier if you do.

“**Monty Python is back, and even better than in COMPLETE WASTE OF TIME.**”

## CHECK!

▶ If you enjoy anything Python-oriented, you should check out [www.7thlevel.com](http://www.7thlevel.com) and [www.pythonline.com](http://www.pythonline.com). Also, A COMPLETE WASTE OF TIME has been re-released at bargain prices in most retail chains. And of course, there is the inevitable Signature Edition of Holy Grail for collectors. ▶ What exactly is going on with CHESSMASTER 5000? Well, the producer, Glen Hendrickson, has moved on to OT Sports, although Mindscape claims that has nothing to do with the delay in ship-

ping the product. Evidently there's a lot of twerking going on in the Internet play More on this game next month.

▶ We may finally see a reasonable version of Trivial Pursuit for the computer. Hasbro Interactive has worked time into their ambitious schedule to bring the best-selling board trivia game to Windows 95—but with all the games they have in the pipeline (see this month's feature story), don't expect this one until Christmas season at the earliest.

## STOP GROVELING!

There are no men with three unlikely anatomical appendages here, just a glorious re-telling of the quest for the Holy Grail, as only these Kings of British humor could pull off. Your first thought must be that MONTY PYTHON AND THE QUEST FOR THE HOLY GRAIL must be short, after all, the movie was less than two hours. How long could they possibly stretch the game out? Rather far, actually.

What the creative team at 7th Level has been able to do is recapture that hilarious drop-jawed Terry Gilliam-esque animation, using digitized film clips and renderings from the film. The great irony is that



**NONE SHALL PASS** One of the silliest bits of *Holy Grail*—even by Python standards—is the struggle against the Black Knight, definitely not for the politically correct (or weak of limb).

the SCNA graphics give the game a far better look than the original film. Of course, 7<sup>th</sup> Level probably had a bigger budget than Python did, since the movie sometimes looks as though it was shot with a Super-8 camera. One reason for the crisp look of the game is that it uses the new MPEG-5 technology—see the difference in the screen shots shown here. *HOLY GRAIL* is the best mix of new and old media since *REBEL ASSAULT*—and a lot more fun.

In any case, what's good for games and Python fans alike is that there are probably 25+ hours of silly things to do. 7<sup>th</sup> Level, in the grand but equally silly tradition of well-meaning marketing teams everywhere, is determined to spread confusion as to what type of game *MONTY PYTHON AND THE QUEST*

FOR THE *HOLY GRAIL* actually is. Supposedly, it is "An action-strategy game for hard-core strategists." Now, as much as I would love to scale the walls of Castle Ankhura, my stomach knights bawling the taunts of silly, obnoxious

French-speaking persons—this just isn't that kind of game. Neither is it a pure action game, nor does it have enough plot to be called an adventure (although in all fairness, *HOLY GRAIL* is a lot more coherent than the aimless meandering of say, *The 11<sup>th</sup> Hour*). No, *MONTY PYTHON AND THE QUEST FOR THE HOLY GRAIL* is really A COMPLETE WASTE OF TIME, with even better subject matter and better technology. In short, it's an instant classic, a model for how to take classic traditional media and transform it into a computer game.

#### ENTER PYTHON, TALL

Eric Idle is a prime reason why *MONTY PYTHON AND THE QUEST FOR THE HOLY GRAIL* turned out so well. He knew little about this strange new breed before A

COMPLETE WASTE OF TIME. Since then, Eric has done more than dabble in games; he starred in Pignosis' *DISCWORLD* game (where his sense of comedic timing made a huge difference). Now, Eric's knowledge of Python lore has made him the obvious choice as the executive producer (along with 7<sup>th</sup> Level's Bob Eavin) of *HOLY GRAIL*. His control over the project made it easier for 7<sup>th</sup> Level to land not only Idle, but other Python members for audio recordings. Terry Ciflam added new illustrations as well, so that even the newly-generated material has that authentic Python silliness.

Essentially, gameplay consists of moving to the various locations made famous by the film, then playing a puzzle or arcade game. You can Spank the Virgin at Castle Ankhura, Burn the Witch, Bring Out Your Dead, all while traipsing through a medieval England that your history professors never imagined. Make a daring escape from the three-headed knight, always hungry (and always arguing with itself). Attempt to Catch the Cow outside of Lombard castle. Bravely fight the Black Knight in his dark, brooding and dangerous (if silly) forest. Face unspeakable fiery horrors in the fell and on-pronounceable Caves of Caerbannog. Oh, yes, lest you forget—there is a "point" of sorts to find hidden clues and items strewn about the Pythonesque landscape, so that you may safely cross the Bridge of Death. But with a game as much fun as this, why would you even want a thing the plot to get in the way? That would be truly silly. ☞

## STIPS!

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*Masterpieces Takes Chess*, one contest in particular teaches several lessons. Bobby Fischer is still, in my opinion, the greatest chessplayer of all time, and in his "Game of the Century" against US Grandmaster Donald Byrne, he was definitely "in the zone." Notice how Byrne, as white here, seems to have the advantage: his knights are well-posted, and he controls more of the board than his opponent. But Fischer takes advantage of Byrne's king, at risk in the center, while simultaneously attacking white's queen. Fischer sees every opportunity, first putting pressure on one flank, then the



other, then making a surprising—and effective—queen sacrifice. Despite Byrne's tough defense, the combinations spring from Fischer's position. Once you can understand this game, you can't help but be a better chessplayer.

For more on Bobby Fischer and his life, as well as his incredible chess skills, I heartily recommend *Bobby Fischer: Profile of a Prodigy*, by Frank Brady (whose new book on Orson Welles is also worth reading, even though Welles was master of a different medium than chess).

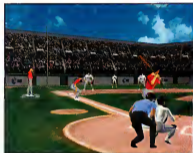
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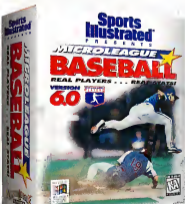
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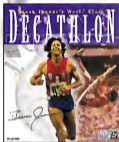
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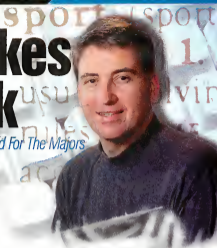
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# Gramps Makes A Comeback

*Old-Timer MICROLEAGUE BASEBALL Gets Re-Equipped For The Majors*



**T**he Friday before Memorial Day dawned sunny and warm—a great day for a ball game. The aged red brick manorment I'd come to visit loomed before me as I climbed out of my battered Subaru. With excitement hanging in the air like a Ralph Branca curveball, I imagined the think that this weathered structure had provided baseball fans over the years. Passing through the entrance I sensed that I was visiting a true shrine to the national pastime.

What made my pilgrimage even more intriguing was that I had come to bear witness to perhaps the year's most anticipated birth.

No, I wasn't at Wrigley Field or Fenway Park. Rather, I was at the old APBA Game Company building. Nestled in rolling farm country not far from Gettysburg, APBA HQ, with its 1950s architecture, quirky interior layout and endless stacks of player cards is a retro trip down memory lane. And the celebrated birth I'd come in search of? It had nothing to do with Madonna's pregnancy, but rather the reinvention of MICROLEAGUE BASEBALL, the original heavy hitter among computer baseball games.

opponents with torpedos (hey, we can dream).

▶At press time, we put on our fake caddy outfits and struck onto the fairway for a closer look at VR Golf, the next game to be released by Interplay's VR Sports division. The game will ship with two fictional courses (one in the U.S. and one in Scotland), eight modes of play, three commentators, variable weather conditions, and the ability to change your player's gender, skin tone, and—thank goodness—clothing (no green pants for us, thank you). The company has reportedly lined up licenses for four real courses (with more possibly to come) to be offered on an expansion disk.

## BALL BEARINGS

MICROLEAGUE BASEBALL debuted back in the days when Apple IIs and Commodore 64s battled IBM PC XIs for computer entertainment dollars, but it has been on the MIA list for several seasons. That's why this summer's release, officially called SPORTS ILLUSTRATED PRESENTS MICROLEAGUE BASEBALL 6.0, has sports gamers' anticipation level going into extra innings.

A lot has transpired in the years since the game dropped off the radar in 1992. Newer releases like Sierra's FRONT PAGE SPORTS BASEBALL, Acclaim's HARBALL 5 and Sierrafront's Tony LaRussa 3 have established themselves as potential perennial contenders in the graphics-oriented baseball sim arena. Even stat-oriented products like Miller Associates' B BASEBALL FOR WINDOWS have stepped it up a notch, adding limited multimedia elements such as play-by-play announcers and stadium backdrops. With the competition getting better every year, will MICROLEAGUE BASEBALL enjoy a triumphant return, or will it end up as just another face in an ever-growing crowd?

While the late alpha version I saw was far from complete, the game clearly has some intriguing features. If the finished product can deliver the goods, it's sure to

“ MICRO-LEAGUE BASEBALL 6 should appeal to both stat- and graphics-oriented sports fans. ”

## ON DECK

▶Philips Media and BlueSky Software are kicking off their Total Control sports line later this year with NFL Total Control Football, which will purportedly focus heavily on front office management strategy as well as on arcade action.

▶For something completely different, zip up your windbreaker and keep your eyes peeled for Vivid Simulations Inc.'s Sail 2000, a 3D simulation of the America's Cup yacht match. Targeted for Christmas, the new version is a sequel to last year's Sail 95, adding head-to-head modem play and the ability to race ice boats as well as IACC yachts. No word yet on whether you can sink your

enise a stir among baseball fans. In fact, it should have enough crossover appeal to bridge the traditional gap between stat- and graphics-oriented players. Why? Because the game, while heavy in statis-



**I LIKE TO WATCH** MICROLEAGUE BASEBALL 6.0 promises to combine its traditional stat-intensive, managerial mode of play with new 3D-rendered graphics.

tics, also has a very appealing graphical flair.

The game uses motion-captured animation, with each player individually scripted. This means gamers can expect to see things like infielders bouncing on their toes as they get set for the pitch. Like the older versions, the game defaults to a press-box view of the diamond. That's where the stat-nerd ends, however. With a click, gamers can zoom down to field level and check things out from a near endless variety of camera angles. The Windows 95 native product also features DOOM-like 3D movement within the playing field, allowing gamers to observe the action from any perspective.

The key word here is observe. Unlike most graphics-oriented games, MICROLEAGUE BASEBALL is strictly a managerial sim. There are no arcade elements. You can't pitch, bat or field. If the final version works as planned, the result will be a product that has a flavor all its own—a heavy statistical orientation that rides along on state-of-the-art graphical currents.

The most exciting thing about the new version is its potential for online play. The

game not only allows for solitary and modern action, but also commissioner-league play via the Internet. Gamers will be able to join a league through MicroLeague's Web site. Once the league is formed, drafting takes place. The commissioner will then publish a schedule, and teams can begin duking it out in real time. Gamers will also be able to monitor stats and standings, and make roster moves online.

With real-time Internet action as the major component of MicroLeague's game plan, the company also intends to release pro football, basketball, and ice hockey sims in the coming year. Each will offer online league play.

"We're looking to establish ourselves on the Web as the place to go for sports replay," product director Scott Games says. "We want to be the authority on statistics. We're not out there to compete with the EA's of the world in the retail arena."

In fact, they are so committed to statistical accuracy that the game no longer has subjective rating factors. Each player aspect is based on a mind-boggling 1,200 statistical categories licensed from Stats, Inc. The heavy numbers orientation forces the game to buck at least one hot trend in sports simulation: career mode. Because play is totally rooted in past performance, the game offers exhibition and single-season play only. The designers saw no way to adjust performance for player aging or to introduce fictitious rookie replacements without a major deviation from the game's statistical emphasis.

The initial release of MICROLEAGUE BASEBALL 6.0 includes teams from the 1995 and 1996 seasons. The company has plans for at least six past season disks which should be available by September. NFL major league stadiums are included with the game, with additional stadiums also in the pipeline for later in the year.

## BUILDING A DYNASTY

MICROLEAGUE BASEBALL 6 is the flagship product of MicroLeague Multimedia Inc. (MMI), formerly known as Sports Associates, Inc. The parent company's name change was timed to coincide with a recent public stock offering. Along the way, MMI purchased APBA.

"We really thought the synergy was there," Cianci explained. "What better way to build a winning team than to get the goodwill of sports boardgame simulations mixed in with the creator of the original sports computer baseball simulation. It was the right fit."

And what of the company that pioneered baseball simulation gaming some 40 years ago?

"APBA continues on," Cianci assured me. The APBA products should benefit from increased access to retail channels via MMI's distribution connections.

MMI's acquisition of APBA is sure to have ripple effects in the sports gaming community. While the APBA board games will continue, future releases in the APBA computer line, especially MS-DOS versions, are in doubt. In fact, at least one discontinued CD-ROM compilation, featuring the APBA baseball, football, and ice hockey games has found its way to market, indicating that these products are being phased out. On the up side, MMI is developing a statistical boxing game, which will probably be the first product released as a joint MicroLeague-APBA venture.

MMI's commitment to APBA seems firm. The parent company has relocated its offices from Delaware to APBA's quaint Pennsylvania facility. Some key APBA people still hold positions in the new organization, and floor-to-ceiling stacks of APBA player cards fill storage areas, awaiting shipment to board game customers.

Less clear, however, are the potential effects that the ownership change may have on BASEBALL FOR WINDOWS, since publisher Miller Associates licenses certain aspects of its game from APBA. Here's hoping the Millers don't wind up as old men on the MICROLEAGUE BASEBALL seminar. ☺



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# Virtually Playable

*VR SOCCER '96 Has Chrome Galore, But Gameplay Misses The Goal*

by Gordon Goble

Any buzzed-on-sensory computer sports fan knows, the latest Big Thing is "virtual 3D." Head Cams and Ball Cams lend new perspectives and up-close-and-personal looks of our favorite sporting events. At first glance, it's all quite impressive, but in practice just how many of these amazing new angles and 3D renderings actually give the player a better grip on gameplay? Sometimes, you get the feeling that good old-fashioned 2D wasn't so bad.

Such is the case with VR Sports' VR SOCCER '96, a game that tries so hard to look good that it ends up being just plain hard to play, mainly because there isn't one consistent viewing perspective. Every possible floating camera (and there are a grand total of seven) is either confusing, far too isolated or prone to wild panning. The lesson here is what works in DOOM doesn't necessarily work everywhere.

## PENALTY KICK

VR SOCCER's head and ball cameras provide superb replay potential, but critical cross-field player movement is nearly impossible to monitor from such limited perspectives. Likewise, the game's more distant viewpoints are often too much so, with players becoming mere blips on the horizon. Electronic Arts' FIFA 95 is guilty of this too, but at least it includes a couple truly workable gameplay views among its otherwise replay-oriented options.

VR SOCCER tips up elsewhere too, particularly in the game's scaling. Shooting from well beyond the halfway mark, camera positions that seem to shrink the field down to the size of an



**ALL DRESSED UP** You'll swear you're looking at real people in VR Soccer, but watching them play soccer is not much fun.

indoor soccer pitch, and super-speedy player motion that further muddles the bag-bag "hockey rink" feel simply don't blend well. In fact, offensive thrusts happen so frequently that the game designers seem to have constructed a built-in buffer so scores won't hit the stratosphere.

Then there are the little things—balls that pop out of play with annoying consistency, a dark screen that hampers important visual information such as ball shadow, and an announcer who is wont to exclaim "he'll be pleased with his team's performance today" and "he'll not be pleased with his team's performance today" in almost the same breath.

## ON THE OTHER FOOT

This is all quite sad, since VR SOCCER towers over its peers in some respects. The game's realistic player structure and fluid animation is second to none—just watching a player fall down and get back up again is a real treat. Even up close, players look like real people rather than an assemblage of pixels.

The game also boasts superb visual aids. The player with the ball will have one of several indicators under his body depending on the circumstance, including a triangle that points in the direction of the intended shot or pass, and a square

when he's in a position

to "square" the ball. VR SOCCER comes with 44 international teams, league, tournament and practice modes, and a host of graphic options including high/low resolution shifting on the fly. Technicalities such as offsoles, substitutions and bookings (penalties) may be toggled on or off, and referees range from

the nearly blind to the positively teleopic. Network and modem play for up to 20 players is supported but an after-match stat summary is not.

When the inevitable comparison tests are made, however, VR SOCCER just doesn't cut the Grey Poupon, and is nowhere near knocking FIFA 96 from its reigning position as king of digital soccer. Despite FIFA's penchant for predetermined goals, tackles and decisions, it more correctly recreates the environment and mood of soccer in a cleaner setting that simply beckons you back for more. VR SOCCER '96 looks great, but this is a classic example of too much glitz and not enough game. **B**

**APPEAL:** "Virtual 3D" and animation hooks who appreciate a great replay.

**PROS:** Uncannily authentic, state-of-the-art player animation, an infinite variety of camera angles, cool ball control indicators.

**CONS:** For all the fancy camera angles, there's no practical gameplay perspective. The action is far too fast, and the field is far too small—a bad combination.



Price: \$49.95

## System Requirements:

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If any of these describe you, then you'll want to watch [www.icigames.com](http://www.icigames.com) for the newest effort from the creators of **WARBIRD**, called **PLANETARY RAIDERS**.

## STATION KEEPING

At the core, **PLANETARY RAIDERS** is very much a multiplayer homage to *Origins*

and the **PRIVATEER** series. Players start with a basic space ship and enough money to buy essential equipment for it. From there, it's up to you what strategy you want to take. Do you earn a steady living as a hard-working trader, or go for the big bucks as a smuggler? Or does space piracy sound more exciting? ICI plans to leave the game as open-ended as possible, so those possibilities and more are open to you.

But **PLANETARY RAIDERS** is about more than space combat and personal wealth. The game promises to have a full-blown resource-management element as well. Players will fly from one of 12 space stations in a planetary system. Each of these stations both produces and requires resources, and none is completely self-sufficient. That's where the trade element comes in. When you take a mission to pick up, say, defensive weapons, you're helping to keep your base supplied. If you succeed, not only do you profit, but you build the strength of your home base as well.

Of course, this works both ways. If you

can intercept other players as they attempt to bring supplies back to their stations, you can hit them in the pocketbook and cripple their station. Be careful, though. Once you're tasked as a nuisance, the station you're bothering can put a bounty on your head, and players the solar system over will be gunning (or lasering) for your ship.

## ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS

The best way to survive with a bounty on your head is to fly with friendly forces at your side. Players can form squadrons, and those squadrons can form corporations, which in turn run the stations. Once a corporation is in control of a station, players won't be able to just sit back and watch the credits roll in. Someone will need to manage the station's resources, sending players out on missions both to sustain the station and increase the bankroll. Of bigger concern are station raids. Players with the cash and resources will be able to build invasion robots, which can be shipped en masse to competing stations in an effort to take them over. In the initial version, the victor will likely be determined simply by the size of the attacking and defending forces. Eventually, look for a fully interactive mission module to go online.

“ Take **PRIVATEER**, mix in a little **CAPITALISM**, and sprinkle with some **Civ...** ”

## ON THE RADAR

▶ You won't have to wait idle while CD wraps up **TFX 3**, the sequel to **EF2000**. The coming **TACTICOM** add-on for **EF2000** will breathe new life into the game. Along with all the fixes and enhancements included in the various **EF2000** patches, **TACTICOM** will add serial and modem play, including a number of new multiplayer or mission options. The new Tactical Mission Planner will allow you to plot your own combat sorties in the campaign, choosing which target to take out, the strike package to use, and

how to get there. A new smart camera system will let you view other aircraft, going straight to where the action is without forcing you to key past dozens of planes sitting on the tarmac.

▶ Also in the works is **Super EF2000** for Windows 95, essentially **EF2000** and **TACTICOM** in one package with full Win 95 support. **Super EF2000** will include detailed online help and reference material. Both products should be available sometime this summer.

## TIPS!

You love a hot new Pezium 200 and you can't wait to see the smooth frame rate on your classic sims and space games like *Crux: Yexen's Air Cover* and *Wing Commander II*. Then you discover that in the bad old days program-

mers never antipated machines as fast as we have now, and the games are unplayable at hyperspeed. No need to worry, though. Just hit the net and find the MoSLo utility, which allows you to run programs at anywhere from 1 to 99 percent of normal speed. You'll find the utility at <http://tip.es.com/pub/patches/moslo.exe>

In the same way that you can enhance and update your fighters and transports, you'll also be able to update the infrastructure of your corporation's station. You can enhance the station's production by reworking the planet you're orbiting. If you produce food, terraform the planet, if you produce raw resources, build automated mines.

If you're looking for that extra edge, go visit the Starman. This jobless 1.10-size character inhabits a corner of the solar system and is the local black marketer. The Starman can sell you contraband weapons not available anywhere else, perfect for that space station assault you're planning.

### SHIP SHAPE

All this resource management may be fun (and indeed, you can just play clerk and not fly at all if that's what you want to do), but it's the action that will be the primary interest of the majority of players. Initially, *PLANETARIAN RAIDERS* will sport three types of fighters and three types of transports. But you won't be able to tell appearances indicate who's who to attack. That top-flight fighter may have broken the bank of the owner and thus be equipped with simple lasers, while that little starter ship may be loaded with all the hottest systems.

As your wallet fattens, you'll be able to buy a better radar, more powerful communications systems, and of course bigger weapons. On tap so far are lasers, rail guns, and a variety of missiles. You can even customize your ship's color scheme.

The "flight model" will be a real departure for the accuracy fanatics at ICI—it will offer simple, *Wing Commander*-style control. ICI considered doing real

space physics, but what's the fun in spending half of your flight accelerating, then turning around and then spending the rest of the journey decelerating? Instead, you'll be able to alter speed and direction easily, and jump-gates will take the drudgery out of going from planet to planet (as well as providing good spots for pirates to lie in wait).

Along with station defense, bounty hunting, transport escort, and trade runs,

sky, do? Double-cross him, though, and you'll quickly gain a negative reputation.

So what happens if your hard-earned ship gets blown away, and you don't have any credits in the bank? Along with the corporations, there's also a military presence in the solar system. When you reenter the game, you can join the military, where you'll be given a free ship and steady pay. Look for the military to keep any corporations that grow too big for their britches in check.

### STATION ASSEMBLY

Of course, a universe this extensively modded and with this much freedom of action is going to be quite a task to model. Look for a free, open beta test with a subset of these features to start soon after you read this. As time passes more features will be added, and once the main structure is in place, the billing clock will be turned



**SPACE BLANKET BABYLON** The ships in *Planetary Raiders* may be a bit polygon-light, but the smooth motion and huge space stations give you a great sense of scale.

you can work to disrupt your opponents' economies as well. Resources from planets and asteroids will be shipped to the stations via unmanned cargo pods, which can be destroyed en route, for instance.

Look for some other unique possibilities. For example, you could rid a neutral opponent and tell him that if he drops his cargo, you'll let him go. Better to surrender today and live to fight another

day. The features outlined here are what ICI plans for the basic game, but they have some amazingly elaborate plans for versions to follow. After getting a look at an early alpha version of *PLANETARIAN RAIDERS* and gauging the scale, it's relatively small ships flew around huge space stations orbiting even more gigantic planets, this free trader is definitely ready to beam aboard. ☺

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# Mac Boot

The Macintosh Surfaces For A New U-boat Mission

by Kevin Turner

**O**perative Drumbeat was the code name for U-boat operations off the East Coast of the United States during World War II. After America entered the war,

Admiral Donitz, the chief architect and commander of the German U-boat fleet, sent his U-boats to America to intercept and destroy convoys and disrupt the sea lanes. He almost succeeded. U-boat commanders found a country ill-prepared for submarine warfare. There were no coastal blackouts, and ships tunneled up and down the East Coast without escort or convoy. The British tried to rely on the lessons they had learned, but found the U.S. Navy disinterested. Meanwhile, the Germans were hunting in seas much friendlier than those they had left behind.

**DRUMBEAT**, the game, is a Macintosh submarine simulation (a Windows version under development) where you take on the role of a U-boat commander during this East Coast campaign.

## PHOTO REALISM

The first thing that really impressed me about **DRUMBEAT** was the graphics. The control room is an actual photo of a control room, altered slightly so that all the gauges and controls fit on the screen. Clicking on the hatch takes you to a photo of the captain's station. From the stationroom, you can tour the aft end of the submarine. Each stop on the tour is a photograph, although there is nothing in the other compartments. From the control room, you can head forward and tour the business end of the U-boat. This tour isn't functional, but it shows you what the confines of a U-boat were like.



WHAT A DIVE You can't fault the realism of *Drumbeat*'s interiors, as *Deadly Games* used photos from real U-boats

Heading to the bridge, you'll find a set of binoculars for surface attacks, and a voice tube used to receive status reports. Checking the horizon is done in 90-degree jumps, instead of the panning that most PC sub games support. The sea nerves, although the effect is hampered by a demarcation line on the horizon where the sea seems to flatten. Day turns to night in a hurry, meaning sun one moment and stars the next.

The sounds were more impressive. When you give an order, it's not merely acknowledged and carried out—the entire process is audible. For instance, a depth change order is acknowledged, the instructions are given to the helmsman and planesman, and the sounds of pumping or blowing tanks can be observed. As I left the sub pens in Lockport, France, a horn sounded and I could hear the engine running and the wind going by.

## SUB PAR

Game play won't quite up to the standard set by *Acies of the Deep*, but was entertaining nonetheless. The interface for ship's control was hard for an old PC hand to learn. I spent a lot of time looking for familiar ways to accomplish tasks, only to end up with the same control window that follows the player everywhere.

The game is heavy on strategy, and this is reflected in the name, which is nothing more than a well-written treatise on sub operations and strategy. Animation is minimal, and a lot of the standard sim perks, such as tactical aids and sensor input, simply don't exist. But what **DRUMBEAT** does do, it does very well.

The U-boat has a Target Data Computer that is to die for. Once a target is spotted, it's viewed through

either the binoculars or the periscope. Input the masthead height, divisions in the reticle, and angle-on-the-bow into the TDC, then press the "generate solution" button. Presto, one working solution. While the TDC is being operated, the target seems to freeze, which makes life much easier.

Aircraft attacks are frequent, and the only possible solution is to dive. The sounds around the dive are so well done that I felt myself flashing back to my submarine days. Yes, it did sound a lot like that, was the German accents.

If you have a Mac and an interest in sub warfare, I recommend this game. If I had one wish, it would be for developers to put **DRUMBEAT** and *Acies of the Deep* in a blender. Then you'd have the ultimate submarine simulation. **S**

**APPEAL:** Mac users ready to plunge into the world of submarines.

**PROS:** Well-done targeting systems; the photograph-based graphics work surprisingly well; the sound effects will have you checking the walls for leaks.

**CONS:** Control interface is quirky, and there's little in the way of moving objects here.



Price: \$44.95

**System Requirements:** Macintosh LC III or faster (PowerMac native supported), 8MB RAM, 16-color or 16-gray display

**Protection:** None  
**Designer:** Rene Vidner

**Publisher:** Deadly Games  
Bridgehampton, NY  
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**Reader Service #:** 328

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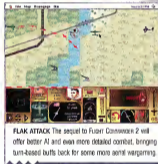
*OVER THE REICH Emphasizes Aerial Strategy Over Reflexes*



The screen call is seductive, even mesmerizing: "Come to me, O lost and lonely boardgamer. Reject thy hexagonal ways! Forswear your outdated himb-based beliefs and embrace the new, the first-movering, the real-time strategy game." Certainly, games such as WARCRAFT III and COMMAND & CONQUER are not to play—especially multi-player. But all the claims being made about these two games ignore the basic fact that they were successful because they were well-designed, not just because they were real-time. And, as good as they are, both WARCRAFT III and C&C still fail to address one of my pet peeves that all real-time strategy games eventually descend into arcade action, despite their loftier aspira-

tions. If I want fast action with little real strategy to get in the way, I'll play QUAKE, thank you.

Evidently a lot of gamers feel as I do, since STEEL PANTHERS, CIV II and FANTASY GENERAL are getting as much



**FLAK ATTACK** The sequel to Future Commander 2 will offer better AI and even more detailed combat, bringing turn-based buffs back for some more aerial wargaming.

attention as the real-time conflicts. In fact, it can be argued that the runaway success

reported sales of over 60,000 units. In addition, BG: WARHOOD had, according to Empire (the distributor for Ironsoft in the US), the highest "buy-in" at retail chains of any historical wargame they've released this year.

After BG: SHILOH, the BATTLEGROUND series travels to the Middle East with BG: SEVA. It will be interesting to see how the system—so well-suited to 19th century warfare—is adapted to simulate the high-tech armor-heavy combat

collected on page 158

of PANZER GENERAL (see Briefings below) has put turn-based wargames back on the map, at least for the foreseeable future. All of which is welcome news for Avalon Hill, as it continues to refine methods to bring its classic gaming line to the computer.

Actually, the "new" era of Avalon Hill started some three years ago, with the release of PC KINGMAKER, which to date has sold 40,000+ copies—decent for a computer wargame. But those kind of numbers have not been duplicated by any other AH product—not even the well-received WOTD or WAR SERIES.

## AIR STRATEGY MARSHAL

In particular, Avalon Hill was disappointed with sales of FLACATT COMMANDER 2, especially since the game made every critic's "best of '98." So, designer Chuck Moylan decided to spice up the next game in the series. Like its predecessor, OVER THE REICH is a game where the outcome is determined by thinking rather than reflexes. It isn't a flight sim, but an aerial strategy game, much like the old SPI Air War—only with less tanks and far

“ **OVER THE REICH could be Avalon Hill's breakthrough computer game.** ”



Find the demo of **Over the Reich** on the CGW website at <http://www.zinet.com/gaming>

## BRIEFINGS

In case you are confused by the rumors flying around, it's official: Sid Meier has left MicroProse as speculated in last month's column. Check out this month's Road.Me for the full low-down.

Talonsoft continues to roll with the popular BATTLEGROUND series. Not only did BATTLEGROUND: GETTYSBURG debut as the number three wargame in the CGW Top 100 readers' poll (confirming my contention that it was the best American Civil War game in nearly a decade), but it also has

## BRIEFINGS

\*\*\*Reprinted from page 157

between the Arab and Israel armies. The good news is that Tainsoft plans scenarios for all of the famous engagements, including the Six-Day War.

►More good news for strategy gamers: GMT Games (after parting ways with SSI) has signed a letter of intent with Interactive Magic to bring its sophisticated *Alexander the Great* board game to the computer; the game will likely be in Windows format, for release sometime next year.

►After *History of the World* is completed, the next big project at Avalon Hill will be PC PHAZERSLITZ. The big questions are whether this mega-boardgame hit (it's sold over 275,000 copies, making it second only to *Axis & Allies* in board wargame sales) can be updated from its 1970 rules to a more modern mindset without damaging the feel and quality of play.

►PANTER GENERAL continues to sell very well—CGW was able to confirm sales data of over 250,000 units. When you consider that a new Windows 95 and

Macintosh version has just been released, it seems fair to say that PG will be incontestably the best-selling historical computer wargame of all time, not even including bundling agreements. Our congratulations to SSI and all the talented people involved.

►Never been to a game convention? Two of the best are but weeks away. GenCon (Milwaukee, \$40, 414-248-0389 fax, tsrnc@aol.com) is the largest board/computer game convention, with an average annual attendance of over 20,000. Every major (and many minor) board and computer game vendors are there to ply their wares, run tournaments, and pontificate on the state of the art of gaming. If you are an RPGer, this is the place to be, as it hosts the official RPGA championships. Avalon Hill (Baltimore, \$35, 800-999-3222, Avalon.Hill@games.com) is a much smaller con, averaging about 1400 attendees. There are no lectures, seminars or other distractions from the more than 100 boardgame tournaments—all featuring AH games.

more realism. It could be Avalon Hill's breakthrough computer game.

The big differences in OVI & III, RICH and FC2 involve more than just moving the venue from the modern era to WWII. A big contributor to the project has been JD Webster, whose prolific boardgames on air combat have been praised by aficionados ever since his first project, *Air Superiority*, used 2-point movement (remember, this was on a hex-based game map) back in the mid-eighties. Freed from the restrictions of cardboard and paper, Charlie and JD will

now be able to add even more details than in JD's boardgames.

Overall, RICH has the potential to be not just the best game ever produced on the Air War over Germany—it's that already—but one of the best WWII games we've seen, period. If you read my column on computer opponents a couple of months ago, you know how highly I rate the AI for FC2. OVI & III, RICH should give you an even tougher fight, because the planes perform with a consistent internal logic. The exemplary research becomes more than just mere number-crunching and wind tunnel

effects algorithms piled on top of one another. Spiffins him in exquisitely tight circles around MC-109s, while Pöckel-Wald 190s make up for their lesser maneuverability with devastating firepower. The early German jets blast through Allied propeller-driven craft and quickly leave their hit-and-run tactics necessitated by low fuel reserves.

## MULTIMEDIA BOMB RUNS

Like PANTER GENERAL, OVER THE RICE has real strength comes from strong campaigns, each featuring a heap of authentic WWII archival film footage, strafing runs, screaming jets, fighter sweeps, et al. But these little multimedia touches never get in the way of the combat-rich environment. You aim your fighter group, choose your pilots, decide which route to take and charge toward the target. As you fend off attacks from interceptors, you must make the tough decisions: Do I attack the secondary target? Have I enough fuel to make it home? And you face similar decisions with your pilots, who gain in experience and fall prey to fatigue, adding role-playing elements to the mix.

Every type of Allied aircraft are included in the game, including the P-38 Lightning, the P-51B and P-51D Mustang, and the famous B-17 Flying Fortress. Should you get tired of playing the Americans, you can switch to the British or German sides; in the latter, you'll find not just how experimental the Komrad rocket fighter really was. And it looks as though not just e-mail play, but Internet play will be included as well. Now, if you'll excuse me, HQ has just informed me that Her Majesty has authorized our use of the new Gloster Meteor jet fighter. We'll give those Jerries what for! ☺

## STIPS!


immediate area first. They'll give you the money to buy the necessary gangs and equipment. Later, seek out a research lab and purchase a gang with a good research bonus to be your weaponsmith. Your first research project should be the Katana or high-powered firearm, followed by some cheap advanced armor.

►In *Crusoe* Detonates, grab and defend every Casino and Bar in your

Remember that your choice of three gangs-for-hire are cards that will sit in your purchase area until you either buy them or discard them. So if you don't have the funds or inclination to hire a gang during a turn, discard the one that you find least appealing until you have those prime ones waiting for you. Always try and have at least one good buff-lacking bunch waiting to be hired at all times.

*Crusoe* DEVELOPS tips by Martin Civilec





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# Beef Wellington

TalonSoft's *BATTLEGROUND: WATERLOO* Has The Beef And The Dessert

by Johnny L. Wilson

**T**he Napoleonic Era is often considered to be the Grand Age of Warfare. Indeed, this era had everything: advancements in technology, a mutation in tactics, large armies, colorful uniforms, impressive martial arts, and famous battles of grandiose size.

Napoleon, for example, fielded a massive army of 175,000 at the battle of Leipzig, whereas his famous predecessor, Frederick the Great, had a "mere" 77,000 at Hohenfriedberg as his largest force. Napoleon is well-known, of course, for his successful use of cavalry as shock troops, but he also added to the infantry manual. Where the accepted 18th-century tactic was for armies to attack in line, Napoleon had refined the art of massive column attacks by the early 19th century.

*BATTLEGROUND: WATERLOO* does the best job yet of any computer game to capture the glory, spirit, and tactics of this fascinating era of warfare. Yes, the game "only" covers the Waterloo battle. But the historical game takes 44 turns, you have the option of playing shorter scenarios (various venues within the battle), and the real treat is a longer "What if the weather had been better?" version of the battle that's even longer than the "big battle."

Like the previous games in the *BATTLEGROUND* series, the game takes place on a finely veined hex map adorned by beautiful terrain, and you get to command highly colored units that gleam like painted miniature soldiers—soldiers that are slightly larger than those in previous releases of the series. The visual cues of battle are everywhere: evident dead horses, soldiers, and the flow of battle

make clear that there is a cost to the pageantry of war. Additionally, multimedia film clips of Napoleonic reenactments combine with audio files of martial songs and shouts of "Vive le France!" to really make the battle come to life.

(Huguenot) Use of skirmishers is particularly advantageous for defending armies, but they are also useful for cautiously advancing armies.

Just as Napoleon used cavalry so effectively at Eylau, cavalry really makes things

interesting in *BC: WATERLOO*. Whenever cavalry whined up facing an enemy unit (unless it is disordered), it can charge the enemy during the Cavalry Charge Phase. This adds to the effectiveness of the cavalry in the next phase, Melee. Unless that enemy is infantry which has formed into square (literally a square formation designed to keep the faster cavalry from being able to flank line infantry), the cavalry's value is tripled for that

melee. This reflects the demoralization which units usually feel when facing those tiers of horse-flesh descending upon them.

Of course, once a unit is lined up in the square formation to repel a



**CHAOS THEORY** A simultaneous cavalry charge and flank attack by line infantry make these British regulars retreat into a well-ordered unit—with messy results.

## THE AGE OF MANEUVER

The game flow is most similar to *BC: CENTURIES*. The action is divided into turns with five phases per player in each turn: Movement, Defensive (Opportunity Fire and Formation Changes), Offensive Fire, Cavalry Charge, and Melee. This time, skirmishers and cavalry have significantly more important roles, and infantry can fight in column formation. Skirmishers can slim down line battalions just as they did in real life. Even facing 1:6 odds, skirmishers can usually take more than they give in terms of lives. As you would expect, skirmishers are particularly devastating in certain types of terrain (in this game, most notably in the orchards surrounding

## Thrillfests for dessert, monsieur

**T**he use of the column formation in *BATTLEGROUND: WATERLOO* reflects an interesting historical insight. When Napoleon's campaigns first began, many of his troops weren't disciplined enough to fight in line. So, initially, he used a lot of *grands corps* (skirmishers supported by columns). Later as the troops became better trained, he was able to move large rectangular columns against the Allies' line battalions and break through them. By the time of the Waterloo campaign, Wellington had learned to counter the column attacks and they were no longer as effective.



Price: \$49.95

**System Requirements:** 486-DX33 minimum (P70 or better recommended), Windows 3.1 or 95, 8 MB RAM (16 recommended), 2x CD-ROM drive, SVGA graphics, 5 MB hard disk space (130 MB recommended), mouse, supports all Windows-compatible sound cards.

**# of Players:** 1-2  
**Protection:** None (CD must be in drive)

**Designers:** John Tyler, Jim Rose and Joseph Hummel  
**Publisher:** TalonSoft Software  
Forest Hill, MD  
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## Battleground Tactics



**BATTERY POWER** Placing artillery side-by-side within the same hex is particularly effective, if you fire each battery separately. Firing the batteries in the same hex simultaneously will almost always produce the same result for both batteries, while firing them independently means you'll usually hit the target at least once.



**NELEE MASSACRE** Skirmishers can chalk up disproportionate results when defending in well-covered terrain such as this orchard near Hougoumont. Just because we think the skirmishers are too effective to be historically accurate doesn't mean you shouldn't take advantage of it.

cavalry charge, they have effect: they spread their firepower out around the square. That means that if you can bring a column of infantry or line infantry to bear upon them while they are in square, their return fire will only be about 75 percent as effective as it would have been if you had faced them while they were in line formation.

Finally, artillery was important to success in *BCA WATERLOO*, as it was clear to Napoleon's heart. There are more artillery units in this game than in any computer game I can ever remember. Manuevering the guns into firing position and choosing

the right targets seems easily the most critical factor in the game.

## PERILS OF WAR

*BC WATERLOO* is almost the perfect Napoleonic wargame, with a few quibbles. I fought entirely charges, so that the British AI would form squares, allowing me to decimate them. Alas, I didn't even need to show my cavalry most of the time. The AI forms squares all too readily. Not only that, but the calculations just don't look right for infantry in square. They are supposed to lose 25 percent effectiveness, but it doesn't look like this is always the case.

Also, it may be just because I only like to play the historical scenarios, but it doesn't seem to me like the artificial opponents are aggressive enough. Of course, it may well be that this is a factor of the units forming squares so easily. It's tough to move aggressively in square formations.

And while I agree that skirmishers were effective historically, they're too effective here. I have pretty

serious doubts about the number of 63 attacks at 1,650 troops to 50 in which the attacker can lose 150 troops and the defender none. I suppose those could be really thick woods, though. Those South Carolina swamps worked for Francis Marion in the American Revolutionary War.

Another complaint I have has nothing to do with the underlying calculations. It's just that in order to get the most of the visuals in the game, you have to play much of the game zoomed in to the max. Unfortunately, that also means you'll face a lot of scrolling that slows the game down, even on my Pentium 70 laptop. The bigger figures are nice, but it means you'll usually see less of the map at one time when you're enjoying them.

## SPOILS OF WAR

Yet, when it comes down to it, *BATTLEGROUND: WATERLOO* is the best Napoleonic gaming experience I've ever had. I've played minis with rules authors, classic board games with champion players, and tried every Napoleonic computer game I could get my hands on. This one captures the fun, or the strategy and the spirit of the era like no other game I've played. If it only had a map and unit editor, it wouldn't leave my hard drive until DVD games use active movie technology to make the figures in the game look like the film clips in the multimedia enhancements to the game. Of course, considering the e-mail and head-to-head capabilities, it may reside permanently on my hard drive anyway. **S**

**APPEAL:** Anyone interested in the most fascinating era of warfare in history.

**PROS:** New formations and tactical challenges transform a very good system to excellent. Multimedia enhancements that add to instead of diminish game excitement. Massive troops to command over gorgeous terrain.

**CONS:** Overuse of square formations, slow scrolling on some machines at closest zoom level and lack of a scenario editor.



**SQUARE PEGS** Only one French cavalry unit can possibly charge the British who are pictured here, yet an amazing amount of infantry units have formed into square. We think this algorithm needs tweaking—but the cavalry charges are still loads of fun.

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# Tactical Errors

*Arsenal Fires A Dud Into Windows Territory*

By Patrick C. Miller

**W**hen Arsenal Publishing released TacOps for the Macintosh nearly two years ago, PC wargamers like myself could hardly wait for the Windows version of this modern

armored warfare game. The long wait was not over, but many will probably be disappointed with the results. The reasons are numerous: TacOps for Windows lacks realism in significant areas, appears out-

Canadian and former Soviet weapon systems from the recent past and near future is impressive. In addition, the point-and-click interface that's used to give units orders and capabilities is very intuitive, thus reducing the learning curve of an otherwise complex game. The artificial intelligence is quite good and provides challenging solitary play. The trick manual is also very informative, and Arsenal has good support for TacOps, offering on-line technical help and playing tips, and releasing patches quickly.

## BAD EXECUTION

However, it's the glaring oversights and inaccuracies that prevent TacOps from being all that it can be. There is no attempt whatsoever to model command, control and communications issues on the modern battlefield. Vehicles equipped with anti-aircraft guided

missiles under Windows in have at least some visual appeal. TacOps has a face that only a gringard could love. The maps are ugly and since most of the terrain is an identical shades of green, determining effects on combat and what you can see is difficult. It doesn't help that the line of sight routine is a convoluted process or that you can't zoom in the map view. Without zoom, you sometimes feel as if you're playing a fire board game using a pair of tweezers to move unit markers.

TacOps supports play by e-mail, network and null modem connections. Modern play is much too bothersome though. Rather than packing built-in modem support, the game requires both players to connect with a third-party communications program and then send their orders files back and forth. It's not all that easy and probably not what most players have in mind.

Despite TacOps' poor showing on Windows, Arsenal is planning a sequel using a more up-to-date engine. Given the company's lagging in porting TacOps over to Windows, it will probably be another year before we see it. From the look of things, though, they probably need all the time they can get. ☹



**HARDWARE HEAVEN** TacOps' database of weapons systems is an informational bonanza for those who thrive on details.

dated with its crude graphics and sound and has numerous bugs.

## GOOD STRATEGY

Some aspects of the game are done well: TacOps accurately portrays the lethality of modern ground combat, as well as the tactics that commanders look try to drill into their troops. Those who employ combined arms teams, emphasize reconnaissance, use boarding over-watch on the attack and properly set up engagement areas on the defense will win many battles. The database of U.S.,

missiles (ATCM) can fire with great accuracy while moving at full speed, a nearly impossible feat. The time required to reload ATCM launchers isn't taken into account, enabling some units to unrealistically swap missiles like Roman candles at a fireworks display. The type of ammunition and point of impact for artillery fire can be changed seconds before a barrage arrives. Because armor isn't modeled, all units fight until annihilated, creating the impression that you're commanding an army of mindless robots rather than living, breathing humans

**APPEAL:** Wargamers whose primary interest is in shooting and moving modern hardware rather than a realistic simulation of tactical combat from the command perspective.

**PROS:** Challenging AI, two-player capability, good manual, low system requirements, extensive database of modern weaponry.

**CONS:** Bugs, lack of realism and command perspective, poor graphics and cheesy sound make TacOps a mediocre simulation.



Price: \$44.95

System

Requirements: IBM compatible 386/33 DX or better, Windows 3.x, 4 MB RAM, 8 MB hard drive space, VGA graphics card, mouse, Windows-compatible sound card.

# of Players: 2

Protection: None

Designer: I.L.

Holdridge

Publisher: Arsenal

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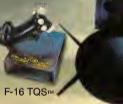
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# Nuns With Guns?

*New World Reinvents Gang Warfare, And It Ain't Pretty*

by Martin E. Cirulis

**N**obody's happier than I am that we live in an age when dozens of new computer games arrive every quarter. Sometimes, though, I wonder if we are in danger of missing some rough gems in favor of all the shiny baubles. In the old days, there wasn't much to choose from, and consoles were more likely to squeeze all the gameplay they could get from a game before passing judgment. I'm afraid many will overlook *CHAOS OVERLORDS* because it does not make a good first impression: there are no flashy graphics, no live action video, and gameplay isn't anything incredible. But remember the old days and stick with this game, because it definitely rewards the player who's willing to put in a little extra effort.

## CYBER-M.U.L.E.?

*CHAOS* is a multiplayer, turn-based strategy game about various crime lords vying for control of the city. There isn't a lot of chrome here. Instead, this game is a trip back to simpler, pre-IBM supremacy days, when an audience didn't think twice about a game set on a 5x8 grid, where units were bland reproductions of warplane info cards, and where the manual explained combat resolution in terms of simulating six-sided dice.

Though *CHAOS* allows players to play a number of different scenarios, what they all boil down to is the same style of game with different victory conditions. This is a game of territory control and economics, where each neighborhood serves as a movement square to be entered and fought in, as well as an economic resource to be exploited. As a Crime Lord, your existence depends on hiring criminal gangs to control territory, which in turn produces the money to hire more, and so on, and so on. Each neighborhood con-

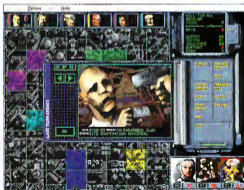


**GRID WARS** This interface is pretty ugly, and none too intuitive, but once you get past it, you'll find a challenging strategy game with a surprising level of depth.

tains three structures that range from casinos to bars to research labs, and all cough up varying amounts of money every turn, in what must be the future equivalent of "protection" payments. Structures also confer other benefits according to their purpose, such as improved recovery rates

for units healing in hospital squares, or increased research ability for those gangs in squares with a lab.

As for the gangs themselves, they are your eyes, ears and fists, without them you have nothing. Each gang has a long series of attributes that cover both combat and



**DON'T SHOOT ME** The name of the game is extortion; you need money to finance your gang, and you get money by controlling businesses in your squares.



Price: \$49.95

**System Requirements:** IBM-compatible 486 or better; Win 95, 8 MB RAM, 15 MB hard drive space, SVGA graphics card, 2x CD-ROM drive, mouse, supports major sound cards

# of Players: 1-6

**Protection:** None (CD must be in drive)

**Designer:** Stickman Games

**Publisher:** New World Computing  
Hollywood, CA  
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**Reader Service #:** 351



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## REVIEW • CHAOS OVERLORDS

administrative skills for the running of your empire. To take a neighborhood into your pocket, you must first send in at least one gang to initiate control of the sector. Once that is achieved, you may begin taking over the buildings within that sector, or, if you are pressed for cash, a gang can shake down the entire neighborhood for loose change. Be warned, though. Populations can only be shaken down so many times before they get angry and call in the cops for a crackdown. Then the cops will call in the big guns, kill every

center of the game. Instead of just random decoration, which is how they initially come across, each gang is actually a carefully constructed unit that can have an important effect on your basic strategy. Because the gangs you can hire are random, you are forced to adopt subtle changes to your strategy with every new game. For instance, you may have discovered a killer gang/weapon combo, but if you've never dealt the right gang to research the weapon or the ideal one to carry it, you will be at a fair amount of

open up with shotguns on the Dismantled Postal Workers, who are packing rocket launchers.

## ORDER FROM CHAOS

**CHAOS OVERLORDS** is basically a good little boardgame translation with a few rough corners in presentation, which may turn potential fans off before they reach the gold. For a supposedly Win/95 game, it functions more like a proprietary DOS game, with no window-shrinking controls. Players minimize the screen at their own risk.

Graphically speaking, this game is incredibly unimpressive. **CHAOS** could use a few random combat resolution effects for truly spectacular match-ups, as well as a more rewarding end to the scenarios and a permanent record of player achievements. Also, the interface is fairly daunting and confusing, requiring a few reads of the manual before any computer usage. As far as gameplay goes, the only real flaw is that the AI plays "Kick the Human" a little too much in a game that is supposed to be a free-for-all.

In the end, what we have here is proof that sometimes your first impressions can be wrong. Of course, this depends on what kind of person you are as well. If you are looking for a slick package that delivers up-front wargame thrills like *Power & Glory*, then I doubt this game will ever rock your world. On the other hand, if you have the time and patience to play a strategy game that is original and challenging instead of just pretty, then you might want to test a stronghold in this twisted little neighborhood. ☺

**PAPPEAL:** Only for dedicated strategy gamers who crave a challenging management game and have the patience to look beyond the surface.

**PROS:** A novel, truly strategic wargame that offers plenty of play and humor with excellent multiplayer potential.

**CONS:** *Chaos Overlords* is not pretty

by any means, and it's very hard to get into. It also starts off slowly, and, while deep, is never really exciting. Interface is also confusing.



	<b>IDENTIFICATION</b>		<b>DOMINATRIX CLIQUE</b>			
	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>		"YOU'VE BEEN SO BAD AND NEED A SPANKING. CRACK!! BARK YOU DOG, BARK!"			
	<b>INFORMATION</b>					
	FORCE		??	UPKEEP		
				TECH LEVEL		
	<b>STATISTICS</b>					
	COMBAT		3	STEALTH	3	3
	DEFENSE		5	DETECT	9	9
	<b>COMMAND SKILLS</b>					
	CHAOS		0	STRENGTH	4	4
CONTROL		0	BLADE	4	4	
HEAL		0	RANGE	13	13	
INFLU		1	FIGHTING	13	13	
RESEARCH		0	M. ARTS	0	0	
<b>OK</b>						

**BREAK OUT THE WHIPS** The gangs in *Chaos* conjure up some hilarious images, and help give the game a little demented personality.

gang to the neighborhood for a few turns, and return everything to its pristine, unexploited state.

Speaking of killing, no matter which scenario you choose to play, conflict with your fellow overlords is inevitable. So don't forget to hire some nasty loners and outfit them with the best weapons you have on hand. Gangs attack with a combination of their own attributes and modifiers from equipment they carry, while the defender gets a counter-attack at half-strength. Should a combat round end with a gang at zero hit points, they are gone from the game, and whatever expensive equipment you provided goes to the grave with them.

## LOOKING BEYOND THE GRIME

The key to getting your money's worth from *Chaos* is realizing that the gangs aren't just a gimmick but are the whole

trouble if you can't come up with something else first. And the gangs aren't just for fighting. The subtle interaction of their attributes with the economics of the game means you're always eager to find the right bunch for the job you have in mind. You can spend entire games using your favorites to their best advantage (such as bankers for squeezing out extra cash), while desperately trying to protect them from harm. It is this level of the game which truly differentiates it from the pack.

While this may seem a small detail, it was enough to change the game from something I played because it's my job to something I will play long after this assignment is over. Not since the old *Illusions* card game have I openly chuckled at some of the images created by a game. You'll know what I mean the first time you see the Angry Nung gang

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# World Conquest Made Easy

*Essential Tips For Winning At Any Level In CIVILIZATION II*

by Tim Carter

**W**ork, work, work. Megalomania is a tough calling, you know, and world domination isn't all it's cracked up to be. What a world conqueror to do? Well, since this is Computer

Gameing World, not Psychology Today, the best your humble scribe can offer is a few tips for more effective conquest in SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION II, the current state-of-the-art in games of world domination. Actually, and unfortunately for the more violent dictators in the room, Civ II is much more concerned with development than destruction. Winning requires

a much greater emphasis on building than its predecessor, and it's the peaceful (or restrained) megalomaniac who will be rewarded with victory.

## THE BIG PICTURE

Winning in Civ II at the all-new Deity level of difficulty is challenging. The computer opponents develop very quickly and are quite unforgiving in their diplomatic attitudes. Screw them over once and they are unlikely to forget it—*ever*. Also, if you gain any kind of substantive lead over the computer players they will eventually form an alliance against you, leading technology until they have caught up with or exceeded your empire's technological development.

This competitive environment can

be a dramatic and often irreparable turn of events if they are inadequately defended. The computer AI in Civ II likes sneak attacks, and is quite capable of using combined arms to overwhelm several cities quickly.

Make sure your empire always grows in all three directions at an equal pace. Plan your empire to provide you with all of the necessary resources from the start. Your growth will be continuous, your empire secure, and success considerably more likely.

**3** In Civ II, the square you build on automatically generates a shield—even if no resources exist on the terrain. So, build beside resources, rather than on top of them. This can literally double the early productivity of your city.



**THE ART OF STONE WALLS** Build fortresses around your cities early. They can provide a second line of defense and can also be used as springboards for invasions of neighbors.

penish players that neglect any particular aspect of their empire for very long. If you concentrate on military forces, for instance, you had better capture many enemy cities quickly, or you will find that all or most of the other players will have built up a substantial technological edge while you were busy bashing heads.

Likewise, strong economic and technological empire can suffer

## IN THE BEGINNING

As with all exploration and development games, one of the most important elements of success is a fast start. In Civ II it is absolutely imperative that players get as many cities as possible started early in the game.

Build your first city as quickly as possible, definitely within the first five turns. Build a militia unit first, then settlers. Until the territorial borders of your empire are reached, every second unit improvement built by all cities should be a settler. Caravans are important to keep barbarians away, but barbarians are fairly rare on regular settings.

At deity level, population control is a problem right from the word "go." Therefore, the first improvement of built in each city should be a temple. Barracks and granaries must wait until your citizenry is plentiful, otherwise there won't be

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enough workers in the fields to keep cities growing, to produce trade, and to generate the resources needed to build all those settlers.

Trade is important also—not the technological advancement, but the money generated by each city. All city squares that are in use should be generating trade of some kind (except mines), and it's worth building roads right from the start of the game to make sure this happens. Without a healthy cash flow, it is very difficult to start and sustain an aggressive research program.

Another key to starting quickly a con-

**Tip** Huts in unexplored territory can provide free military units as well, not to mention cash and technology, so go after them as quickly as military production allows. The many benefits outweigh any possibility of unleashing a barbarian horde.

verting to a monarchy as soon as possible. Monarchy allows greater food production, reduces corruption and makes limited military production more affordable. Research monarchy as quickly as possible. As a rule of thumb, only build enough

### Dictating A Democracy

**W**aging war while ruling by democracy is a little tricky. Here are a few tips on how to do so effectively.

- 1) Manage unrest with wonders. Woman's Suffrage and the Cure for Cancer both diminish the negative effects of large overseas armies. J. S. Bach's cathedral is also nice, since it effectively gives you a cathedral in every city. Use freight or caravans to accelerate wonder production so enemy civs don't build these essential wonders first. The AI will typically begin construction of a wonder immediately after it acquires the appropriate advance.
- 2) Increase production with the Hoover Dam. This wonder will boost production in all your cities and also cleans up pollution. The production boost will help you build units and space ship parts, while the clean air will help in your final score.
- 3) Use airroads for a rapid deployment force that can move anywhere on your continents instantaneously. This military striking force can then be rapidly shifted via rail from one trouble spot to the next.
- 4) Once your civs have SAMs, build airfields. A few squares away and garrison them with fighters. Bombers have a tendency to overcome intercepting fighters defending a city. Let the bombers expand themselves on infantry defenses, then drop up during your turn.



**RIVER BONUS** Your first cities should be built on rivers to take advantage of their increased trade and rapid movement bonus.

military units to explore the surrounding area and to provide a minimum defense—usually two phalanxes per city is plenty. Do not go to war with any civilizations you happen to meet unless they are very close to your heartland and threaten to cut off your settlers from further expansion. Even then, it is often wiser (and cheaper) to look for other areas to expand into rather than take on a well-established empire.

On the other hand, if you encounter a computer opponent early in the game, with only a few cities, it is usually a good idea to suspend all other activities and concentrate on eliminating them as quickly as possible. This way you'll clear away a larger area in which to grow

### HOLDING ON TO MOMENTUM

Once your empire is underway, focus on keeping your growth rate as high as possible. Switch some settlers from city building to irrigation, mining, and road building. Somewhere around 1 AD my civs usually hit a cash crunch. Upgrading to the republic will generate more revenue—thus keeping the people happy and research moving at the right speed, but at a cost to shield production. If you plan to go to the republic early in the game, begin digging mines as soon as you have the settlers to spare. This will allow your key industrial cities to keep building once maintenance costs rise.

I prefer to remain in monarchy for as long as possible. Because military units are cheap, particularly if you remain on the defensive, your overall economic growth is better under a monarchical government than a republic. To keep your research from stagnating, make extensive use of caravans to boost your trade figures. Most large cities should produce three caravans, and you should endeavor to have your caravans reach the best foreign cities.

This strategy can double the trade generated by big cities under a monarchy, thus keeping research moving at a decent pace. Caravans also generate cash when they first arrive at their destinations. If

**Tip** For a good defense in the early and middle stages of gaming, the most useful wonders are the Great Wall (automatic peace) and Leonardo's Workshop (automatic upgrades). These two wonders will allow you to defend yourself relatively easily without burdening your economic growth or your research efforts.

your caravans go to foreign cities which demand the goods they are carrying, this initial payment can be substantial. By using this money to buy city improvements, you can accelerate the development of your empire considerably.

Once your cities have the minimum



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improvements (barracks, granary, temple) and have sent their cavalry divisions. It is usually a good idea to start thinking about building a wonder or two. During the middle game, I don't recommend extensive military action.

#### DEMOCRATIC WARFARE

The increases in production and mobility that come with the discovery of the railroad make it possible to continue economic and military growth even under a democratic government. Once your empire begins to feel the effects of the railroad, switch to democracy and stay there.

The extra trade established through canals makes earlier in the game pays even higher dividends under a democracy. You can afford to spend 50 percent on hours, it is as well, creating a happy population in general and repeated "We love the president days," which greatly increases the power of your cities.

#### Combined Arms And City Bashing

The computer not only does a good job of attacking cities, but is also pretty good at defending them. Here are a few tips on the effective use of combined arms to reduce enemy defenses.

1. Begin your attack by using aircraft, naval units, or cruise missiles to destroy the bulk of the defenders.
2. Use spies to sabotage key defensive improvements such as city walls, coastal batteries, and SAM sites.
3. Try to surround the city before capturing it. The more units you have in the countryside, the less partisans you will have to deal with later.
4. Often the computer sues for peace following the fall of a city, then counterattacks a few turns later. If you are ruled by a democracy and cannot break treaties yourself, make sure that key defensive positions (such as forts or mountains) are in your hands before making the final assault.
5. Make sure you have adequate units to defend a city before taking it. Trading control of a city not only reduces its value, it can provide the computer with an easy way to steal a bit of your technology as well.
6. The computer often sends spies into newly fallen cities to take technology as well. Remember to include spies of your own in all frontier garrisons.



**BOTTLENECK** The thin land strip here makes for great defense. Always fortify key mountain squares and garrison them with several strong defensive troops to create nearly invincible positions.



**TRADING PLACES** Trade is an indispensable part of any large empire's economy. This city derives half of its income from trade, leaving more financial resources for research and luxury.

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believable.

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more & darker rail-  
less 3D new levels to  
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Welcome to the Cooperstown of Computer Games. Here, raised upon pedestals, you'll find the games that broke

the records, established the benchmarks, and held gamers in delighted trances for hours untold.

## HIGHLIGHTS

### Alone in the Dark

I-Motion, 1993

When you talk about the decline in action-oriented adventure games, no story is more telling than the *ALONE IN THE DARK* series. The original earned a place in our Hall of Fame because of its creative use of 3D technology to place gamers within a chilling adventure game context. *ALONE IN THE DARK*'s immediate ancestor, *DUT OF THIS WORLD*, proved that 3D technology was useful for cinematic action games, but *AITD* went much further in creating an effective gaming atmosphere. Despite the number of times that I-Motion and others have returned to themes of Lovecraftian-style horror, *ALONE IN THE DARK* is the only time they've been fully successful. The private investigator you portray looks awkward now, but at the time, the 3D character walking into the dark and mysterious house was wonderfully creepy. Hell-hounds, pianos that played by themselves, creaky stairs—this game made every gothic horror cliché fun again. While some of the maneuvering could be tedious, line of sight and maneuvering around objects became an integral part of the adventure game experience. The action portions of the original *AITD* have sadly been over-emphasized in the sequels at the expense of the storyline, let's hope that I-Motion can recapture the magic. We can always use another classic horror game



### Wolfenstein 3D

id Software, 1992

WOLFENSTEIN 3D is the grandfather of modern-day 3D shooters like *Duke Nukem 3D* and *Quake*. If you had to put it on the evolutionary chart, it would go somewhere between *Homo erectus* and *penicillin* (there's a pun there somewhere, but we're not looking). The original *Castle Wolfenstein* had you running around in an old castle guarded by Nazi jailers. Fairly typical of early Apple II games, it was soon forgotten. *Wolfenstein 3D* took the simple line-and-fill graphic mazes of the earlier game and transformed them into a smooth-scrolling, rapid-fire, texture-mapped environment. The details of the castle were lower than those of *Ultima Underworld*, but they featured Nazi banners, stained glass windows staring out haughty himself, and lots of nice touches like chandeliers and coats of armor. Gamers hungry for action quickly warmed to the fast pace of the game, accentuated by the large active area of the screen, and the excellent use of sound and perspective—all of which would later be perfected with id's masterpiece, *Doom*. Although newer, sexier 3D games have now replaced *Wolfenstein* as the latest adrenaline pumpers around, the game should be remembered for putting shareware back on the gaming map, and for sparking a first-person shooting craze that lives to this day.



## Modern Inductees

### Inductees Prior To 1989

**BATTLE CRESS** (Interplay Productions, 1988)  
**CHUCKLEMASTER** (The Software Toolworks, 1985)  
**DUNGEON MASTER** (FTL Software, 1987)  
**EARL WEAVER BASEBALL** (Electronic Arts, 1986)  
**EMERGE** (Interstel, 1978)  
**F-19 Stealth Fighter** (MicroProse, 1988)  
**GETTYBURG: THE TURNING POINT** (SSI, 1986)  
**KAMPFGRUPPE** (Strategic Simulations, 1985)  
**MICRO BORGWAR** (Strategic Simulations, 1986)  
**MIGHT & MAGIC** (New World Computing, 1988)  
**M.U.L.E.** (Electronic Arts, 1983)  
**PIRATES** (MicroProse, 1987)  
**SimCity** (Atari, 1987)  
**STARBUCKET** (Electronic Arts, 1986)  
**THE BIRD'S TALE** (Electronic Arts, 1985)  
**ULTIMA III** (Origin Systems, 1983)  
**ULTIMA IV** (Origin Systems, 1985)  
**WAR IN RUSSIA** (Strategic Simulations, 1984)  
**WASTELAND** (Interplay Productions, 1985)  
**WIZARDRY** (Sir-Tech Software, 1981)  
**ZARK** (Infocom, 1981)

**ALONE IN THE DARK**  
 (I-Motion, 1992)

**BEYONCE AT KNOXON**  
 (Dynamic, 1993)

**DAY OF THE TENTACLE**  
 (LucasArts, 1993)

**DOOM**  
 (id Software, 1993)

**FALCON 3.0**  
 (Spectrum Hobby, 1991)

**FIGHT PAGE SPORTS FOOTBALL PRO**  
 (Dynamic, 1993)

**GUNSHIP**  
 (MicroProse, 1995)

**HARPOON**  
 (Three-Sixty Pacific, 1989)

**KING'S QUEST V**  
 (Sierra On-Line, 1990)

**LEMMINGS**  
 (Psygnosis, 1991)

**LINGS 386 PRO**  
 (Access Software, 1992)

**M-1 TANK PLATOON**  
 (MicroProse, 1989)

**MASTER OF DUNE**  
 (MicroProse, 1993)

**RAILROAD TYCOON**  
 (MicroProse, 1990)

**RED BARCH**  
 (Dynamic, 1990)

**SO MIBER'S CIVILIZATION**  
 (MicroProse, 1991)

**THIR 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.

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.

## Allied General Victory

**Conditions** This self-extracting zipped file contains a text and Word For Windows file outlining all of the victory conditions for every scenario in *ALIED GENERAL*.

**Angel Devoid Update** Fixes a problem with the SONY CDU 33A CD-ROM Player accessing Disk 2 of *Angel Devoid*. If you do not have this CD-ROM player, DO NOT download this update. Once unzipped, follow the instructions as outlined in the *Readme.txt* file. Although this update has only been tested on the CD player listed above, if you experience a lockup while inserting Disk 2, you may opt to try this patch.

**ATF MIDI Sound Update** Allows gamers with IRQ 10 to play the game with sound. This file is for ATF users who selected the MIDI install. To run this self-extracting executable file, follow the instructions in the text file.

**ATF Digital Sound Update** Allows customers with IRQ 10 to play the game with sound. This file is for ATF users who selected the Digital install. To run this self-extracting executable file, follow the instructions in the text file.

**The Civil War: 1861-1864 Update** Fixes lingering crashes especially regarding naval units. You must have V1.13 to use this update. Unzip this file directly into your Civil War directory.

**Civilization 2 V1.11 Upgrade** The latest upgrade includes several fixes.

**Conquest of the New World V1.06** Provides updates and additions to the game. Instructions are as follows: 1) Copy the file *CNW106.ZIP* to the directory that contains your

copy of *CONQUEST 2*. At the DOS prompt in the directory where *CONQUEST* is installed, type *PKUNZIP CNW106-d-d* to install the update.

**Dark Seed II Update** Fixes problems with options menu, save game, sound and more. Unzip *DS2PAT2.ZIP* and copy the files into your *Dark Seed II* game directory.

**Duke Nukem 3D V1.3d Patch** Updates your shareware copy of *Duke Nukem 3D V1.1* to *V1.3d*. This patch requires that you have your copy of *V1.1* on your hard drive and installed before use.

**DUKE NUKEM 3D V1.1 Patch** Updates your shareware copy of *Duke Nukem 3D V1.0* to *V1.1*. You need to have your copy of *V1.0* installed before use.

**Strike 1.2 Update** Fixes a bug in multiplayer mode that kicks out one of the players with a "Consistency Failure" message. The patch is called *V12\_DDS.EXE* (or *V12\_WIN.EXE* for Windows users).

**Rise and Rule of Ancient Empires** Updates *Rise and Rule* to *V1.01*. Adds modern play to Windows 3.1, addresses problems building 3rd-level buildings in city mode and enhances the AI.

**Silent Thunder: A-10 Tank Killer 2 V1.01** Updates the game to *V1.01*. Adds joystick calibration feature, enhances DirectSound capabilities, allows weapons to be fired even without a weapons lock.

**SU-27 Flanker V1.1 Upgrade** Updates *V1.0* of *SSI's SU-27 Flanker* to *V1.1* and includes a detailed list of fixes and new features including rearview mirrors, network head-to-head play (using IPX or TCP/IP),

increased rearview view, Mig-31 opponent, improved run graphics, and many others. Download this file into a temporary directory, go to that directory and type *SU27V11* to extract files. *README.txt* text file contains complete installation instructions.

**The TACOPS for Windows V1.02 Update** Contains 10 new user requested enhancements, 4 new US/Canadian units, 13 new OPFOR units (including North Korean MBTs and IFV), and a number of bug fixes. The update consists of an update installation program, several data files, and a text file detailing the features of the update. You must have the retail version of *TACOPS* for Windows *V1.00* or *V1.01* to use the patch. Use either *WinZip* or *PKUNZIP 2.04g* to unzip the patch.



► New Patches are on disk.

## 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 Web sites or direct from the publisher with proof of purchase.

## Publisher Web Sites

Many of these patches are available directly from the publishers, at the following sites:

- Accolade:** <http://www.accolade.com>
- Activision:** <http://www.activision.com>
- Apogee/3d Realms:** <http://www.apogee1.com>
- Bethesda:** <http://www.bethsoft.com>
- Blizzard:** <http://www.blizzard.com/tech.htm>
- Bullfrog:** <http://www.wes.com/bullfrog.html>
- Domark:** <http://www.do.mark.com>
- EA:** <http://www.ea.com>
- Interactive Magic:** <http://www.imagicgames.com/games.html>
- Interplay:** <http://www.interplay.com>
- Looking Glass:** <http://www.vie.com/gj/vifility.html>
- LucasArts:** <http://www.lucasarts.com>
- MicroProse:** <http://www.microprose.com/mpsfiles.html>
- Microsoft:** <http://www.microsoft.com>
- Mindscape:** <http://www.mindscape.com>
- New World Computing:** <http://www.nwcomputing.com>
- Dean:** <http://www.at2000.com>
- Origin:** <http://wwwes.com/origin/english/index.html>
- Papyrus:** <http://www.papaya.com>
- Philips:** <http://spider.media.philips.com/media/games>
- Sierra On-Line:** <http://www.sierra.com>
- Spectrum HoloByte:** <http://www.trk.microprose.com/shfiles.html>
- SSI:** <http://www.ssi.com>
- Take 2:** <http://www.take2.com/~klatnetwo/tpiper.html/patches>
- Velocity:** <http://www.velocitygames.com>
- Virgin:** <http://www.vie.com/html/viesupport.html>

# THE COMPUTER GAMING POLL • A MONTHLY SURVEY OF THE READERS OF COMPUTER GAMING



You've read our take on the latest games, now here's a chance to see what your fellow gamers think. The CGW Top 100 is a monthly tally of game ratings provided by our readers. 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	Crashers: No Reverse	Origin	9.56
2	Horathon 2	Bungie	9.06
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 Hood For Speed	Electronic Arts	9.12
9	Tomorrow: Strike Force Contain	Virgin	9.11
10	Hotella	id Software	9.08

## TOP ADVENTURE GAMES

RANK	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Gabriel Knight 2	Sierra	9.84
2	Zark Nemesis	Activision	9.57
3	Full Throttle	LucasArts	9.44
4	Mission Critical	Legend	9.35
5	Woodruff & Schaeble	Sierra	9.28
6	Relentless	Electronic Arts	9.12
7	Ecstasica	Pygmalion	9.09
8	Under A Killing Moon	Access	9.04
9	Ripper	Take 2	9.01
10	Legend of Kyraada 3	Virgin/Westwood	8.94

## TOP CLASSIC/PUZZLE GAMES

RANK	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	You Don't Know Jack	Berkeley Systems	9.01
2	Incredible Taxes	Dynamix	8.86
3	Incredible Machine 2	Sierra	8.85
4	Masepaly	Virgin/Westwood	8.73
5	Connections	Discovery Channel	8.56
6	Clickers	Spectrum HolyByte	8.25
7	Wad n' Pod	Virgin Interactive	8.16
8	Shanghai-Great Moments	Activision	7.75
9	TriTyr	Virgin	7.71
10	Learnings 3D	Pygmalion	7.50

## TOP SIMULATION/SPACE COMBAT GAMES

RANK	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Wing Commander 3	Origin	10.57
2	Wing Commander IV	Origin	10.22
3	WitchWarrior 2	Activision	10.05
4	NASCAR Racing	Pygmalion	10.01
5	U.S. Marine Fighters	Electronic Arts	9.76
6	U.S. Navy Fighters	Electronic Arts	9.60
7	EP2000	Descon	9.56
8	Wings of Glory	Origin	9.55
9	Flight Unlimited	Lacking Glass	9.51
10	Aces of the Deep	Dynamix	9.38

## TOP SPORTS GAMES

RANK	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	NBA Live '95	EA Sports	9.06
2	NHL Hockey	EA Sports	9.70
3	Front Page Sports Football 95	Sierra	9.64
4	FPS Football Pro 95	Sierra	9.19
5	PGA Tour Golf 495	EA Sports	8.93
6	Front Page Sports Baseball	Dynamix	8.70
7	Grand Prix Manager	Spectrum HolyByte	8.72
8	Hardball IV	Accolade	8.70
9	Hardball 5	Accolade	8.36
10	Tony LaRussa 3	Stormfront Studios	8.12

## TOP STRATEGY GAMES

RANK	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Civilization II	MicroProse	10.58
2	Warcraft II	Blizzard	10.50
3	Command & Conquer	Virgin/Westwood	10.00
4	Jagged Alliance	Sir-Tech	9.81
5	Heros of Might & Magic	New World Computing	9.77
6	Master of Magic	MicroProse	9.65
7	Warcraft	Blizzard	9.64
8	Fantasy General	SSI	9.64
9	C&C: Generals	Virgin/Westwood	9.48
10	X-COM: Terror from the Deep	MicroProse	9.38

## TOP ROLE PLAYING GAMES

RANK	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Night & Magic: Clouds of Xeen	New World Computing	9.07
2	Asht of Dawn	New World Computing	9.04
3	Ravenloft: Stone Prophet	SSI	8.98
4	Wulf	Sanctuary Woods	8.64
5	Stonekeep	Interplay	8.44
6	Metzenberranion	SSI	8.26
7	Nordor	TOA	8.00
8	Dark Seed: Woke of the Ravager	SSI	7.64
9	Thunderscape	SSI	7.63
10	Druid	Sir-Tech	7.00

## TOP WARGAMES

RANK	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Penzer General	SSI	10.46
2	Steel Pathners	SSI	10.36
3	Rise of the West	RAW	9.63
4	Flight Commander 2 Mission Edit	Avalon Hill	9.48
5	Battleground: Gettysburg	Talarch	9.40
6	Stalingrad	Avalon Hill	9.38
7	Flight Commander 2	Avalon Hill	9.35
8	Generals Last Command	Incredible Simulations	9.12
9	Perfect General II	ODP	8.96
10	Resurgence of 3 Kingdoms IV	Koel	8.75

Reader Poll #143

	GAME	COMPANY	TYPE	SCORE
★	1 Civilization II	Microprose	ST	10.38
★	2 Wing Commander 3	Origin	SI	10.57
	3 Warcraft II	Bizzard	ST	10.50
★	4 Panzer General	SSI	WG	10.48
	5 Steel Panthers	SSI	WG	10.36
	6 Wing Commander IV	Origin	SI	10.22
	7 MechWarrior 2	Activision	SI	10.06
★	8 NASCAR Racing	Pygmy	SI	10.01
	9 Command & Conquer	Virgin/Westwood	ST	10.00
★	10 Crusader: No Remorse	Dynan	AC	9.95
	11 Marathon 2	Bungie	AC	9.86
★	12 NBA Live '95	EA Sports	SP	9.86
	13 Gabriel Knight 2	Sierra	AD	9.84
	14 Jagged Alliances	Sim-Tech	ST	9.81
	15 ODS II	id Software	AC	9.77
	Heroes of Might & Magic	New World Computing	ST	9.77
	17 U.S. Marine Fighters	Electronic Arts	SI	9.76
	18 NHL Hockey	EA Sports	SP	9.70
	Dark Forces	LucasArts	AC	9.70
	20 Master of Magic	MicroProse	ST	9.66
	21 Front Page Sports Football 95	Storm	SP	9.64
	Fantasy General	SSI	ST	9.64
	Warcraft	Bizzard	ST	9.64
	24 Rise of the West	AWW	WG	9.63
	25 U.S. Navy Fighters	Electronic Arts	SI	9.60
	28 Zork Nemesis	Activision	AD	9.57
	27 Wings of Glory	Origin	SI	9.56
	EF2000	Ocean	SI	9.56
	29 Virtual Pool	Interplay	AC	9.52
	30 Flight Unlimited	Looking Glass	SI	9.51
	31 C&C: Covert Ops	Virgin/Westwood	ST	9.48
	Flight Commander 2 Mission War	Avolon Hill	WG	9.48
	Magic Carpet	Electronic Arts	AC	9.48
	34 Full Throttle	LucasArts	AD	9.44
	35 Battleground: Gettysburg	Talonsoft	WG	9.40
	38 Stalingrad	Avolon Hill	WG	9.38
	X-COM: Terror from the Deep	MicroProse	ST	9.38
	Aces of the Deep	Dynanix	SI	9.38
	36 Mission Critical	Legend	AD	9.36
	Flight Commander 2	Avolon Hill	WG	9.35
	41 Silent Hunter	SSI	SI	9.31
	42 Woodruff & Scheible	Sierra	AD	9.28
	43 Warlords II Deluxe	SSI	ST	9.27
	44 System Shock	Origin	AC	9.19
	FPS Football Pro 96	Sierra	SP	9.19
	46 Custer's Last Command	Incredible Simulations	WG	9.12
	The Need For Speed	Electronic Arts	AC	9.12
	Reckless	Electronic Arts	AD	9.12
	48 Terminator: Strike Force Centauri	Virgin	AC	9.11
	50 Ecstasia	Pygmy	AD	9.09

	GAME	COMPANY	TYPE	SCORE
	51 Heretic	id Software	AC	9.08
★	52 Might & Magic: Clouds of Xeen	New World Computing	RP	9.07
	Advanced Tactical Fighters	Electronic Arts	SI	9.07
	54 Raven	Raven Software	AC	9.04
	Under A Killing Moon	Access	AD	9.04
	Annal of Dawn	New World Computing	RP	9.04
	57 Ripper	Tika 2	AD	9.01
★	You Don't Know Jack	Barkley Systems	QP	9.01
	58 Ravenloft: Stone Prophet	SSI	RP	8.98
	60 Perfect General II	QOP	WG	8.96
	61 Ryzan	Ubisoft	AC	8.95
	62 Riddle of Master Lu	Sanctuary Woods	AD	8.94
	Legend of Kyrandia 3	Virgin/Westwood	AD	8.94
	Transport Tycoon	MicroProse	ST	8.94
	65 PGA Tour Golf 486	EA Sports	SP	8.93
	66 Earthlore 2	Sierra	SI	8.88
	67 Descent	Interplay	AC	8.86
	Incredible Tunes	Dynanix	QP	8.86
	68 Incredible Machine 2	Sierra	QP	8.85
	70 Front Page Sports Baseball	Dynanix	SP	8.76
	71 Remnants of 3 Kingdoms IV	Koei	WG	8.75
	Star Trek: TNG, Final Unity	Spectrum HoloByte	AD	8.75
	73 Manopoly	Virgin/Westwood	QP	8.73
	Allied General	SSI	WG	8.73
	75 1630	Avolon Hill	ST	8.72
	Grand Prix Manager	Spectrum HoloByte	SP	8.72
	77 Hardball IV	Accolade	SP	8.70
	78 Buried in Time	Sanctuary Woods	AD	8.65
	79 Martial Kombat 3	GT Interactive	AC	8.64
	Wall	Sanctuary Woods	RP	8.64
	King's Quest VII	Sierra	AD	8.64
	82 Caesar II	Sierra	ST	8.62
	Superheroes of Hoboken	Legend	AD	8.62
	Phantasmagoria	Sierra	AD	8.62
	85 1942 Pacific Air War Gold	MicroProse	SI	8.61
	86 Clivett	MicroProse	ST	8.59
	87 Chessmaster	Interscope	AD	8.58
	88 Destruction Derby	Pygmy	AC	8.57
	89 Magic Carpet 2	Electronic Arts	AC	8.56
	Connections	Discovery Channel	QP	8.56
	The Dig	Duosoft	AD	8.56
	92 Shannara	Legend	AD	8.55
	93 Werewolf vs. Comanche	NovLogic	SI	8.50
	Death Gate	Legend	AD	8.50
	95 FX Fighter	GTE Entertainment	AC	8.48
	96 Stonekeep	Interplay	RP	8.44
	97 Apache	Interactive Magic	SI	8.43
	Dark Legions	SSI	AC	8.43
	99 Lords of the Realm	Impressions	ST	8.42
	100 Top Gun	Spectrum HoloByte	SI	8.39

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, QP = Casual/Puzzle. Games are retired after two years and become eligible for the Hall of Fame.

# What's The Deal With... Windows 95?

**S**ooner or later you know I was going to mouth off about Windows 95 and share my gamer's take on things. But before we get on to the merriam, I'd like to get a couple of things straight.

First of all, I could give a rat's fanny about the name "Microsoft takes over the world" tales that pervade the "Net" these days. As far as I'm concerned, there is enough real industrial villainy in the world that the shenanigans of a boy genius really don't cut it. Anybody who thinks computer software skulduggery is worth droning on about should go hang out in Bhopal, and see what real corporate greed can do.

Second, I thought the marketing blitz last summer for Win95's release was the most ridiculous thing I had ever seen. Every time the mainstream media fell for it I couldn't help snickering. My favorite was the "Midnight Release Parties" that were thrown at goofy software stores in just about every city. Did anybody go to these things? What were they thinking? "Hey Bubba! C'mon! Get that waitress off yer lap and come over to my place. You can watch me transfer a file! Yeehaw!" I mean, c'mon, this was a bloody operating system, not the Beatles reunion album with John chiming in from the netherworld.

With those two background checks in place, I guess it's time to get on with the main event. After all, it's pretty much been a year since I've started working with this beastie, and I think I can safely say that my opinions have left the realm of the knee-jerk long ago. The bottom line is: "It seems to work OK, but it's no bloody Theory of Relativity either"—and that's really what bugs me about it. For all that hype, it should have really been some thing special... but guess what? It's just another damn operating system.

I admit, as a big network gaming kinda guy, I am pretty happy about the improvements over the crichetely old guy-in-the-attic that was Windows for Workgroups. Nowadays those network hooks, once established, are as solid as can be, and make gaming through anything Win95 compatible a real breeze. I am tickled pink over that improvement. In fact, the whole setup is completely user-friendly, right up to the point something isn't working—and then all that endless "Plug'n Play" crap boils down to a help file message saying a) *Maybe your card is bugged or you didn't put it in all the way or b) Maybe you should ask somebody much smarter than you.*

The other great promise of Win95 for gamers: the end of the 640K limit and the dreaded boot disk. This is another mixed bag, from the Maxwell Smart "It was this close..." depart-

ment. Once again things have gotten easier, but at the same time they are nowhere near what they were promised to be. The very fact that the wise and courageous Loyd Case must spend each month diving through BIOSes and defining optimal boot systems is a big clue that Win95 isn't

“Hey  
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lap and come  
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fer a file!”

exactly the gamer's complete "friend in a box" yet. I can hear the trade reps screaming that these things aren't needed for games designed for Win95, and they're right. But who gives a fig, while the current games designed for the OS are so dubious?

Oh sure, there are a few sweet dedicated titles, the odd quality ones from Sierra like the command cut of *Acis* or the Deer with actual useful voice commands, or the very pretty *Even-Score2*, which had for more impressive frame rates than gameplay or character, but which at least demonstrated that the next half-step in sim technology could exist quite nicely under Win95. On the other hand, I am getting pretty tired of half-baked cartridge machine rejects that need a Pentium and 16 megs, but proudly display "Compatibility" stickers.

And speaking of compatibility stickers, here's a news flash to all those folks who put on those "COMPATIBLE WITH WIN95" stickers, locked at the bottom with: "in MS-DOS mode." For all intents and purposes, that is the same bloody thing as saying it's NOT bloody compatible!

So, while Win95 is definitely a step in the right direction, and I'm sure of Uncle Bill deserves to make the odd buck off of it, I'd really hate to see all the back-slapping media mangers go blind to the fact that Microsoft ain't quite done yet, and there's a ways to go before gaming and Windows are comfortable in the same sentence. ☹

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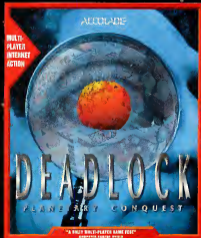
-Computer Gaming World

"Multi-player, city building, land exploring, alien busting fun"

-Strategy Plus

"Deadlock... truly shines as a multi-player experience."

-Computer Gaming World



# DEADLOCK. ONE PLANET. ONE

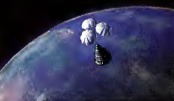
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# CHANCE.

"A solid multi-player game fest."

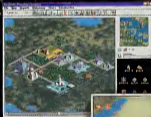
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