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Computer Gaming World

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Trespasser: Jurassic Park

54 How do you follow up the second biggest grossing movie of all time? For Stephen Spielberg, you not only make a movie sequel, but a digital sequel replete with the most advanced technology we've ever seen in a PC gaming title.

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213 You complained, and we listened—Gamer's Edge is back, and now it's bigger and better than ever. Check here every month for in-depth strategies to the hottest games on the market, written by some of the best gamers in the business.

Quake

Dialo

SkyNet

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Many
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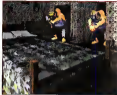
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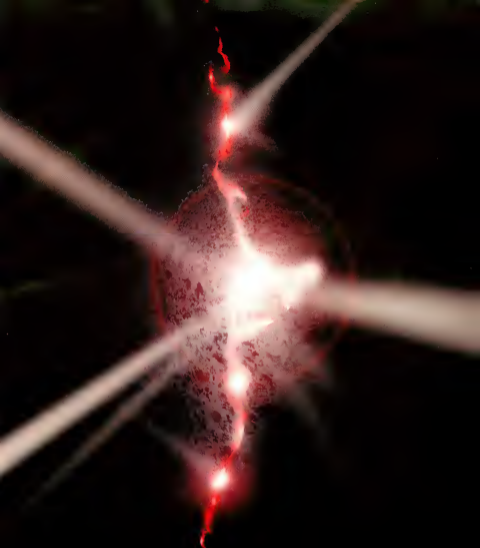
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What's on the demo disc and how do I use it? What can I do if I have a CD subscription and I didn't receive a

disc? Where's the justice in this world? Is anybody out there even listening?



What's On The CD?

If you like strategy games, you've come to the right place. We've got five good strategy game demos aimed right at your head:

HEROES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC II from New World Computing;

WAR WIND from SSI, which comes with its own custom scenarios;

FALLEN HAVEN from Interactive Magic;

EMPEROR OF THE FADING SUNS from SegaSoft;

and **SYNDICATE WARS**, from Origin/Bullfrog.

Also this month, be sure to check out

Origin's gorgeous-looking space simulation/trading game, **PRIVATEER 2: THE DARKENING**, and SSI's excellent wargame **STEEL PANTHERS 2**. You'll get your money's worth.



Auto racing fans: get your speed thrills with **SCREAMER II** by Virgin Interactive and **SEGA RALLY** by SegaSoft. What? You say you want more contact? Perhaps you should steer towards Sony PlayStation's **DESTRUCTION DERBY 2**. 'Too bad life doesn't imitate this art!

How Do I Use It?

If you have Windows 95, installation is simple: The CD is Autoplay enabled—just lock 'n' load. Otherwise, from Windows 3.x, select Run from the Program Manager menu, and type D:\RUN-ME (where D 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 disc will use the program group already on your desktop.

GAMES AND GOODIES ON THE CG-ROM

DEMOS AND STUFF	PLATFORM	DIRECTORY	EXECUTABLE
Atomic 3D	95	DEMOS\NEUTRON	SETUP.EXE
BattleSport	DOS	NONE	BINSTALL\INSTALL.EXE
Destruction Derby 2	DOS	DEMOS\DD2_DEMO	INSTALL.BAT
Dragonheart: Fire & Steel	WIN/95	DEMOS\DRAGDN	DRAGON.MOV
Emperor of the Fading Sun	95	DEMOS\EMPEROR	SETUP.EXE
Fallen Haven	95	DEMOS\HAVEN	SETUP.EXE
Gamers' Guide to the Internet	n/a	D:\TXT	via CD interface
Harpoon 97	WIN/95	DEMOS\KESMAJ	HARPOON.EXE
Heroes of Might & Magic II	95	H2DEMO	AUTORUN/AUTORUN.EXE
Kuala Lumpur	WIN/95	DEMOS\KLOEMO	SETUP.EXE
Mplayer front end	95	DEMOS\IMPLAYER	SETUP.EXE
Patches	n/a	D:\PATCHES	N/A
Privateer 2	DOS	DEMOS\PRIV2	INSTALL.EXE
Scorched Planet	95	DEMOS\SPDEMO	INSTALL\WINDOWS\SETUP.EXE
Screamer II	DOS	DEMOS\S20EMO	INSTALL.BAT
Sega Rally	95	SEGA	INSTALL\SETUP.EXE
Steel Panthers 2	DOS	DEMOS\STEEL2	INSTALL.EXE
Surface Tension	DOS	DEMOS\TENSION	INSTALL.BAT
Syndicate Wars	DOS	DEMOS\SW	SETUP.EXE
War Wind	95	DEMOS\WARWIND	SETUP.EXE
War Wind Scenarios	95	DEMOS\WWSCENAR	N/A
Wing Com. Secret Missions	95	DEMOS\WING_SM	SM12INST.EXE
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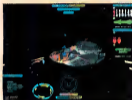
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How Do I Play The Demos?

To view the demos, first click on Editors' Hot Picks, Special Features, or Product Demos. Then click on the title of interest. Each demo has its own instructions for installation.

How Do I Get The Patch Files?

Click on Patches under the CGW Features, then read the instructions on copying the files to your hard drive. You can access the patches from a DOS prompt by typing D:\PATCHES (where D: is the letter of your CD-ROM drive) and copying them directly to your hard drive. We strongly recommend that you back up any saved games before installing a patch, as this may overwrite your existing program.

How Do I Get The CG-ROM?

Newsstand issues come in two flavors: with and without the CD. If you can't find the version you want, encourage your retailer to carry it (or subscribe to ensure that you get a CD every month by calling (303) 665-8930, specify that you want the CD-ROM version).

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What Makes A Good Game?

The Eightfold Path To Great Game Design

During the holiday season, I was privileged to be interviewed by a number of broadcast journalists about computer game gift ideas. Many of the reporters wanted to know what makes a good computer game. At first, I wanted to hedge. After all, what makes a computer game seem good to me may be irrelevant to you. Yet, I felt that I could go a long way toward building understanding of the hobby if I could articulate a few coherent thoughts on the subject, so here is my eight-step path to great game design:

► **A good game is winnable, with the possibility of defeat.** Gamers like to win, but they savor a victory when it's a close call, a hard-fought triumph. Games that are too easy aren't fun, but neither are games which are too hard. Playbalancing—the art of adjusting the game's values so that the possibilities for victory and defeat are either even or only slightly in the gamer's favor—is even more important to a game's success than the depth of the graphics palette or the quality of its soundtrack.

► **Good games offer authentic choices so that gamers' decisions really matter.** If the

game forces players through a certain pathway, regardless of their earlier choices or successes and failures, or both, they won't feel like their decisions make a difference. When gamers don't feel like they're making a difference, they don't get any satisfaction out of playing.

► **Good games allow gamers to feel like they are getting more proficient.** This can be



What makes these games great?

shown in several ways. It may become easier for them to wipe out the initial enemies faced in a game, so that those spiders or rats that used to take two or three hits to destroy now only take one or two hits. It may merely be that gamers are told that they have gone up a level in skill so that they can succeed more easily at a

given task. It may be that they gain more command capability and, as a result, are allowed to deploy more, or better, units or resources. It may simply be that they are granted appropriate recognition through the presentation of medals, citations, promotions, knighthoods, etc. Yet, however it is accomplished, a good game lets gamers feel like they're getting somewhere.

► **Good games allow gamers to continually discover new things.** Games like CIVILIZATION II, CONQUEST OF THE NEW WORLD, WARCRRAFT II, and C&C: RED ALERT let gamers discover the game world piece by piece, uncovering a map from unexplored realms. Games like CIVILIZATION II, MASTER OF ORION II, MASTER OF MAGIC, DEADLOCK, and even lesser games such as ASCENDANCY allow gamers to unfold a technology or discovery tree so that their capabilities constantly increase. For adventure and role-playing games like DAGGERFALL, DUNGEON, and MESSIAH CRUCIAL, discoveries often require finding artifacts, getting information, and uncovering treasure through encounters with aliens, monsters, suspects, or townspeople.

► **Games should have more than one path for winning.** If gamers always have to build the same technology at the same point in the game or they always have to

conquer cities in a given order, it's not the kind of classic game that keeps them coming back time and time again. For example, we here at CGW loved MERCHANT PRINCE and its remake, MACHWELL, when we

“ Gamers should never think things are so hopeless that they can't make a comeback. ”

first started playing them. Unfortunately, as soon as we discovered that you could always win by purchasing influence in the church, we lost interest. Replayability, if not a certain openness, is part of what makes a good game great.

► **Good games have solid pacing.** Gamers should never feel that things are so hopeless that they can't make a comeback. Even when they're losing, there ought to be a sense that they can get things under control with the right strategy, even if they have to play a longshot to make it so. Being out of control is only fun for a short time, restoring order is what makes the victory sweet.



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Games should have multi-player capability. Once a gamer has beaten the AI, they ought to be able to take on someone their own IQ size—a human opponent or two. Multi-player capability, or even play-by-email capacity, brings a delightful sociability back to gaming.

Good games have a way to customize them. Whether gamers can merely build maps, vehicles, and military units or design monsters, dungeon levels, and cities from the ground up, a

good game should allow them to build their own version of the game to pass on to their friends.

The technologies involved in computer gaming will continue to change, but the qualities inherent in good game design won't. The big winners in the future will be those designers who use technological advances to enhance the game qualities described above. If you have anything to add, feel free to join the discussion concerning good game design at www.zdnet.com/gaming ☺

What Makes A Good Magazine?

We don't just want the computer game industry to make better games. We want to make Computer Gaming World better and better, too. At times, we have redesigned the entire magazine, but we don't think that's necessary at this point. We've just heard our readers speak on some issues, and we've made a few changes to reflect their input.

First, we are constantly bargained with mail complaining that we don't offer enough tips and cheats. Since we were delivering 15-30 different tips

per issue in the little CG Tips boxes and in the adjoining sidebars of strategy articles and reviews, we were alarmed you didn't feel we were meeting your needs. We also kept hearing that you wanted "Gamer's Edge" back. So, it's back! We've put the tips and strategy articles all together in one complete section.

Second, we heard you when you said you couldn't easily tell the difference between "Sneak Preview" coverage and "Review" coverage. Now, you should be able to tell at a glance. Sneak Previews will appear in the front of the magazine and the "Reviews" (still ordered by genre for fast reference and navigation) are all in one section. In this way, we feel like we've maintained the easy navigation for finding the reviews you want and clarified

the distinction between Sneak Previews and Reviews.

Of course, the changes in structure meant that it made more sense to put most of the columnists together rather than placing them in separate genre sections. Now, columns are in the back of the magazine, and most columnists will appear every issue. We hope these changes combine to give you a more useful and digestible magazine. Let us know what you think.



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LETTER OF THE MONTH

ON LAWYERS, ON-LINE,
AND WASTED SPACE

The January 1997 issue touched briefly on three important issues which I feel deserve some commentary.

Johnny Wilson's piece on corporate lawyers attempting to stamp out custom levels and user-generated scenarios depicts the sad state of affairs at some (but not all) game publishers. Because many of these publishers seem unable to give us what we want in a gaming experience, they will attempt to destroy, through litigation, things like cheat programs, editors, and other utilities devised to make the games more enjoyable. I cannot believe that LucasArts' Star Wars license is threatened by an externally-developed level editor. This is a standard response from copyright holders, who claim that the value of their properties will be lessened, but it's a claim that doesn't carry the burden of proof on the copyright holders.

Prove to me the value of your property will lessen. If anything, the value of the property will increase because many of these externally-developed editors increase the accessibility of the game to other users. So, screw LucasArts. I can get a bang just fine without playing their games. There are other companies which actually encourage user participation with their games. Two notable examples include Sid Meier's JACQUARD ALLIANCE, DEADLY GAMES, with its ultra-cool Scenario and Campaign Editor, thus allowing us to make game after game with the JA engine, and, of course, id's QUAKE. Id did something completely as ordinary with QUAKE. The game itself is just more of the same, and indeed, even dull (I got bored playing the single-player game and quit without finishing). But where the revolution occurs is in its allow-

ing everyone to have access to the code, and to make whatever they want out of that. From QUAKE, we are getting things like QSOCCKER, a football game, vehicle driving, bizarre patches that allow for new weapons, new monsters, and on and on. It takes a gutsy company to do that, and they should be applauded for delivering an entertainment product that doesn't punish the user, and that encourages continuing development in its name.

OK, point number two. Ken Pritchard's Letter of the Month mentions a fact which I think is understated by most gaming publications. There are a lot of us gamers who simply don't want to play online games. Of

course, online gaming is hot, but I think people need to be careful about overhyping the new phenomenon. It won't replace single-player gaming, it will be another option. Some games will find their strength in multiplayer online gaming, others will find their strength in being played by a single person alone with their computer. The standard line is, "Why would you

want to play against a poorly-designed AI when you could play against human opponents?" Well, Pritchard mentions several reasons why human opponents may not be optimal. Plus, there are a lot of assholes out there whom I really don't care to meet, online or not. I just don't feel the need to link up with someone and play the latest computer game. I'd rather play the game by myself. And there's no reason why a game has to have poorly-designed AI except for laziness on the part of the publisher. The new trend of releasing a game that supports both single-player and multiplayer modes—with the single-player mode being completely lame and tacked on

REAL-TIME: NO DEAL

Real-time wargames? ("What's the Deal With...Real-Time?" December, '96) Please, NO! While I enjoy COMMAND & CONQUER and even Warcraft 2, I always fall back to a boardgame or a computer wargame for a good strategic/hactical game. I do not wish for a more realistic game in the sense that I'm pressured for time and trying to click on a group of infantry faster than my opponent (oh, yeah, this really adds to the realism). I would like, however, an intelligent, playable, and reasonably historically-accurate game that rewards good strategic thinking, not fast reflexes. Turn-based works much better in this regard. I would absolutely love to see companies adapt existing boardgames to computer format so that the bookkeeping is less of a chore and the player can concentrate on actually playing. Avalon Hills' COMMAND & CONQUER: TANK REARMS is a good start. If I wanted to be held hostage to real-time, I'd pick up a tank simulator program or stick with C&C.

Incidentally, I can recall one game that did combine real-time with wargaming. That was PATRON STRIKES BACK. Remember that one? I didn't think so.

It would indeed be a sad day for wargamers if Mr. Clinks gets his wish and we do one day see the "End of the Turn-Based Games" as we know them." If that happens (heavy sigh), at least I will still have my closet full of boardgames.

Ken M. Carroll
Charlotte, NC

On the CCW editorial staff, we like both real-time games and turn-based games. To us, the real-time games offer more of a sense of urgency, and the turn-based games provide more of an opportunity to savor the options. The former is better at presenting the reality of tactical command levels, but the latter gives one a better sense of feeling in control. We believe the game designer



QUAKEWARRIOR? Game editors such as Quake C let you make custom mods like this. MatchWarrs back. For more details, see this month's Quake Page in "Gamer's Edge."



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REAL-TIME WARGAMING Core Core is in the middle of the debate between real-time and turn-based wargames. The game sold well, and has become popular on Microsoft's Internet Gaming Zone at www.zone.com.

should choose the mechanics which best fit the design intent. This issue definitely seems to have hit a nerve, though. Check out this next letter.

LETTER OF THE MONTH

By Continued from pg 22

to increase sales — should be halted forever. . . . Finally, point number three. With Huber's letter brings up two interesting thoughts. You definitely should let people know if the game can support multiple players in network mode or if each player needs to have a separate copy of the product. And, I want to give a missing "Heart Heart" to his comment that your magazine spends way too much time talking about alpha and previews of upcoming games. CCW isn't the only offender, of course. All the game magazines do it and, frankly, it's pretty useless. Half the time the games come out with a completely different feature set than previewed, and the other half of the time the games never come out at all. Usually, previews and alpha looks are written in an optimistic tone, and when the game is released, that optimism turns to disappointment. Short looks at games to be released in the next two months or so are OK, just so we know on what to spend our gaming money. But I would much rather read an in-depth review of the released game, or a discussion of the patch and how it affects an already released game, than anything about a game that isn't yet on the shelves. Again, this isn't CCW's problem, it's all of the game magazines. What I do now when I read CCW or any of the others is to simply skip over the Preview pages. Never read 'em at all, and so

far, haven't felt like I missed anything.

Anyway, that's it for this letter. I still like CCW quite a bit and hope you continue to improve. Thanks for listening.

Mark Rose
via the Internet

We hear you, but we also want to make sure you noticed that Johnny Wilson's editorial also warned how copyright protection was necessary or computers would have to resort to encryption and protection schemes that would mitigate against scenarios and campaign editors. So, the game editors are essentially under siege from two directives: overly aggressive interpretation of copyright on the one hand and international complexity with regard to copyright violations on the other.

We also hear you about online games. One reason why we only focus on online games in a few issues per year is because we think the hype is too far ahead of the curve. As far your comments about sneak previews, you'll notice that most of our editorial space is devoted to reviews and strategies of games that you can play now. Since we only review from final copy, sneak previews provide early information that many of our readers use to see if upcoming games will appeal to them. We agree that the industry trend is to cover games too far in advance to be useful, but gamers often state that they want previews, and our job is to give them what they want.

IT'S NOT REAL

Let me quote from your recent preview of LucasArts' **REBELLION**: "In both the strategic and tactical portions of the game, your enemy is moving his pieces simultaneously with you in real-time."

Now, since the strategic portion of this game encompasses warring control of an entire galaxy from the opposition — building bases, staging invasions, and sending fleets on missions of conquest — how in holy hell can it be staged in real-time? Are you seriously suggesting that it takes several years to complete the game? And if you actually have full years in which to move your units around,

but can accelerate time, then what benefit is offered by this real-time hype — besides being able to print "REAL-TIME!" on the box?

Or does real-time as you are using it here translate to "the player needs to make a decision (that would actually be made by a full general staff over the course of several weeks) in 15 seconds? Aren't we talking about enormously accelerated (real) time? What it boils down to is that most



real-time games are simply mechanisms for camouflaging deficiencies in the AI by forcing the gamer to hurry. At a platoon level, perhaps real-time offers some benefit, but in a game of galactic grand strategy? So long as I have a full hour to decide when to invade Coruscant, then perhaps I'll believe your claim that **REBELLION** is a real-time game.

Scott K. Stafford
from the Internet

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Dungeons, Dolphins, And Deities

Bullfrog's DUNGEON KEEPER Tops Their Lineup Of Impressive Games For '97

DUNGEON KEEPER

Almost 10 years after founding Bullfrog and developing the genre-builder Populous, Peter Molyneux said he plans to leave the company after his latest project, *Dungeon Keeper*, is completed. This departure hasn't worried many at the

"Being a hero has become such a cliché I wanted to do something different. In *Dungeon Keeper* you have to be a complete and utter bastard, design and build a dungeon, and be the bad guy. There are heroes—good guys who enter your dungeon and try to steal your treasure, rid the world of your evil."

So how do you win? "You get

end, you will kill him horribly, and there's a nice cut-scene for this."

Dungeon Keeper features two distinct, but related, styles of gameplay: overhead strategy and first-person perspective, real-time action. The object is to lure evil creatures who'll become your servants into the dungeon to defend it against heroes. The dungeon is expanded in the main map and strategy section, as you build living quarters, gold stores, and food hatcheries. You can direct minions against the heroes

NO MORE MR. NICE GUY
Allow one of your henchmen to do your dirty work for you.

Any creature can be possessed, right down to the hilarious chickens that the monsters feed on (not such a good idea, unless you want to become monster fodder). You can also torture, train and discipline creatures, slapping them with the



DARK SPACES Who knows what evil lurks within the heart of your dungeon?

company, for one simple reason: *DUNGEON KEEPER* never seemed very near completion—until now.

CGW took a peek at an advanced version and spoke with Molyneux about its development.

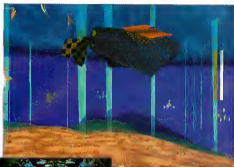
"I was sick to death of always playing the good guy in games," Molyneux explains

more points for stabbing heroes in the back than killing them cleanly in battle," says Molyneux. "There is this green and pleasant land which is viewed from your castle, which progressively becomes dark, ravaged, and blood-soaked as your Dungeon's influence spreads. In the distance is a castle inhabited by the Avatar from the *Ultima* series. In the



from this overview or, more interestingly, possess one of them, then enter a 3D textured, first-person world and fight from this perspective, while the computer takes care of the sim and

back of the mouse cursor hand. Scheduled for release in early April, 1997, *DUNGEON KEEPER* will allow up to four players to compete via network in keeper-vs.-heroes and keeper-vs.-keeper



SWIMMING WITH THE SHARKS
CREATION plunges you into new depths, as you patrol the realms of a subterranean world.

midst of a full-scale battle, the only help coming from a few dolphins acting as your wingmen.

Most of the texture screens were up and running when I saw the game, but internal views, control screens, and guidance were not properly set up. **CREATION** is scheduled for release in late spring or early summer.

POPULOUS 3

The game that kicked off the God sim genre is back, this time with a complete graphic overhaul. The new world view is so secret that Bullfrog wouldn't even allow *CGW*'s screenshot. We did get an early peek at the title, though, which looks very advanced for a game not scheduled for release until summer.

It is being produced under the supervision of Alan Wright (*Magic Keeper 2*), and follows the same basic scenario as the other *Populous* games: Worshipers do your bidding and Wildies wander around aimlessly, leading shallow lives until they're converted to your religion, in an all-too-accurate portrayal of mankind's history.

There are plenty of 3D disasters to contend with, including insect plagues, a ghost army, earthquakes and volca-

PLAYING LATELY?

Here are the games readers are actually blowing the most time on, as opposed to the reader's overall "quality ranking" in the Top 100.

The Top 6 remains fixed, with **CIVILIZATION II**, **DUKE NUKEM 3D** and **WARCRAFT II** maintaining the top three positions for the eighth consecutive month, while **COMMAND AND CONQUER**, **MECHWARRIOR 2** and **QUAKE** hold their positions a few steps behind. **DAGGERFALL** creeps steadily up the chart, while **HEROES OF NIGHT AND MAGIC** slips back down into tenth place.

You'll no longer find the *CGW* Poll Card bound into the magazine, but check your mail box: We mail a survey to 1,500 randomly-chosen subscribers each month, and we use the results to calculate the Top 100 and Playing Lately each month.

READERS'
TOP 10

	Last Month	Months On Chart
1. Civilization II (MicroProse)	1	10
2. Duke Nukem 3D (3D Realms)	2	11
3. WarCraft II (Blizzard)	3	13
4. Command & Conquer (Westwood)	4	16
5. MechWarrior 2 (Activision)	5	15
6. Quake (id Software)	6	3
7. Daggerfall (Bethesda)	10	2
8. Steel Panthers (SSI)	9	15
9. Doom II (id Software)	8	12
10. Heroes of Night & Magic (New World Computing)	7	15

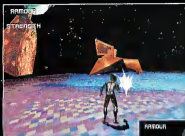
noes which can be called down from the heavens at whim, as you battle against up to three AI opponents.

With three other titles due out before *Populous 3*, including *Theme Hospital*, (a sophisticated sequel to Theme Park), Bullfrog is worried about letting the cat out of the bag too soon. But from what we've seen, *Populous 3* is likely to be the most user-friendly God sim to date, and could well broaden the genre's appeal even further.—Alan Dyles

modes, as well as a first-person perspective deathmatch. Every aspect of the 25 levels will be editable in Win 95 using a customized Excel spreadsheet. A *Dungeon Keeper* Web site is also in the works, which will allow up to 256 people to play on-line, with up to 64 dungeons, on a skeleton landscape created by Bullfrog.

CREATION

CREATION is an eco organization which has escaped the syndicates and set up a water-world on a distant planet. You take on the role of an underwater caretaker, looking after dolphins, whales and other friendly flora and fauna. The overall impression of depth, light and shade is impressive, as you traverse this submerged, textured world in an armed submersible. But all is not well: A sinister fungus starts appearing on the ocean floor, driving fish into aggressive mode. The usual suspects are there: sharks and killer whales, which ambitious big game fishermen will enjoy blasting away. The syndicates appear, too, and soon you're in the



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"...futuristic 3-D action/adventure that could set a new standard for PC Gaming."

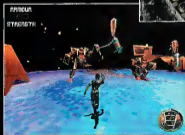
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ON A GOOD DAY, ONLY 2.5

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 - COMPUTER PLAYER



"This highly anticipated title is certainly one of the slickest games we've seen...could be the action fest to rival Quake."
 - BOOT



SEVEN FIFTEEN



PC CD-ROM

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Starfleet Delayed



An Update On Interplay's New Star Trek Sim

After hopes that Interplay Productions' Star Trek: Starfleet Academy would be released by last Christmas, it now looks as if it's Spring fabrication for virtual cadets. When the game does beam down, you'll get the chance to enter Command School and compete for the approval of its famous and well-decorated faculty: Mr. Sulu, Mc Chekov, and Captain Kirk.

We spent a day on the set of Raleigh Studios, where the out-scenes and interactive video sequences for ST: SFA were being filmed. We found that the game has experienced many of the typical delays surrounding a big-budget movie: script modification, actor availability, and logistics. Add the changing technology, and you'll see why the game is taking longer than Producer Rusty Buchert would have liked. Yet, it looks worth it.

On the day we visited, the set was



George Takei on the set of ST: SFA.



Julianne Robles gets made up as an Antarean cadet.

abuzz with excitement. Several veteran filmmakers were checking out the money-saving technique Buchert's crew was using to composite the film footage with the digitized sets. By posting a grid on the green-screened areas of the set, Buchert can identify the exact coordinates of any actor in

the frame by using "plain old high school trigonometry." The technique allows Interplay to change scenarios, angles, and light-

Buchert doesn't have to composite the digital set and the film immediately; adjustments and refinements can come later. So far, the results look better than digitized sets.

STAR TREK: STARFLEET ACADEMY started out with a hugely ambitious design. Buchert's three-and-a-half year mission has been to contain the vast Star Trek universe to a real-world budget and schedule. He had the added challenge of combining Paramount's incessant concerns over their license with Interplay's concerns about gameplay.

The problem was solved by drawing from top writers in both game design and scriptwriting worlds. Dan Greenberg, an award-winning paper game designer, wrote the original interactive material. Then, Interplay brought in veteran writer Sandy Fries, dubbed "my rewrite man," by Gene Roddenberry when they worked together, to ensure faithful characterization from the Paramount perspective.—Johnny Wilson



A FEW GOOD CADETS Some actors remain on the set as the fighting crew prepares for the next camera set-up.

sourcing on actors during post-production—as if they had shot footage from many different angles.

Because of the new technique,

Here are short takes on games that were released just prior to press time. Most will be reviewed next month.

AMBER: JOURNEYS BEYOND

I have a dream. My dream is that someday I will open an adventure game, boot it up and it will not look like Myst. This was not the case with AMBER: JOURNEYS BEYOND, but for



once, I was not disappointed. When the game begins, you receive an urgent email to check on Roxie, a ghostbuster friend, who is experimenting with a new device that she believes will let her communicate with the spirit world. The opening segment feels uncomfortably Myst-like, and I was sure I was about to play yet another bumbling-through-pretty-screens-with-nothing-to-do game. But, happily, AMBER really improves as it goes along, with an extremely creepy Stephen King-type story and atmosphere, great sound and clever plot-oriented puzzles. Horror fans eager to forget PAINFUL MESSAGES should check this one out.—J. Green

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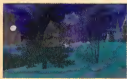
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CYBERGLADIATORS

Sierra has entered the fighting game market, and their first baby, CYBERGLADIATORS, isn't too shabby. It's definitely not up to par with WIPAK FIGHTER, but its gameplay is at least as good as MORIA. Known for the PC, and better than PLAY FOR OCEAN and RISE 2. Innovations to the genre include inter-



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Now You See It.



The Complete id Anthology

Is it worth \$100?



The Beatles waited 25 years to do it, but id Software has decided that six years is time enough to have fans clamoring for its anthology. Encased in a spooky black box emblazoned with a satanic-looking long-horn skull, it makes you wonder what evil contents it might conceal. But inside you'll discover four discs, (three PC, one Mac) containing such id classics as *Wolfenstein 3D*, *Spear of Destiny*, *Doom*, and, of course, *Quake*.

You'll also get a selection of collectors' items: id Anthology dogtags, a little pewter Cyberdemon, *The Book of id* (a tale about the company's history with amusing photos and sketches), a snazzy black T-shirt, the *Doom* Comic Book, a poster, and a collectors' card, all for about \$100.

So, is it worth it? True id fans will no doubt think so. And then, of course, there are those people who'll collect anything. Maybe they're right: If you don't break the shrink wrap, the sucker may someday be worth a lot more. But that's no fun—I'd rather wear a limited edition \$100 T-shirt. —C. Parfiter

active environments. Meteors crash onto arenas, barrels lie ready to be kicked at your enemy, and spears lie ready to be thrown. The graphics are good (fantastic on a Rendition- or



3Dfx-based 3D card), with detailed backgrounds and well-rendered characters. You can crank up the detail level on characters, or ditch fancy backgrounds for faster frame rates. The game supports the SideWinder, Grip and other controllers. For fighting fans looking for a sen-

ous and replayable game, though, there is a lack of depth. Still, if you just want a two-player action game for the PC and are tired of MK, then *CrashGuns* might be worth a look.

—E. Chin
Sierra (800) 757-7767
Win 95 CD-ROM
Reader Service # 307

TOY STORY

Buzz and Woody are back in Disney's challenging arcade-style take on the successful movie. An enhanced version of the Sega Genesis game, *Toy Story* is 17 levels of increasingly difficult, fast-playing fun. Woody and Buzz (with

GTE Pulls The Plug

GTE has decided to begin the process of phasing out operations at its GTE Interactive Media division beginning March 14. The company is expected to release its developers on a case-by-case basis in order to finish products still in development. Meanwhile, customer support for existing games such as *TIMELOPE*, *TORIKU* and *NCAA College*

BASKETBALL will continue at the existing facility until approximately June, 1997.

GTE formed GTE Interactive Media in 1990 to build entertainment properties which would be complementary to GTE's development of broadband video services. The phenomenal growth of the Internet has created enough new players that GTE Vice-President and General Manager of New Ventures now claims that GTE no longer needs to create its own.

Prior to announcing the shutdown of the entertainment unit on January 6, 1997, GTE investigated relationships with several strategic partners, but none were forthcoming.

One of the most interesting projects to be thrown into limbo because of the GTE shutdown is the announced collaboration between Wildstorm Comics and GTE Entertainment to create both a comic and ongoing computer game/Internet experience based on *Siege*, a new superhero group created by Wildstorm (see the story on CGW's Web site). No determination has yet been made as to how development will proceed on the game, but from what we've seen of it, it looks like a valuable property. —Johnny Wilson



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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #63

FIRST LOOK

Here's your first look at games in development. These games aren't even playable yet, but we thought you'd want to see how they're coming along.

Black Dahlia

In January, 1947, the tortured and dismembered body of an aspiring actress named Elizabeth Short was discovered in a vacant lot in Los Angeles. A reporter immortalized the memory of this once raven-haired beauty by writing about her as the "Black Dahlia." The murder of Elizabeth Short was never solved, and still provides fodder for true crime aficionados to this day. Take 2 has taken a different tack with

centering the involvement of Nazi spies into a fascinating fiction built around some intriguing research and art deco-period art. Players take on the role of a special agent for the C.G.I. (predecessor of the O.S.S. which, in turn, was precursor to the CIA). As a special agent, you have to investigate reports of a Nazi band operating in Cleveland, and the resulting strands of evidence will take you through 80 different locations in both the U.S. and Europe.



DECO ETRAGE Of course, the 1940s still had their share of classic art deco hotels left over from the Jazz Age.

the Black Dahlia story. Although the game itself deals with the murder of Elizabeth Short, you'll wonder if she is truly the Black Dahlia or if that is a term for something else. In an imaginative story which weaves the history of the Cleveland torso slayer (a series of unsolved torture/slayings in the early '40s), the facts surrounding the Black Dahlia murder, and speculation con-

cerning the involvement of Nazi spies into a fascinating fiction built around some intriguing research and art deco-period art. Players take on the role of a special agent for the C.G.I. (predecessor of the O.S.S. which, in turn, was precursor to the CIA). As a special agent, you have to investigate reports of a Nazi band operating in Cleveland, and the resulting strands of evidence will take you through 80 different locations in both the U.S. and Europe.



SPEAK SLEAZY Would-be special agents will have to spend some of their time in dives like this.

PIPELINE

6300 2D/3D Chip Set	Tseng Labs	3/97
Achtung: Spill!	Avalon Hill	4/97
Agents of Justice	MicroProse	Spring 97
Aide De Camp 2	MPS Simulations	Spring 97
Armored Flot 2	Midstage	4/97
Atlanta City		3/97
Batman: The Telltale Tale	Midwest	3/97
Battles of Alexander	Interactive Magic	Spring 97
Big Wolf On Campus		3/97
Bohannon of Antara Sierra		3/97
Blade Runner	Midwest/Wood	Fall 97
Blood Arises		Spring 97
Bios Heat Cybernatics		3/97
Boggle	Harbo Interactive	6/97
Calisher's Crossline	Sibicon Legend	9/97
City of Lost Children	Pygrosis	3/97
Commander 3	Midstage	3/97
Dark Earth	Midstage	Spring 97
Descent in Undermountain	Interactive	3/97
Dungeon Keeper	Bullfrog	4/97
Estancia II	Pygrosis	3/97
Entrepreneur	Starback	Q1/97
European Air War	MicroProse	Summer 97
Felton Haven	Interactive Magic	Spring 97
Flyin' Nightmares 2	DotEmu	3/97
Front Pace Sports	Golf Sierra	Q1/97
Grand Slam 97	Virgin	Spring 97
Hardball 3	Accolade	7/97
History of the World	Avalon Hill	2/97
IF22	Interactive Magic	Spring 97
Imperialism	SSI	Spring 97
Interstate 76	Activision	Q1/97
Jack Nicklaus Golf 97	Activision	3/97
Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II	LucasArts	3/97
Lands of Lore: Guardians of Time	Wideload/Origin	3/97
MDK	Shiny Entertainment	Q3/97
Mercs	Midstage	Spring 97
MicroLeague Baseball 6.0	MicroLeague	Spring 97
Big Alley Empire		Summer 97
Myst 2: Raven Bookend		Summer 97
NBA Live 97 EA Sports		Q1/97
NFL Legends	Accolade	4/97
Pacific General	SSI	Summer 97
Reach for the Stars II	SSI/Microsoft	Spring 97
Rebellion	LucasArts	3/97
Rebel Moon Rising	Parish Wolf	7/97
Red Baron II	Sierra	4/97
Returns to Kronder 7th Level		Spring 97
Sabra	Acq Virgin	Spring 97
Shadows of Nixa	Si-Tech	Spring 97
Shivers 2	Sierra	4/97
Ship of the Line	SSI	Fall 97
Sin Survival	Westwood	3/97
Sonic Vibes	Amiga Chip Set	Q1/97
Spidey Man: Venom Foe	Playmate Games	Spring 97
Star Craft	Bizzard	5/97
Star Fleet Academy	Innaplay	4/97
TFX: X-22	Ocean	3/97
Theme Hospital	Bullfrog/EA	4/97
Ultima On-Line	Origin	Spring 97
Unreal Epic		5/97
Voodoo Rush 3D	Chip Set 3D/3D/Interent	Q1/97
VR Baseball	VR Sports	Spring 97
VR Golf	VR Sports	Q1/97
VR Baseball	VR Sports	Spring 97
Wizard XL	Pygrosis	3/97
X-COM: The Apocalypse	MicroProse	Spring 97
Zork: Grand Trunkster	Activision	Fall 97

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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.

►Man of War

The era of "Fighting Sail," that period which extends roughly from the American

Revolutionary War through the Napoleonic Era and closes out with the War of 1812, seems fertile ground for wargame designers. *Wooden Ships and Iron Men*

(Avalon Hill) and *Age of Sail* (Balancesoft) have already reached store shelves, with *Fighting Sail* (SSI) and *Man of War* (Strategy First) to arrive in 1997.

Wooden Ships and Iron Men is a detail-oriented command simulation which gives up a slight edge in urgency to allow the gamer to do most, and *Age of*

Sail increases realism by requiring the gamer to act within accelerated-time combat. Both games do a poor job of allowing gamers to satisfactorily command huge fleets.

Man of War allows gamers to have the perspective of a Rear Admiral or Commodore. It is a graphically rich update

of Simulations Canada's largely text-based version of a few years back. Where the SimCan version scrolled CGA graphics, the Strategy First version will feature 3D rendered ships. The good news is that the 3D is used in the game, not cut-scenes. The only cut-scenes occur when your flagship



VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE *Man of War* offers a command perspective from the flagship.

is boarded by the enemy.

You'll plan your strategies via an overhead map in the historical style, and you'll give orders with signal flags (based on the standard British code groups of Nelson's era) to either your flagship, other ships, a designated task force, or to the full fleet. The original *Man of War* was designed around four-minute segments, but the new version will feature scalable time. The original featured a campaign game constructed of linked scenarios, and the new game will feature the 12 linked scenarios from the original game, plus a few American Revolutionary War scenarios. It will also allow for hot-seat, network or modem-to-modem play, as well as software play against the computer. *Man of War* is expected to ship in Spring of 1997. —Johnny Wilson



LOG CABIN Basic setup and menu screens for *Man of War* use the admiral's cable and log metaphors.

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Leonard And Bubba's Excellent Adventure

After REDNECK RAMPAGE, The Trailer Park Won't Be The Same

by Dave Salvatore

Most first person shooters pit you against notorious alien hordes in a struggle for the fate of humanity. What a bother. Our pals Leonard and Bubba, the reluctant heroes in Xatrix's upcoming *Redneck Rampage*,

have a different problem: them that blasted aliens done made off with Bessie, their award-winning pig. Their (and your) mission is to rescue Bessie and make dang sure them aliens get blowed up real good.

Duke NUKEM 3D pioneered the idea of a campy shooter that limes better than to take itself too seriously. But *RAMPAGE* goes joyously careening over the top, lampooning all things rural, and helping us all get in touch with our inner Redneck.

Rampage is being written using Duke's Build Engine, but the Xatrix boys are making some cool improvements, like a default frame size of 640x480, and larger, less-pixelated texture maps to give *Rampage* a

CG SNEAK PREVIEW
PRODUCT STILL IN DEVELOPMENT

Developer: Xatrix
Publisher: Interplay
Target Release: April

more immersive feel. Unlike Duke, and just about every other shooter for that matter, much of *RAMPAGE* is set outdoors,

giving it a more expansive feel. There's also good news for you Quakeheads: you can reverse the mouse's y-axis setting so it responds the same way as Quake's for mouse aiming.

GIMME THAT CAN O' WHUPASS

If you're going to do battle with a bunch of berserker backwoods bumpkins (not to mention the aliens), you'll need some fairly serious hardware. You'll start out with a standard-issue crowbar, the redneck's scalpel, which does some damage, but is pretty much a last resort. Then you'll get yer garden-ting tools: the revolver and a double-barreled scatter gun, which are the first weapons you'll be able to grab and use. Next, you'll move to the ranch rifle, a semi-automatic that your friend who's "good with tools"



AHHH GORNA GETYA The townfolk don't take kindly to strongers, and they Ray here may not be handsome but he's damn quick with that shotgun

has filled down to be a fully automatic machine-gun type-deal—very handy in close-quarter situations. And speaking of good with tools, there's the rip saw, a power tool gone terribly wrong. You'll use it to slice toes into cold-outs, or launch saw-blades at them and slice and dice from a distance.

Now we start cookin' with gas. There are sticks of dynamite which you light and toss scattered around the levels, but be careful: the fuse and detonation times are random, so as soon as you light it, lose it! No undo here. And since Leonard's thrown 'em ain't what it used to be, you'll also have a crossbow to launch the dynamite sticks. And the last Marquis Jehro de Sade touch: bear-traps. That's right, lay these babies and watch your toes get stuck and yow!—could be very handy for multiplayer deathmatches. When you encounter the aliens and pick a few of them off, you'll get the most macabre BFG of 'em all: the Alien Arm Gun. Pick up the alien's severed arm (it'll hold the weapon) and pull its tendons to fire the gun. Grim, but very effective. Of course, if you run out of everything, there's the trusty cowboy boot kick.

SAY GOODNIGHT, JOHN-BOY

Why do you need all these implements of destruction? Xatrix is assembling an incorrigible cast of characters who'll keep you hopping. First off, there's the Crazy Ol' Coot, who seems to strangely resemble a certain third-party presidential candidate, though the resemblance is mere happenstance. He carries a pistol, and is a pretty easy mark.

Your next encounter will most likely be Billy Ray, a big, oaf-type character who lumbers around with a shotgun, and can put a hurtin' on you when he lands a shot. Every once in a while he stops mid-gunfight to dig some overall out of his cleft, giving you an ideal opportunity to take 'em down. Both of these characters aren't especially hard to handle, but



BILLY RAY GO BOOM When you eighty-six Billy Ray with a stick of dynamite, you may be surprised by the leftovers

with their enhanced AI, they can "heal," so when you begin a gun battle with one, any others within ear-shot will most likely join the fray. At press time, these were the only two characters running, but Xatrix has a hellacious host of others waiting in the wings.

The first mini-boss you'll come upon is Sheriff Lester Hobbes, local lawman. Now things take a turn toward the scatological: The Turd Minion (yes, the Turd Minion) is made of fecal matter, and when detonated, spews crapnel (yes, crapnel). A little later on in the Smelting Plant level, you'll encounter an end-boss (so to speak) who the developers will only refer to as "ass-face." Visualize for yourself. The final earth-bound end-boss is William Joseph Beaudry, a wealthy local landowner who turns out to be an alien collaborator. He's apparently had his living head preserved in some gelatinous goo and rides around atop a tractor-like vehicle. Very crafty, and tough to deep six.

PASS THE VITTLES AND A ROAD MAP

After you take down the locals, you'll be ready to face the alien contingent. You'll first come across Alien Hulk Guards, big muscle-bound goons who take a lot of hit-points before finally giving up the ghost. Next will likely be the Alien Vipers, whom the developers describe as Pamela Anderson look-alikes, replete with brassiere-mounted machine guns. Two words: eye contact. For the grand finale, you'll have to detect the dreaded Alien Queen, who also packs some pretty serious hardware, if you know what I mean.

On this arduous journey, you're bound to need some refreshment to keep you going. You'll find bags of pork balls scattered throughout the levels, and bottles of Cheap-Ass Whiskey, which you can drink to replenish your health and recapture that rosy glow.

The first demo level we traipsed through had several multi-user buildings, but was more spread-out and horizontal than most other shooters. There's a chicken processing plant level where you'll witness some repugnant poultry pulverization. But karma kicks in as you duel a giant chicken boss at the end of the level. Like Duke, *Revenge* has two map modes, one where you can still see what you're doing and get an overhead level map, and the other where the overhead map is textured.

Xatrix is planning to do several deathmatch-friendly levels, including a junkyard and a mortuary. *Revenge*'s multiplayer antics will happen on the Internet via Engage, Interplay's online service. Other multiplayer options will include rail-modem cable, modem, and IPX.

All told, Xatrix is putting together a hilarious send-up of the oh-so-serious shooters

we've seen recently, but they're not forgetting to make it a fun game, too. *Revenge* will be unleashed in April, so y'all get kikked up and ready to shoot! 'Yes How!



STUPID IS AS STUPID GOES Billy Ray can prove a vexing challenge, but when he stops to "adjust" himself, you get a good opportunity to plug 'em.



Space Combat Sans Chrome



A Space Opera That Relies on Gameplay, Not Video Footage, For Its Voice

by Cal Jones

An action game that stands on good old-fashioned gameplay is a rare commodity these days: It seems that you can't even have a humble platform game without a million bucks worth of special effects tacked on in the form of a few non-interactive cut-scenes. It's as if developers aren't sufficiently confident to sell a game on its own merits. Are they frightened that games won't sell

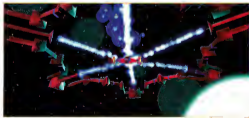
without the requisite flashy intros, FMV, and animated renders?

Well, there's one company which refuses to follow the trend towards producing expensive eye candy: Rage Software, based in Liverpool, England, believes that fun is more important than flash, and is currently hard at work on a game which promises to be so utterly playable that it will knock your socks off. **DARKLIGHT**

CONFLICT is a mission-based 3D space combat game that has more in the way of gameplay than the entire *Wing Commander* series put together.

FAMILIAR PLOT

Set in 1980—a scant two years away—the game places you in the role of a U.S. Navy pilot fighting drug barons in South America. In a plotline reminiscent of *The Last Starfighter*, you're suddenly whisked



RING OF FIRE Jumpstarts his way into hyperspace.



SPECTACULARLY SPECTULAR Explosions cast blinding light on your battles.

away by aliens and sent to war in some godforsaken galaxy millions of light years away from your home planet. Despite having pressed you into service, the reptilian Reptons seem like a decent enough bunch. Their foes, on the other hand, the bird-like Ovrons, are truly fearsome. However, what you don't yet realize is that the Reptons are evil carnivores who eat their captives, and so ultimately you'll end up fighting both races in a bid to save humanity from a nasty fate.

While the plot is not exactly original, it's mere window dressing. The game's main attraction is its white-knuckle action. The game offers three modes of play, starting with an arcade mode comprised of five levels, where the object is simply to score by destroying enemy ships. Alternatively, the game caters to network play and includes missions designed specifically for multiplayer action.

For a greater challenge, opt instead for the campaign mode, which includes five separate campaigns of ten missions each. In this mode the plot becomes more relevant, but unlike *Wing Commander*, **DARKLIGHT** isn't one of those games where completing or failing a mission affects the storyline. Progress is linear, and if you flunk a mission you have to do it again until you get it right.

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LIGHT FIRE Taking a blast at the mothership. All enemy weapons, stars, and other light sources will cast light and shadows on the game's ships.



THE BADLANDS Just because you're traveling through hyperspace, it doesn't mean you're safe from attack.

THERE IS NO TRY, ONLY DO

This doesn't make *Darklight* boring, however. Each mission has a different objective, whether it's retrieving a valuable object with your tractor beam, destroying an installation, or mining ore from asteroids. All are exceedingly dangerous, and you'll find yourself engaging the enemy more often than not. To help you, you'll have access to 15 weapons and five different types of ships, from bomber to gunship, so variety is clearly not a problem.

Although *Darklight*

looks simple to play, it's surprisingly tough. Expect to get wiped out very quickly when you start out, but don't get disheartened. If you enjoy dogfighting with pirates around

the anarchy planets of Eura, you'll be more than happy with *Darklight*'s exhilarating combat.

Although I've stressed the gameplay element, *Darklight* isn't an ugly game by any means. Rage, whose previous projects include the highly underrated 3D blaster *Pinocchio*, has kept the graphics clean and attractive. Rather than go overboard on texture mapping, Rage decided to up the number of polygons in order to create complex 3D objects which look clean and solid. Using unlimited light sources, specular reflection and a bundle of lens flare effects, light from stars, explosions, and nearby suns forms reflections and shadows on the ships as they whiz past, so that they appear as though they're really there, rather than pasted in as an afterthought.

Darklight Conflict is shaping up to be one of the surprise hits of 1997, and it's refreshing to see a company more concerned with impressing the dedicated gamer than the

graphics connoisseur. Beauty, in this case, is not so much in the eye of the beholder as in the hand holding the joystick. And that's where it counts. ☺



Plasma Explosion: Game Over

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What's Eating Him?

ABE'S ODDYSEE Is A Dazzling Adventure In The Tolkien Tradition

by Ken Brown

In an age when most computer games either have a "2" in the title or bear a striking resemblance to earlier successes, it's refreshing to see something different. While the makers of this game, Otworld Entertainment, haven't reinvented the wheel, they certainly did away with most of the elements common in other action/adventure games. There are no keys or crystals to pick up, you aren't controlling an armed soldier hellbent on destruction, and there isn't even an inventory per se. Instead, the game focuses on an original story, interesting characters, and puzzles that logically "fit" in the environment. The mechanics are similar to Broderbund's side-scrolling *Prince of Persia II* or *Psychosis' Sword of the Berserker*, but the story and execution are decidedly different.

Abe's Oddysee is the story of Aboman, the forlorn goblin-like protagonist under the player's command. Aboman is far from hero caliber, appearing rather homely and weak, whose stitched lips symbolize his enslavement by the Magog Cartel. As a Mudokon, Abe was getting along okay on a diet of meat dishes like Paramite Pies and Scrab Cakes, but when he saw a poster advertising new Mudokon Pops, that did it. Suddenly Abe had a mission: save his fellow creatures from extinction by destroying the cartel and its evil leader. So off he goes, one plussed Mudokon with a major axe to grind.

ABE'S WORLD

The world in which Abe lives is a splendidly designed and rendered 3D environment, thanks to Silicon Graphics Indigo 2 Extremes running



Alexis software. It was originally rendered in 1024 x 768 in 24 bit (16 million colors), so that the developers could save the environments for future games in the series (four are planned). Since today's PCs can't quickly process that much data, Otworld reduced the pixel depth to 640 x 480 x 8 bit color, and they apply a real-time interpolation algorithm to the game to enhance resolution. The result is a beautiful, first-quality visual experience through which you can actually move very quickly.

The character movements have also been carefully crafted. The sprites in *Abe's Oddysee* are composed of approximately 18 animated frames per movement—comparable to good cartoons. The movements look realistic on a Sony PlayStation, but on the PC the game will likely require a good graphic accelerator to move briskly.

GAMESPEAK: GIMMICK OR GESTALT?

Otworld devised a clever way to get to know your character, an interface called Gamespeak lets you control Abe's speech. While he blinks at you from the screen, a list of options appear around him with their control keys so you can make him talk. Gamespeak teaches



HANG TIME Abe can hang from scrabs in shadows, but he needs to use that hanging basket to get away.



Developer:
Otworld Inhabitants
Publisher: GT Interactive
Target Release:
November, '97



OHMMH Abe uses his chant to control the slig above. That's Abe's trusty pal, Elum, at right.

you how to make Abe whistle, chant, and say "Stay," "I don't know," "Okay," and "Follow me." He can also express anger, issue a respectable Bronx cheer, and rant at will. These cues function as a kind of inventory, since they can trigger other characters' actions.

Once you've played with Gamespeak, you're ready for the adventure. The action consists primarily of side-scrolling maneuvers across bridges, ledges and other terrain. Abe's movements include: walk, sneak, run, jump, roll, crouch, and running jump. Abe can also use primitive elevators, throw items, set explosives and do other kinds of crazy things. Pretty soon, you'll run across a creature that wants to kill you.

The most common enemies are sligs, a sort of foul-tempered goblin with a big gun, and scrabs, bizarre, ugly creatures that trounce their victims and stamp on them. Sligs are susceptible to Abe's mind-control chant, which subjugates the little thugs to your control. Since the slig carries a machine gun, this comes in very handy as you direct the slig back to his buddies and burp several rounds into them.

The other common villains, scrabs, aren't susceptible to mind control, which presents a tougher challenge. You can elude a scrab by distracting it with food, or you can agitate scrabs to trigger a fight. Scrab duels are to the death, which makes your life a little easier.

Other puzzles require you to hang from ledges, hide in shadows, or set explosives. Most of the puzzles are consistent with the game universe, but taken together they connote adventure in the classic fantasy tradition, a Tolkienesque journey in a strange land populated by evil creatures.

Another Tolkien similarity can be found in Abe's discovery of a loyal companion, a strange two-legged beast known as Elum. Elum isn't very intelligent and he can't communicate, but he serves various purposes as Abe's ride and trusty decoy. Abe controls Elum with his audio cues, such as "Follow me" or "Stay," and when riding Elum he's under your control. Elum figures in a number of puzzles, and

he's not immune to mistakes—Abe can blow him up just like the rest of the characters—so you'll have to be careful (after you blow him up once or twice for grins).

PLANE HOPPING

As you know, Abe's Oddysee is a side-scrolling affair, which is a design with known limitations. To add variety, *Otherworld* threw in some axes twists. The first is a series of pendulums that swing forward and back and serve to block Abe's movement. It creates an effective puzzle while suggesting that all of the action isn't under glass.

The second is more elaborate. It consists of a sort of vacuum tube that transports your character to another place. When Abe hops on an inlet, he sometimes pops up on another screen, and other times he reappears on the same screen in the background. When this happens, Abe's size is perspective corrected, and his audio cues are subdued since he's talking from "a distance." *Otherworld* made these "boom tubes" an integral part of the game design, so that Abe's passage through them isn't just for convenience.



GOING POSTAL The slig under Abe's control can be lead back to his friends to share the magic of machine gun fire.

Otherworld has also put some thought into players' fondness for save games. You can save the game anytime you choose. You may not need to save, though, since *Oversee* automatically restores your character after you die. This is graphically depicted by a flock of birds that swarm to the reincarnation point and morph into Abe.

CONTROL ISSUES

Abe's *Oversee* is an impressive first title from *Otherworld*. Game publisher GT Interactive liked it so much that they invested in a 50 percent stake in the company. GT also plans to do a multi-million dollar marketing campaign for Acc, so you expect to see a lot more of it. Keep in mind, though, that the game was designed for the PlayStation and the PC, so trying to control Abe with the keyboard may prove a chore. In the meantime, this is one odyssey we'll be following very closely as it nears completion. ☺



The Slig
He's mean, mechanized, and loaded.

Conspiracy theorist alert: *Zell Diner's* parent company, Softbank, has a stake in GT Interactive, which owns half of *Otherworld* developers. I know that as one writer *Zell Diner* or *Softbank* compelled us to cover this game, since it was my idea to write about it, so you can blame me if you don't like it.—K. Brown

Phalanx Phun

The Macedonian Art Of War Gets The Royal Treatment In ALEXANDER

by Terry Coleman

Alexander the Great earned his moniker because he blazed through history like a streaking comet that encapsulated Greece, Persia, Egypt, and reached the edge of India. Alex erected the Great Library at Alexandria, wisely left the local governments of conquered nations largely intact, and was such a brilliant tactician that he overshadowed the considerable military accomplishments of his father, Philip.

Yet, when rating the great leaders of history,

it's hard to know quite where to place his formidable commander. He died young, before he could complete a planned conquest of the Far East, and his heirs were left to squabble, carving up his once-great empire amongst themselves. *THE GREAT BATTLES OF ALEXANDER* lets you decide for yourself if Alexander deserves his storied legacy.

CLASH OF SPEARS

Recent computer games dealing with the ancient world focus mainly on empire building and city management. Ancient warfare is almost an afterthought, consisting of mere crash-and-bash, with most tactics reduced to how quickly you can click

Momentum Swings



The toughest parts of *BATTLES OF ALEXANDER* for traditional wargamers to get used to are the momentum and bump mechanics. Here at the Battle of the Granicus, the Macedonians are attempting, as Alex did historically, to force a passage across the river. Then, using the superior shock power of the phalanxes, they plan to defeat the Persians in detail.



The Persians, however, have no intention of setting idly by and letting the Macedonians do as they please. Note how the Persian cavalry is aggressively placed just across the river from the Macedonians, where a well-timed charge might catch a phalanx of two in the flank.



Alexander moves his units forward, out of range of Persian missile fire. Afterwards, he gains momentum, and moves up the rest of his troops. The Persians must then either gamble that they can gain enough momentum to cross in force, or concede the river position to the Macedonians. And all these momentous decisions were made on the very first turn!

your mouse. Consider *CAESAR II*, where battles degenerate into mob scenes because the design fails to properly differentiate between the professional Roman legions and the untrained barbarian hordes they face. *ALEXANDER*, however, is based on a sophisticated boardgame design that deals realistically with ancient warfare, despite the game's simple mechanics.

Phalanxes in *ALEXANDER*, for example, lack the flexibility of the later Roman legions. Brandishing their famous 21-foot spears, phalanxes are powerful—particularly against cavalry—but unwieldy, taking up not one, but two spaces when they move. Thus, the game system shows the phalanx's near-unstoppable frontal assault and strong defense, while simultaneously depicting its Achilles' heel: When a phalanx is outflanked, its lack of maneuverability renders it terribly vulnerable.

The interrelationships of the various combat arms has exactly the right balance. Light infantry is more maneuverable, but can't hold for long against the shock value of heavier units. There are skirmishers to delay enemies, light cavalry to scout the opposition, and heavy cavalry to ride rough-shod over scattered enemies—although their effective mass is limited, since shtrups had yet to be introduced into warfare. Rounding out the mix are chariots, Greek mercenaries, archers, slingers, and those would-be tanks of the ancients, war elephants. All of the various formations are rated for "shock superiority" based on their weapon type and mass.

Here's where the game comes alive on the computer.

The original Alexander boardgame



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It's one thing to imagine the power of a Macedonian phalanx; it's quite another to see a phalanx with a bull head of steam scattering light infantry in its path when 21-foot spears collide with enemy shields.

I'M IN COMMAND

Another departure from most strategy games for *ALEXANDER* is the realistic—and fun—command control and movement systems. Instead of the usual method of you move everything, then I move everything, *ALEXANDER* employs a different turn structure. The player with initiative (usually Alexander) selects a commander, and orders units under his control to advance, withdraw, rally, or attack within that turn phase. The opposing player then selects a commander and follows suit, with players alternating until all commands are exhausted. The twist is that no one, not even Alex himself, can issue orders to every unit under his command in a single phase.

After a player has finished with a commander, he may attempt to sustain momentum, based on the leadership and charisma ratings of that particular commander. This could result in another immediate orders phase for that leader, the passing of initiative to the other side, or even (rare, but possible) the abrupt end of the entire turn for both sides! Meanwhile, the opposing player may decide to use his own initiative to trump his enemy and move a formation instead! Not only is this an exciting game mechanic—you never know for sure whose phase will come up next—it's quite psychologically realistic in practice, capturing the ever-changing momentum of the battlefield.

TROOP QUALITY IS JOB ONE

The other key to Alexander is troop quality, which takes into account the training, morale, and confidence the various troops had in their respective leaders. Every time a unit moves, fights, checks its morale, etc., its troop quality (TQ) comes into play. TQ tends to decrease with fatigue,

and as TQ

goes, so does a unit's cohesion. Most scenarios offer a competitive imbalance with the greater numbers of the Persians offset by the superior TQs of the Macedonians. Later, the Indians throw light, fast troops, and lots of missiles against the ponderous but powerful phalanxes. Through it all, Alexander gambles, goes for decisive victories, and tries to pre-

The Battle Song Remains The Same

Here's a look at how the units of *ALEXANDER* are depicted on both boardgame and computer. Keep in mind that any information displayed on the cardboard counters is readily available from the computer game's interface.



PHALANXES Note the limited movement, due to the long spears, and the familiar double-wide, unwieldy formation.



PERSIAN CAVALRY Fast and maneuverable, but they had trouble with phalanxes. Where are straps when you need them?



COMPANION CAVALRY Probably the finest troops of the ancient era. If phalanxes were the anvil, these guys were the hammer.



WAR ELEPHANTS When fighting mad, they could trample all, even Phalanxes. Of course, they could also go berserk at the most inopportune times.



CHARIOTS These were hot wheels in the Pharaoh's day, but were somewhat dated on the Macedonian battlefield.



DARIUS DARES YOU After consolidating the claim to your father's throne, you go toe-to-toe with Darius III for mastery of the Persian empire in *ALEXANDER*'s campaign game.

serve his core units. Unlike the boardgame, *ALEXANDER* has a **PAINTER GENERAL** like campaign.

Thus, without a lot of complex rules and sub-systems to cover rout, casualties, and stragglers ad nauseum, *ALEXANDER* realistically—and elegantly—stimulates the essence of ancient battles. Crushing your opponent's will to win, rolling up his flank, and watching his army fall apart at the seams is a tremendously satisfying experience. *ALEXANDER* also shows, in a way that no history book can, why the Macedonian military system held sway on the battlefield until the rise of the Romans.

There are still questions to be answered, particularly concerning the AI and how smoothly network and modem play will be implemented. Nevertheless, the boardgame on which *ALEXANDER* is based already has that rare combination of being the definitive historical treatment of its subject and a not to play as well. We'll be surprised, given what we've seen so far, if the computer game isn't even better. ☺



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Primeval Prey

Fight For Survival On A Dinosaur-Infested Island In DreamWorks' TRESPASSER: JURASSIC PARK

by Johnny L. Wilson

The trailer is already playing in the movie theaters. *The Lost World: Jurassic Park* is expected to be one of the top box office hits of the year. It's even spawning not one, but two very different games based on the film's universe: *The Lost World: Jurassic Park* and *Trespasser: Jurassic Park*. The former is a platform game with cool 3D dinosaurs. The latter is a computer game so revolutionary that Spielberg himself calls *Trespasser: Jurassic Park* "the digital sequel to *The Lost World: Jurassic Park*." Those are great expectations from a master showman.

Indeed, Spielberg is right to have such expectations. *Trespasser: Jurassic Park* may well be as revolutionary in its genre as the original *Jurassic Park* film was in its genre. Seamus Blackley, the award-winning designer-programmer behind *Fuzion Unlabeled*, is working with a team at Dreamworks Interactive to build the most realistic world ever explored in a computer game—even though that world contains fictional dinosaurs. It is realistic because every object in the game is defined in such a way that it acts and can be used realistically. It is realistic in that the artificial intelligence routines behind the dinosaurs force behaviors that make sense. In addition,

it looks real because it has the most lush game environment ever seen in a 3D computer game. In short, *Trespasser* is so real it's fantastic.

It looks real because it has the most lush game environment ever seen in a 3D computer game. In short, *Trespasser* is so real it's fantastic.

PALED-ENTHRALLOGIST

One revolutionary aspect to *Trespasser*'s design is the way the dinosaurs have been built from the ground up. Blackley developed skeletal models for each of the dinosaurs represented in the game. Then, he connected the skeletons with artificial muscle connections. Each portion of the skeleton and musculature is assigned weight, strength, durability, etc. and, as a result, the model ends up handling skeletal and muscle movement according to authentic physical principles. Even the recoil during combat is handled according to this physical model. Since these models were working satisfactorily, the artists stretched skin over the skeletons and musculature in order to create realistic-looking dinosaurs.

The dinosaur skin is neither gouraud-shaded nor a simple texture-map. The skin is fully bi-mapped but handled by a rendering engine that allows Dreamworks to use low polygon-count

dinosaurs and still have them look great. No polygons are visible on the dinosaur models or even in the light sources. The same engine allows Art Director Terry Izumi (a veteran of the imaginative group who developed many of Disney's Theme Park attractions) and Artist Kyle McKisic to develop all of

the game objects with relatively low polygon counts and still have them look terrific. The amazing thing is that the rendering engine calculates this bi-mapped skin quicker than most engines can calculate gouraud shading.

Another reason the dinosaurs will seem realistic is because of the way the artificial intelligence routines are being designed by Andrew Grant. Since the entire game world environment of *Trespasser: Jurassic Park*, including animals and you as the protagonist, is made up of defined objects (weight, height, material, durability, etc.), the AI is being developed around each animal's reaction to various objects. For each object encountered, the dinosaur will have a number of options/activities to accomplish and will always choose the most pressing (highest rated activity at the time). The variables for these options will be built around: fear, love, anger, curiosity, hunger, thirst, fatigue, pain, solidity (a variable that forms both the basis for collision detection and the animal's likelihood of reducing said object to ruins).

The computer will perform rapid calculations based on each object and will filter

Developer: Dreamworks
Publisher: Dreamworks
Target Release: Fall, '97



VOLATILE PREDATOR INTELLIGENCE



DON'T FEED THE DINOSAURS As cool as this raptor looks, you'll probably rejoice when you smash his head in.



BREATHKING 3D SCENERY

THIS IS GAMEPLAY! Dreamworks' sophisticated graphics techniques include 3D modeling of every dinosaur's skeleton and musculature. Then, binned "skins" are stretched over the models, which makes the creatures look realistic and not polygonal like many PC games

out low-rated objects. Then, depending on the animal's highest activity rating at the time, will decide what the animal will do. If the fear rating is highest because the raptor has just felt a shotgun blast, it may run away. If the pain rating is highest, it may wander around illogically. If the hunger rating is highest, file of adventurer rises to the top of the menu and the raptor targets you.

AUDIO-SYNTHESIS

Another revolutionary aspect of *Tresasser* is the sound design. Although the sound design is being handled by the Academy Award-winning production house, SoundDelux (*Five Lies*, *Braveheart*), the implementation is different from anything they've done before. SoundDelux uses a technique called full Foley work for the movies, putting a complete sound sample together to go with x number of frames of the film. In the computer game, the sounds have to be generated on the fly and they have to make sense according to

whatever is happening in the world.

Whenever there is a collision in the game world, the program's physics engine sends out location information, data on the intensity of the collision, and databased information on the materials involved (density, objects, etc.). Then, a portion of the program known as the Sound Daemon receives the message and decides upon the appropriate sound, volume, pitch and location cues. One of the last programs used by in-house sound designer and associate producer Brady Bell and in-house sound engineer Brandon Lee models a steel cube. By dropping the steel cube on different terrain (flat ground, side of a mountain, water, etc.), it makes different sounds according to the collision routine.

To enable this Sound Daemon program, SoundDelux has had to revise their Foley technique. Now, they do one-sided Foley work. This means that, for example, they might record one sample of wood being hit hard and another of wood being hit softer. Now, assume that the player wants to hit a smaller piece of wood against a tree. There are actually two sounds involved: a hard hit related to the tree as one object and a softer hit related to the wood used to strike the tree as another object. The sound engine will determine how loudly to play each sample and how to combine both samples into a convincing knock on wood.

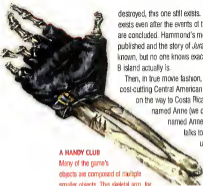
The physics engine constantly calculates collisions for everything from footsteps to combat. The basic dependent variable is velocity. Obviously, a foot-step across leafy terrain is going to play softer than a well-thrown rock hitting a portacotty. Against the velocity variable, Bell and Lee have placed algorithms which measure velocity against pitch (a function of the object's basic material) and volume to determine how to mix up to four of the one-sided Foley samples to make an overall sound that relates to how forcefully the characters within the game world have perpetrated a given action.



For more pictures and details on the making of *Tresasser*, visit CG On-Line at www.zdnet.com/gaming.

CONUNDRUM-CREATION

Of course, all of this revolutionary technology would be useless without a compelling reason to play the game. *Tresasser: Jurassic Park* has a story, but the design team's goal is that it won't get in the way of the game. The story is simple. Film-goers will discover in *The Lost World: Jurassic Park* that Hammond (Richard Attenborough) and his International Genetics firm built a Site B island. Although the first Jurassic Park was



A HANDY CLUB

Many of the game's objects are composed of multiple smaller objects. This skeletal arm, for example, can also be used as a club

destroyed, this one still exists. Indeed, it still exists even after the events of the second film are concluded. Hammond's memoirs have been published and the story of *Jurassic Park* is well-known, but no one knows exactly where the Site B island actually is.

Then, in true movie fashion, a plane from a cost-cutting Central American airline crashes on the way to Costa Rica. One survivor named Anne (we only know she's named Anne because she talks to herself) washes up on an island.

Imagine her surprise and consternation as she

discovers that this

is not just any island, but the Site

B island of Hammond's memoirs. As she discovers the ruins of the island, bit by bit, she not only hears Hammond's memoirs ringing in her head, but she realizes that it is a matter of life and death that she get off the island. To do so, she'll have to survive against very long odds across very different types of terrain: jungle, plain, mountains, and semi-urban industrial. She'll have to track landmarks across

deadly terrain, since one puzzle

requires her to follow power lines through a jungle, and she'll have to stalk and hunt dinosaurs that threaten her.

Austin

Grossman, the game's actual designer, humorously calls

TRESPASSER: JURASSIC PARK,

"The Anti-Quake." He calls it that for several reasons. First, the bulk of the game takes place outdoors rather than in enclosed locales (though there are some buildings and scaffoldings to be explored and used in combat situations). Second, weaponry is scaled back to real-world limitations so that by the time Anne has moved from being armed with sticks and rocks to being armed with a realistic shotgun, that shotgun feels like a BFG. Not only is the weaponry scaled back, but the damage model is so physics-based that you'll need to pay attention to hit location in order to get maximum



IRONIC DESTRUCTION The consumer of fossil fuels sits localized upon a hilly ridge after encountering the progeny of the self-same dinosaurs who formed those fuels.

effect. Sometimes, it will be more expedient to aim to cripple a dinosaur than to expend the energy and ammunition to kill it.

Third, the puzzles don't require gamers to pull levers and backtrack all over the place to see what has happened. All of the puzzles are based on physical laws and realities. Some doors will make sense to

smash in. At other times, you'll want to smash windows. Sometimes, you may dig traps. At others, you may lure a TRex to charge a building in order to come after you, destroying a building but getting it out of your way.

Fourth, the protagonist has a real character. She

isn't just a space marine or futuristic warrior. Grossman hopes this character will be as endearing and humorous in her way and Duke Nukem is in Duke Nukem 3D. Anne will have humorous lines triggered by events and geographical locales just as Duke does.

Grossman worked with Looking Glass

Technologies when the company developed both *Ultra Unreal* and *Ultra* games for EA's Origin Systems. He also said he has learned positive lessons from Doom and negative lessons from Duke. He wants the game to feel free-form, but he wants it to have solid pacing and a rationale for what you're doing. Since survival is a pretty strong instinct, and since the game's design pulls you through combat, exploration and puzzles of varying styles one territory at a time (i.e. you have to solve certain tough puzzles before you can move to the next terrain type and learn the next immediate goal), we think he's developing a very solid design.



DERRING ODD If the action is as fighting as we think it will be, you'll probably need this.

SEQUEL-SEQUENCER

Frankly, we're as convinced as Spielberg that TRESPASSER: JURASSIC PARK is going to be something special. Now we're wondering what the digital sequel to TRESPASSER is going to be. ☺

INCREDIBLY REALISTIC VIOLENCE



INDUSTRIAL WASTE Although TRESPASSER is the "Anti-Quake" in that most of the action takes place outdoors, some of the combat will take place on stairs, second stories and scaffolding.

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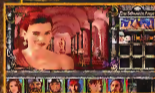
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PC Gamer Magazine, Cover Story, Nov. Issue

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Storage Space: The Final Frontier

New Developments To Alleviate Digital Claustrophobia

by Lloyd Case



In the past year, games seem to have developed a ravenous appetite for disk space and faster CD-ROM drives. At the same time, other cool events have occurred in the usually sedate world of mass storage. Let's take a look at what's going on now and peek into some future developments.

THE MYSTICAL HARD DISK

I've long believed that of all the different technologies built into modern computer systems, the hard disk is the one item that works purely by magic. When you get down into the world of magnetic domains, flying heads, and other arcane technologies, hard disks seem like humpdees: The damn things shouldn't work, but they do.

There have been a number of reports

concerning the "demise" of magnetic hard disks over the years, but every time, the pundits once again predict the end, disk speeds and data densities dramatically improve. Hence, optical technologies, flash memory, and other potential heirs to the throne haven't become mainstream.

Lately, though, things have gotten even crazier. Several companies have shipped EIDE hard disks in excess of 3GB, with 4- and 6GB drives on the horizon. You can



also get 9GB SCSI hard disks.

The speed of hard disks has improved dramatically as well. Access times—a measure of how quickly the magnetic head moves from one part of the disk to

another—have dipped below 8 milliseconds (ms) in some cases, and even average drives have access times in the 12 ms range. The average rotation speed has increased as well, with speeds of 5,200 and 5,400 RPM becoming common in EIDE drives; a number of SCSI drives now spin at 7,200 RPM. Seagate has recently announced that it will be shipping 10,000-RPM SCSI drives soon.

There's another speed increase that's hidden in many newer drives: The bit densities on the drives themselves—the number of pits that can be crammed into a square inch—have radically increased. So a newer drive with a given platter rotation speed can read or write more bits than the older ones. Ergo, more data can be transferred, but there's a catch: Due to all of these performance-increasing factors, an EIDE hard disk can actually feed data to the system faster than the motherboard can handle it. Although most newer motherboards support Mode 4 PIO (Programmed I/O) transfers of up to 16.6MB/sec, for various technical reasons, the best you can get out of standard EIDE drives is slightly less than 8MB/sec.

Riding to the rescue is Quantum Corporation, who has developed an enhancement to EIDE called Ultra ATA (you may also see it referred to as Ultra DMA/33). To Quantum's credit, the company has licensed the technology to other drive vendors at no cost, and Intel has already announced that they'll ship Ultra ATA-enabled chip-sets for future motherboards. Quantum is already shipping Ultra ATA drives, but you'll need to add a

“ Will game makers feel the need to fill up a 5GB DVD disc? ”

LAB NOTES



One of the most invaluable utilities to arrive on the scene in a long time is Partition Magic from Power Quest. Partition Magic is a replacement for the extremely arcane and aging FDISK that comes with Windows 95 or MS-DOS. What makes Partition

Magic cool is that it allows you to change your disk partition on the fly without reformatting your disk or losing any data. Version 3.0 is shipping now and supports Windows 95 (including the new FAT32 file system that's shipping on some new PCs.) There's even a program that allows you to move Windows applications from one partition to another without having to reinstall. At a list price of \$69.95, it's one of the best time-savers around: www.powerquest.com.



CAVE WARS AND THE ET6000

► The ET6000 has VESA 2.0 built into its firmware, so you'd think it would run any VESA-compliant game you'd be using. Cave Wars seems to have a problem with at least the Hercules Dynamite 128 Video, aborting with some very cryptic error messages. The fix is SciTech's Display Doctor 5.2



or 5.3. The shareware version will work fine for this purpose, so you don't need to drop an additional 35 clams just to run Cave Wars.

PCI Ultra ATA controller card to your system to use them, as most of the EIDE controllers only support Mode 4 PIO.

The world of SCSI drives has moved on as well. I've already mentioned the 10,000-RPM drives, another increasingly common standard is Ultra-SCSI. There are a number of motherboards appearing, including Pentium and Pentium Pro, with built-in Ultra or Ultra-Wide SCSI. The downside to Ultra-SCSI is its maximum stable length of 15 meters (much shorter than the previous 50 meters)—inasmuch as you mix internal and external devices.

TO INFINITY AND BEYOND

One of the most useful trends in the last year is the increased capacity of removable devices. On the low end, Imasec has practically stolen the market with its ubiquitous 800MB Zip drive. Toward the end of '96, Syquest shipped the EZ-Flyer, their second (and more successful) attempt at penetrating the low end of the removable drive market. Its removable 230MB media deliver near-hard-disk speeds.

Imasec hasn't been sitting still, though, and is busy trying to sign up vendors for its newest version of the Zip drive, which is intended to be a bootable replacement for a floppy drive.

The downside with the Zip is that it's not backward compatible with the old standard 1.44MB floppies. A new company, O.R. Technology, is offering the A Drive, a 120MB magneto-optical "floppy" drive that can also read standard 1.44MB 3.5" floppies. But if you need a BIOS update in most computers to be a true bootable

floppy replacement.

The high end of the removable storage business has heated up. Imasec shipped its Jaz drive in mid-'96, but the product was so popular it was hard to find one. The Jaz is a 1GB removable hard disk, rotates at 5,400 RPM and has a 12ms average access time—so it's a true hard disk replacement. At roughly \$20 per 1GB cartridge, it's a reasonably cost-effective, too. On this front, however, Imasec's chief competitor, Syquest, didn't wait very long before shipping the 13GB Syjet toward the end of '96 and has recently upped the Syjet's capacity to 15GB.

CD-ROM DRIVES:

WRITE 'EM COWBOY

In the past year, the prices of some recordable CD-ROM drives have dropped to under \$500, though these are still all SCSI drives. Some can be used as a standard CD-ROM drive, too, but due to the need for a much more massive head (for the write laser), they'll never be as fast as dedicated, read-only CD-ROM drives. Last November, a consortium of companies announced the CD-RW standard, which will bring to market CD-ROM drives that will make CDs like mass storage devices, allowing disks to be written, erased, and rewritten as needed. CD-RW has the potential to be a great backup device.

CD-ROM drives have, predictably, gotten faster and faster. Cobalt recently announced a 16x CD-ROM drive, and there are a gaggle of 12x drives out now. The newest twist is Western Digital's new SDX connectivity standard, where SDX

CD-ROM drives connect directly to SDX-capable hard disks (rather than to separate controller cards), and the hard disk will automatically cache some of the information on the CD-ROM disc. Another advantage is that SDX devices will be compatible with current onboard EIDE controllers: the two SDX devices appear to be Master (hard disk) and Slave (CD-ROM). SDX has the potential to stop the spinning "misses" in CD-ROM drives, enabling lowly 6x and 8x drives to seemingly run much faster. Bear in mind that both the hard disk and the CD-ROM drive must be SDX-compatible.

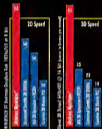
THE STORAGE ELEPHANT

Overriding all these CD-ROM drive developments is the looming presence of DVD drives. DVD drives offer more than 6GB of storage on a roughly five-inch platter. They will be faster than CD-ROM drives, and the consumer drives (and probably many computer DVD drives) will have MPEG-2 decoders built into them. It will be a while before DVD game titles become common, but DVD drives will be able to read standard CD-ROMs as well, though how well is still an open question (see this month's Editorial). By the way, DVD doesn't stand for anything. Until last summer, there were two competing DVD standards. The groups merged but couldn't agree on what DVD means, so it's an acronym without work. Co figure...

MUNDANE NO MORE

In the past, mass storage has seemed a pretty mundane topic, but recent developments in storage will mean significant new capabilities for computers and, hopefully, for future games. Bigger, faster storage begs an interesting question, though: Will game companies feel compelled to fill up a 5GB DVD platter? Just how many 3D-animated sequences and video cut-scenes can we tolerate? After all, we're game players; we're not into watching movies on the computer. Let's hope this new space frontier will be used for something other than massive cut-scenes and 50-games-on-a-disk competitions. The game, after all, is the thing. ☞

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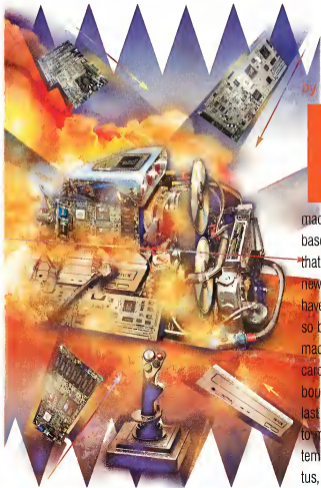
CIRCLE READER SERVICE #258

Hot Rod Your PC

Turn Your Current Clunker Into The Ultimate Gaming Rig

by **Lloyd Case**

In the last three issues, CGW has covered various takes on the ultimate gaming machine, but all three were based on the assumption that you wanted a whole new machine. Most of us have computers already, so buying a whole new machine may not be in the cards, particularly if you bought your system in the last year. But it is possible to move your current system up to ultimate rig status, one step at a time.



The key to wringing the best possible performance out of your current box is to build it into a well-balanced system. Buying a big hard disk won't help much with Windows 95 if all you have is 8MB of memory, for example. Sit down and take a good, hard look at what's in your existing system, find out where the bottlenecks are, and prioritize the upgrades. Then, you'll be ready to launch into the upgrade process.

The big questions are the following: What do I upgrade first? Which components will have the most impact? What's the right strategy for planning an upgrade? Think of your upgrade strategy as a sort of triage, where the slowest component gets the first upgrade, so as to allow the rest of the system to better perform. Since upgrade budget sizes vary, we have two upgrade plans: turbo and nitro. Our turbo plan options for upgrade components are solid additions to any system, but with an eye towards price and performance. The nitro plan options are top-shell components where price is less of a consideration than all-out performance.

He's Dead, Jim

First, let's deal with old systems. I mean, really old systems—you know, 486DX2/66s and slower. In computer years, these babies are pretty much Smithsonian-bound. Don't waste money upgrading them. Unless you have a very savvy local dealer, or are technically capable of building a system from scratch, just get a new computer. You can cannibalize the Old Gray Mare and recoup the floppy disk drives, Sound Blaster card, speakers, the keyboard, the mouse, and maybe even your monitor. So if you do have one of these babies, stop reading this now, go get the last three issues of *CGW* and read the first three parts of the ultimate gaming rig series.

The Mythical System

Let's look at a system that may have been, at worst, middle-of-the-road a scant 18 months ago. Our system is a Pentium 90, in a mid-tower case, with a 14- or 15-inch monitor, 8MB of RAM, and an 850MB EIDE hard disk. It has a PCI graphics card, but it's probably a 32-bit card with a slower graphics chip, such as a Cirrus Logic or Trident accelerator. If it came with a CD-ROM drive, it's most likely a 2X or maybe a 4X drive, connected to a proprietary controller. For audio, there's probably a Sound Blaster Pro or 16 (or clone) and a pair of small, self-powered speakers. Topping it all off is a formerly state-of-the-art 14.4-Kbps modem.

As for the not-so-mythical user of our typical system, let's assume you're either technically savvy enough to eviscerate the guts of this beast, or you know someone who can.

Start from the Start

The hardest part of the upgrade process is deciding where to begin. We want to create an incremental upgrade strategy that will allow the user to grow their system gradually. If you're simply going to buy a pile of hardware and replace it in a couple of days, just buy a new system. Let's assume,

instead, that you have to budget your purchases and upgrade gradually.

You're beginning to become disaffiliated with your system's performance on some of the newer, state-of-the-art games, but you haven't yet reached the point of desperation. The obvious thing would be to buy a faster CPU or more RAM, but instead I'd actually recommend a new motherboard.

Why a new motherboard? The newer chip-sets from Intel,



Micronics, AIR

the 430HX and 430VX, offer significant new features, such as connectors for a universal serial bus (USB). What's more important is that they're more efficient at moving data through the system with features such as concurrent PCI and support for faster memory types like EDD and SDRAM. If you pick the new motherboard carefully (look for Socket 7), you'll be able to drop in a Pentium MMX CPU.

One thing to be cautious about is the form factor of the motherboard. Most older systems use motherboards with the baby-AT layout, which is directly descended from the original IBM PC-AT layout. Lately, there have been a number of motherboards on the market which use the ATX form factor. ATX motherboards are laid out differently, yielding more efficient cooling, easier installation and better access to the expansion slots. The catch is that an ATX board will require a new case and power supply. This is not necessarily a bad thing, but it does add cost.



TURBO 166MHz or 200MHz Intel Pentium Processor with MMX Technology (P55C)

NITRO 200MHz Pentium Pro. Note: You may want to wait for the MMX version of this chip.

MOTHERBOARD

TURBO Micronics M55HI Plus (Pentium motherboard) Note: Be sure to get MMX-compatible version.

NITRO AIR P6MPI (Pentium Pro motherboard w/ embedded SCSI controller)

the 430HX and 430VX, offer significant new features, such as connectors for a universal serial bus (USB). What's more important is that they're more efficient at moving data through the system with features such as concurrent PCI and support for faster memory types like EDD and SDRAM. If you pick the new motherboard carefully (look for Socket 7), you'll be able to drop in a Pentium MMX CPU.

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Brain Transplants

But back to our gradual upgrade strategy. After the new motherboard, the next addition is probably more RAM. Surprisingly, adding more memory has a significant positive impact to performance, particularly if you're running Windows 95 games. If all you have is 8MB, consider getting 32MB of EDD DRAM—60 nanoseconds (ns) or faster—which will work very nicely in our suggested motherboards. If you already have 32MB of RAM, and it's 70ns or faster, it's

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probably not worth replacing. Instead, it's now time to consider a new CPU. Of course, if the budget is a bit bigger, it's probably worth the few extra bucks to get the new P55C processor, not so much for the new MMX technology (see sidebar), but because of its double-sized 16K Level 1 cache. On the other hand, if you're taking no prisoners, and you're getting a compatible motherboard, why not go whole-hog and get a Pentium Pro? It's worth considering, but bear in mind that the next generation of Pentium Pros, code-named Klamath, are just around the corner—and they will

require different motherboards. That said, if your lust is for the best 32-bit processing power you can get, the Pentium Pro is it.

It's also worth debating alternatives to Intel, such as Cyrix's 6x86 and AMD's K series. The K6 will be pin-compatible with the standard Pentium, but is supposed to be roughly comparable with the Pentium Pro in performance. Cyrix's 6x86 lacks floating point punch, but can otherwise keep up with the equivalent Pentium (P54C), and may be a good solution if you're on a tight budget.

VIDEO

MONITOR

TURBO Princeton Graphics E070 17"

NITRO ViewSonic P7010 21"

GRAPHICS BOARD

TURBO Sierra Screamin' 3D or Intargraph Reactor

NITRO Canopus Total 3D and Orchid Righteous 3D or Diamond Monster 3D

However, the P55C has MMX support and is now faster than the equivalent 6x86, so if raw performance rather than cost is the deciding factor, then Intel, once again, is the leader.

If you plan on adding a Cyrix (or IBM) 6x86 P200+, make sure your motherboard can support the 75MHz memory bus speed, which will actu-

ally speed up memory accesses. Also, get a good CPU cooling fan, and consider adding a second fan to your case, because Cyrix chips tend to run a bit on the warm side.



Painting Pictures

Okay, now we have a fast CPU and adequate memory. Unless your hard disk is very small (in today's terms, very small is anything under 850MB), the next thing to add is a

graphics card. Maybe you've seen your friends playing the 3D accelerated version of *Tom Riddle, Quake*, or *NASCAR 2*, and the idea makes your mouth water. There are two possibilities: You can add a fast combination 2D/3D card, or (if you have a fast 2D board already), you can consider a dedicated 3D accelerator.

The second approach may yield the best overall performance, but if you are truly on a budget, your wallet will not be happy. Consider a good 2D/3D combo card to start. All have their strengths and weaknesses, but probably the best solution for serious gamers is cards based on Rendition's Venti chip. Be aware that the standard VGA graphics performance of the Venti is sub-par, though Super VGA graphics are quite speedy. Surely you're not upgrading your system to play VGA graphics games? Remember that buying a combo card doesn't preclude you from adding the dedicated 3D accelerator at a later date, if your budget and inclination allow.

After you pop in your new graphics card, you'll suddenly become aware of an unusual phenomenon: your monitor has gotten smaller. Well, not really, but it'll seem that way. After upgrading the card, the next logical step, unless you already have one, is to consider a 17-inch monitor. With some very nice 17-inch monitors available for less than \$600 these days, it's hard to resist.

MMX: Gaming Panacea?

By Dave Salvatore

There's been much ado from Intel and in the computer press about MMX technology, which is now available in 166- and 200MHz Pentium chips, code-named P55C. Pentium Pro versions of the chip, code-named Klamath, should be available soon. Intel has given a long-winded official name for these new offerings—Pentium Processor with MMX Technology (we'll stick to calling them P55C)—and will be looking to aggressively move these chips into mainstream machines this year. The result will most likely be a minimal price difference between similarly clocked MMX and non-MMX Pentiums.

Who should go ahead and buy the MMX Pentium, not so much for the MMX technology, but for the improved overall performance that will come from the doubling of the Level 1 (L1) cache from 8KB to 16KB.

When Intel's new MMX-equipped P55C CPU looks for data or instructions,

it first checks the L1 cache, a 16KB area of SRAM running at the CPU's internal clock speed. If the desired data or instruction isn't found, this is called a cache miss, and the CPU next checks the Level 2 (L2) cache (usually 256KB or 512KB), another area of SRAM which runs at memory bus speed (60MHz). If the search of the L2 cache yields a cache miss, the CPU must then go to slower system memory to find the desired data.

There's been a good deal of debate as to whether MMX will do much to speed up games, especially 3D action titles. The fundamental problem, which Intel has quietly acknowledged, is that the MMX unit uses the same physical part of the chip used by the floating point unit. And since 3D action games and flight sims tend to be very floating-point-intensive, especially for geometry setup early in the rendering pipeline, too many mode switches (each of which requires 50-60 clock cycles) might actually introduce a performance hit.

Despite the potential pitfalls, a Pentium with MMX is still a worthwhile investment for the larger L1 cache. Whatever else MMX brings to the party (most likely for less demanding multimedia files) will be gravy.





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Space Exploration

The next thing to tackle is the hard disk. Think big. Think really big. Anyone who thought that CD-only games would save on disk space was astonishingly wrong. Games—not to mention other applications—have a seemingly endless appetite for disk space. At a minimum, get a 2GB drive—but consider a larger drive if you can swing it.

If you've got a true performance Jones, you'll also upgrade to ultra-wide SCSI at the same time. But if you do, don't settle for slower hard disks running at 5,400 RPM or less. You've just shelled out over \$200 on an ultra-wide SCSI controller—adding a hard-disk that's no faster than an EIDE drive just doesn't make sense. Go for a 7,200-RPM drive, or wait for the newer drives that spin at 10,000 RPM (Note that there are a number of motherboards out there now with built-in SCSI controllers; you might look into one of those when upgrading your motherboard.)

For most of us, this level of performance is something of a luxury, so get a big EIDE drive instead. Even then, the performance differential is smaller than it used to be. The new Ultra DMA33 (a.k.a. Ultra-ATA) drives can theoretically move data at 33MB/sec, compared with ultra-wide SCSI's 40MB/sec. SCSI still holds the edge in CPU utilization, though.

Just be aware that Ultra-ATA drives may not run at full performance on your standard EIDE controller, but when you move up again, you can take the drive with you, saving on a future expense and getting better performance.

Of course, now that you have a seemingly infinite amount of disk space, you'll need something to back up your critical files. A removable drive such as Iomega's Zip drive or Syquest's EZ-Flyer should fit the bill nicely. If you have a larger thirst for backup capacity, Iomega's Jaz drive, with its somewhat pricier 1GB media, should quench it.

After you have your humongous hard drive, the next step is to upgrade the CD-ROM drive. DVD drives will most likely be shipping as you read this, but unless you're hell-bent on watching DVD movies on your PC, DVD isn't going to bring a whole lot to the party for gamers in the short term (see this month's Editorial). Yes, they offer a whopping 4.7-8.5GB of storage, and yes, they do have a 1.2MB/sec data rate when streaming DVD data.

They're also backwards-compat-

ible with standard CD-ROMs, but how well they'll perform bringing in data from traditional CD-ROMs is still a question. Data rate claims range anywhere from 6X to 8X, though we've heard anecdotally of lower performance from early models.

DVD versions of game titles probably won't be forthcoming until sometime next year, so you might do well to hold off getting a DVD ROM drive until your next round of upgrades. Fortunately, there are several alluring alternatives in the form of 12X EIDE drives well under \$200, and 12X SCSI drives for less than \$250.

MASS STORAGE

DISK CONTROLLER

TURBO Motherboard-based
PCI EIDE

NITRO Adaptec 2940-UW
(PCI Ultra-Wide SCSI)

DISK DRIVE

TURBO Seagate Modelist
Pro 2540 (EIDE)

NITRO Quantum Atlas II
(Ultra-Wide SCSI)

CD-ROM DRIVE

TURBO Toshiba 5702 (EIDE)

NITRO Plexor 12Plex
(SCSI-2)

BACKUP

TURBO Syquest EZ-Flyer or
Iomega Zip

NITRO Iomega Jaz

SOUND

SPEAKERS

TURBO Quickshot 660

NITRO Aura Series 700

SOUND CARD

TURBO Creative Labs
Sound Blaster 32

NITRO Creative Labs AWE
32 with a
Yamaha SW
60XG MIDI
Card

Sound and Fury

Probably the last thing to upgrade is your audio system. In the past, the squasy music that emanated from the old-fashioned FM synthesis of Sound

Blaster Pro and SB 16s would make your teeth itch, but these days it seems most music in games is digital rather than MIDI. Still, you can get pretty good waveable MIDI and better-sounding digital audio by upgrading your sound card. There are a number of contenders out there, too, including Creative Labs' new AWE 64, Aura's model 140, and the Turtle Beach Topex Plus.

With more Windows 95 games hitting the store shelves, we're looking to the day when Sound Blaster compatibility is no longer the limiting factor in choosing a sound card. PCI-based sound cards are in the works from several vendors, with some delivering positional 3D audio. While titles that take advantage of this new feature may be few in number early on, this is a cool technology on the horizon.

Speakers, despite their importance, are often the weakest link in an audio chain. If you have those dinky multimedia speakers on your desk, try hooking up a good set of headphones to your sound card and playing one of your favorite games. You'll be surprised at what you've been missing. Get a new set of speakers—and if you can afford it, get a set with a self-powered woofer.

Are You Connected?

At some point, you'll get tired of matching wits with the computer, so you'll want to go hunting for the most dangerous prey: humans. There are two ways



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BEFORE



IndyCar II with SVGA Graphics

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AFTER



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CONNECTIONS

MODEM

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NITRO SupraSonic 336V+
(PnP External)

NETWORK CARD

TURBO 3Com 3C509 Plug-
and-Play (ISA)

NITRO 3Com EtherLink XL
10/100 (PCI)

seen the price of plug-and-play ISA Ethernet cards drop as low as \$40 now, so there's almost no reason not to get one if you can easily get together with your friends (and their systems.) You might also uncover local groups that get together periodically for "trigtests."

Wait, There's More

After you've got your base system tuned, you may discover you've gotten hooked on that hot new light sim, and suddenly that lowly 2-button joystick just seems inadequate. Or maybe that racing sim you put away because it demanded too much from your system beckons again, and the thought of using a realistic steering wheel is suddenly much more appealing.

to play against people remotely (via modem) or locally, with a local-area network (LAN). The latest buzz surrounds the new 56 Kbps modems, although there's no firm standard yet, and two major chip makers are battling it for dominance. What's more, there's no certainty you'll really see 56 Kbps throughput. Still, these units will also run at 28.8- and 33.6-Kbps, the current standards. You can play with one other person via direct connect, but it's becoming increasingly popular to use Ku95 or a commercial service like TEN or Mpath to play against multiple people. Of course, if you really get serious about your Internet gaming, you can always move up to ISDN.

As for LAN connectivity, we've

Individuality Rules

Probably the single best piece of advice about upgrades is to be sure you buy some future with your new components. That is, spend enough on a component so that it won't have to be upgraded for some time. Your system may not be exactly like our mythical gamer's. You may already have a good graphics card and big hard disk. I hope that this strategy can be used as a template in developing your own upgrade strategy. The best thing we can do is offer guidelines, since everyone's situation and preferences will be different. The key,



F-16 Combat Stick, F-22 Pro

though, is to build with an eye to the future. That way, the hole in your desk labeled "computer," into which you pour gobs of money, can at least have its appetite somewhat tempered. Admittedly, it's not always possible to determine the next standard, but as new technologies emerge, CGW will help separate the plums from the lemons. ☞

CONTROLLERS

JOYSTICK

TURBO CH Products F-16
Combat Stick (pictured) or
Thrustmaster X-Fighter

NITRO Thrustmaster F-22
Pro (pictured) or CH
Products Force FX

GAMEPAD

TURBO CH Gamepad

NITRO Thrustmaster
PhazerPad

Component	Street Price	Vendor Name	Web URL
MSBHI Plus (for Pentium workstation)	\$300	Micronics	www.micronics.com
AIB 688PI (for Pentium Pro)	\$350	AIB, Inc.	www.aibweb.com
Pentium or Pentium Pro CPU	\$490 or \$300	Intel	www.intel.com
Scream'n' 30	\$139	Sierra	www.sierra.com
Reactor	\$159	Intergraph	www.intergraph.com
Total 30	\$259	CompuS	www.compuS.com
Rainbow 30	\$299	Droid Technologies	www.droid.com
Monster 30	\$299	Diamond Multimedia	www.diamond.com
ED70 17" Monitor	\$500	Princeton Graphics	www.pgr.com
ViewSonic PT810 21" Monitor	\$1800	ViewSonic, Inc.	www.viewsonic.com
2400 IMA PCI SCSI	\$339	Adaptec	www.adaptec.com
Maxlist Pro 2540 hard drive	\$279	Seagate Technology	www.seagate.com
Atlas II hard drive	\$1100	Quantum	www.quantum.com
5703 CD-ROM Drive (EIDE)	\$139	Toshiba	www.toshiba.com
12Plex CD-ROM Drive (SCSI)	\$305	Plexor	www.plexor.com
Et Flyer 230	\$235	Syquest	www.syquest.com
Zip Drive	\$150	Imaging	www.imaging.com
Sound Blaster 32, AWE 32 S/W/O/S	\$175, \$225	Creative Labs	www.creative.com
880 Speakers	\$180	Yamaha	www.yamaha.com
YST 10, YST 35 speakers	\$99, \$149	Quickshot Technologies	www.quickshot.com
Series 700 speakers	\$750	Yamaha	www.yamaha.com
Accura 33.6	\$120	Hayes	www.hayes.com
SupraSonic 336V+	\$260	Supra Technologies	www.supra.com
3C509 PnP EtherLink XL 10/100	\$79, \$139	3Com	www.3com.com
F-16 Combat Stick, F-15 Fighter Stick	\$59, \$99	CH Products	www.charproducts.com
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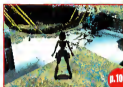
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Reviews Policy

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 reviews of the same version of a game that readers can buy. While we recognize that this may cause some delay in coverage, we believe the reader is better served by such caution.

We expect our reviewers to finish the game. CGW reviews are not based on early impressions of a game. In some cases, bugs make it impossible to finish a game, but we identify those cases in the review.

How We Classify Games

- **Action/Arcade:** The emphasis is on hand-eye coordination and reflexes, usually emphasizing fast play over story or strategy.
- **Adventure:** Games where you control an alter ego and move through a storyline or sequence of events, where puzzle-solving has a more important role than conversation and combat.

● **Classics/Puzzles:** Classics are old stand-bys and perlor games that appeal to many different types of gamer. Examples include backgammon, bridge, chess, and Monopoly. Puzzle games emphasize spatial relationships, word games, and/or problem-



solving without requiring gamers to follow a storyline. Examples include SHOGUN and TENNIS.

- **Role-Playing:** RPGs are a subset of adventure games which allow you to choose a character class and increase their attributes. Conversations with non-player characters (NPCs) and tactical combat are generally more important than in Adventure games.
- **Simulations:** Highly realistic games

from a first-person perspective: you may control a submarine, fly an aircraft with a meticulous physics model, or sweep through a detailed sci-fi environment.

- **Sports:** The sports category is a broad genre which includes sports action games (NBA Live), sports strategy games (Front Page Sports Football Pro) and sports simulation games (NASCAR RACING 2).
- **Strategy:** 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, MASTER OF ORION), as well as "pure" strategy games (WARCRAFT II, COMMAND & CONQUER) and "building games" such as SIMCITY and CAESAR II.
- **Wargames:** A subset of strategy games, wargames 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.

HOW DO WE RATE?

We only review finished product, not pre-release versions. The ratings are as follows:



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.

weapon in hand by a Hidden or Stalker, which are like the Khajin Birds of Prey of *Duress*, waiting until they are within three steps of you to appear and attack.

The controls are well thought out and simple enough that they enhance the experience, not detract from it. Use the mouse to click where you want to go, what you want to fight, or what you want to pick up. Your character will proceed there and perform the appropriate action. By the time you beat *DIABLO*, you'll be a Sino Lin clickmaster, able to amaze your friends by clicking a fly out of midair with your eyes closed. There are also assignable hotkeys for four of your favorite spells and number key assignments for up to eight potions or scrolls. It is apparent throughout the game that someone spent a lot of time thinking about how to lay out this interface, and they did a beautiful job.

LEADING YOUR FRIENDS INTO DARKNESS

The game's multiplayer options let you descend into the dungeons with up to four friends, leveraging the strengths of the different character types. *DIABLO* supports TCP/IP, IPX, modem and direct

cable connections, and Blizzard has given the world free access to its battle.net online multiplayer arena. All you need for battle.net is an active internet connection, and you're in. Setup for every connection type is unbelievably painless, with no configurations to tweak and no learning curve to master. Multiplayer games are primarily cooperative, but there is an option to make your character dangerous to others in your party if you prefer deathmatch-style dungeoneering.

The multiplayer levels have tougher opponents earlier on to compensate for the additional heroes, and all of the stairs from town are open, allowing a party of high-level characters to head directly to the lower levels of the dungeon. The first time we had a multiplayer *DIABLO* session in the office, this game became an instant must-have for everyone on the staff. The one feature we would have liked to see is the ability to use single player characters in multiplayer companies, but sadly that's not included. Another serious bummer is that to play the full version of the game in multiplayer mode, every user must have the CD. "Spawning" is supported, but this only lets users play altrolled versions of the game



TREAD LIGHTLY Be careful not to walk too far into unexplored territory, or you might end up like this poor soul.



CLEAN UP YOUR ROOM Try to organize your inventory wisely. With the limited space available, you can't afford to waste any.

DIABLO has had a noticeable impact on my life: I now get of average one hour less sleep each night, and my wife is about to clock me into the Betty Ford clinic. I had an easier time quitting smoking than I do putting this game down. From the first steps in town to the final battle with *DIABLO*, this game is a solid bull's-eye. If Blizzard isn't careful, they might find *DIABLO* regulated by the government as an addictive substance. My recommendations: If you are interested in this game at all, you have to have this game. ☺

Missing In Action

Duelo is a great game, but it's missing a few elements that keep it from getting our highest rating. First of all, there isn't enough interactivity with the town and its people. It doesn't feel so much like a community with living people as it does a pit stop where you restock on health, mana and weaponry. We get a good feel for Tristram's back story when we read the manual, but not when we play the game. It just doesn't feel like a real town.

Instead of just showing Griswold standing outside his shop, Blizzard could have let us go inside and see him forging and fixing weapons. Or we could have gone into the tavern, bought a drink and talked to Gillian the barmaid about the town's troubles. We know Tristram's supposed to be desolate, but it still feels more like a static snapshot, especially given the depth of traditional RPGs like *Duress*. How about seeing the caravan that delivers the town's supplies come in? Or how about seeing running water in the streams? Simply put, the town could use more life.

The game could also use different endgames depending on which character you play. This is supposed to be role-playing, right? So why do we see the same movie whether we're playing the male warrior or the female rogue? The experience and the reward should be different depending on the character you play.

Blizzard has come up with an exciting game here. Now that they've perfected their engine, hopefully they can spend their time on making *Diablo 2* a better role-playing experience.

APPEAL: Anyone who enjoys third-person action/RPG games and has a pulse.

PROS: Great interface, awesome gameplay with excellent replay value, exceptional multiplayer setup and play, added value with battle.net.

CONS: Only one save game slot per character, shallow role-playing elements, limited play in "spawned" games.



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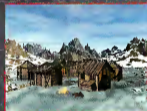
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The Horror, The Horror

The Only Thing Scary About This Sequel Is That Gamers Might Buy It

by Petra Schlunk

Call my editor with a good supply of Hell's paving stones. Surely he had the best intentions when he sent me Sierra's PHANTASMAGORIA: A PUZZLE OF FLESH. Not being a horror fan of repute, I was wary about playing a game with warnings plastered all over the box promising "intense content" that was "not appropriate for players under 17." It promised "blood and gore," "provocative frontal nudity," and "strong, vulgar language." While a showcase for truth-in-advertising, such games are scratched off my gift list very quickly.

The first scene of the game opens with a young man being treated for a supposedly psychotic episode with electroshock therapy. We catch up with our "hero" a year later, no longer mentally unstable and working for a company called WynnTech, which, we learn along the way, is involved in some mysterious and questionable research (Young hero fights big, nasty corporate monster... Where have we seen this story before?)



THE DOCTOR WILL KILL YOU NOW One of a series of sticky situations our hero finds himself in. Let's hope he has insurance.



WOW, DO YOU WORK DUTY? A prime suspect for the brutal WynnTech murders, the bare-chested Curtis must explain his actions to the investigating officer.

THE VISIDN THING

Curtis starts experiencing hallucinations consistent with the brutal murders of several of his coworkers. Among his hallucinations, Curtis has lurid visions (which we are, ahem, "blessed" to share) of these murders, which include scenes of people being tortured and murdered with bizarre weapons such as staple guns. As he learns from the local police, the crime scenes, and his coworkers, his visions of the murders are frighteningly accurate. Curtis, understandably, starts worrying that he is the killer.

Such is the basic plot. As an madmen story, *A Puzzle of Flesh* starts out interestingly enough, and except for the extreme brutality of the murders, this would have done very nicely for a horror game. However, we

discover later that all of these visions and murders are due to WynnTech's meddling with alien (orbi) from an alternate dimension. Interlaced with this story are numerous gratuitous sex scenes, portrayed far too graphically for a main-

stream computer game, as Curtis, confused about his sexuality, experiments with sadomasochism, bondage, belly button piercing and more. Not to leave any tabloid avenues unexplored, the game also includes scenes of child abuse, introduced as memories that emerge as Curtis explores his situation with his therapist. Sounds like a lot of fun, huh?

METHOD TO THE MADNESS

Mechanically, at least, *A Puzzle of Flesh* is very well structured. The point-and-click interface is simple to learn and use. You use the mouse cursor to interact with objects and people, and to move around. Objects that Curtis collects are displayed on an inventory panel and can be examined, combined or used on people to stimulate conversations.

There is not too much traveling within the game, which is a plus, since travel is often a tedious aspect of adventure



Price: \$59.95

System:

Requirements: 485DX-65 or better processor, 8MB RAM,

16MB hard-drive space, 256-color SVGA graphics, Windows 3.1 or better (or DOS), 2x CD-ROM, mouse, supports all Win 95-compatible sound cards, or SoundBlaster and Pro Audio Spectrum compatible cards for DOS.

of Players: 1

Protection: None (CD must be in drive)

Designer: Lorelei Shannon

Publisher: Sierra On-Line
Bellevue, WA
(206) 649-9800
Reader Service #: 318

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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #123



Puzzling Evidence

Here are the answers to two of *A Puzzle Of Flesh's* more annoying puzzles, one from the beginning of the game, one from the end. In chapter 1, you'll need to get your wallet from under the couch. Heaven forbid that you should do something logical like move the couch, so try this instead: click on the rat cage to remove it from the cage. Use the rat on the couch. Use the granola bar on the couch to lure the rat back out. The rat will drag the wallet along with it. Happens all the time, right?

In chapter 5, before you can power-up the Threshold near the end of the game, you're going to need to fix the broken pipe. How, you ask? Quite simple, really. Just make sure that you have some of the brown slime from the green pipe in the upper room of the alien world, as well as the goo that's left behind after you yank the deformed Curtis off of his life support. Then combine the slime and the goo and use the new substance on the broken pipe.

games, especially when you have to revisit areas frequently just to further the story. A friendly feature allows you to reach the important game locations using a travel map.

Much of the action centers around Curtis' apartment and office. A few additional locations include a restaurant, an S&M bar and the alien dimension that Curtis discovers late in the game (did I mention the tabloid aspects of this game?).

An added plus is that the game offers numerous saved game positions that allow for gamers' determined (or demented) experimentation throughout the story. Further, if Curtis dies during the game, you are given the option to "try again" in the sequence during which he died.

For a game with "puzzle" in its title, this one actually has very few of them. Most of the story is furthered through innumerable uninteresting conversations with coworkers, the local homicide detective and Curtis' therapist. When players get

stuck, revisiting locations and trying to use objects or talking with people will get things moving again. The most difficult



FREQUENT FLIER One of the game's actual good features is a convenient travel map that allows easy movement between important locations.

puzzles involve finding passwords to access files in Wyrn Keech's computer system, but the passwords themselves are directly accessible (no guessing involved, other than deciding which password unlocks which file).

Other puzzles are mindlessly illogical, forcing you to try everything in your inventory—in non-intuitive, uncallable fashion—just to arrive at a solution. Good luck solving the riddles when you go puzzle without reading the walkthrough (or the sidebar above).

QUALITY TRASH

From a purely analytical perspective, the acting and cinematic sequences in *A Puzzle Of Flesh* are well done. Similarly, music and sound effects help contribute to what amounts to a fairly suspenseful atmosphere. But, however well-executed it may be, such technical proficiency is completely irrelevant to a product so lacking in story quality. Fascinating matters, I was disappointed that the lead character, with whom I was prepared to sympathize at the beginning of the game, becomes completely unempathetic, amoral, and quite uninteresting as the story progresses.

My overall feeling toward this embarrassing release from Sierra is one of profound disappointment, because the company has produced so many quality adventure games over the years (including the *COURSEL*, *KINGRIOT* and *KING'S QUEST* series, all of which are highly commendable products).

A Puzzle Of Flesh will undoubtedly find its proponents among those who read *Fantasia* or *The Star Playing* this game, if one can grace this woefully reprehensible product with such happy terms as "play" and "game," is extremely unpleasant; to do so "for fun" requires either a fascination with hard-core schlock or a hardened attitude toward horror and exploitative erotica. You have been duly warned. ☹

TAPEAL: Fans of supermarket tabloid stories and grotesque violence.

MPROS: Well-executed interface, video and music sequences. Convenient travel map.

ICONS: An irredeemable tabloid plot further marred by graphic, morally reprehensible, gratuitous violence and sex. The puzzles stink, too.



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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #364



Sink Again

Gameplay Is Weak, But Entertaining Plot, Characters Keep TITANIC Afloat

by Robert Coffey

On the night of April 14, 1912, the RMS *Titanic* struck an iceberg on its maiden voyage. As the ship's orchestra stoically played "Nearer My God to Thee," the supposedly unsinkable ship went down off the coast of Newfoundland, taking more than 1,250 people with it. The *Titanic*, the pinnacle of transatlantic travel, simply didn't have enough lifeboats.

TITANIC: ADVENTURE OUT OF TIME opens some 30-odd years after this disaster during the World War II bombings of London. You are a British spy, recalling your failed mission aboard the ill-fated ocean liner, wondering what might have happened if... As your building is destroyed by bombs, you are whisked back in time to give it one more go.

DEEP SHIP

Unfortunately, you can do nothing to prevent the capsizing of the *Titanic*, but your actions could change the course of history. As gameplay begins, a stuffy English steward gives you a note from your onboard contact, and the plot opens. Apparently, a German spy is aboard with a



SEND HARDER PUZZLES Attractive graphics can't disguise the unchallenging nature of *Titanic's* puzzles. Hmmm... do you suppose the wires and battery will help power this decoder?

stolen, priceless book that he plans to exchange for secret English naval documents. Your job stop the deal from going down.

As you explore the luxury liner's ornate rooms and sweeping decks, you meet and talk with a variety of characters, clicking on dialogue choices to determine conversation paths. From grim ship's officers to lovestruck debutantes, these characters are *TITANIC's* high point, supplying most of the game's entertainment.

The actors portraying these characters provide both humor and pathos in addition to information, but they are jarringly animated. Instead of full-motion video, CyberFlux employs the same technique used in *DUST*: actors appear from mid-torso up with only their eyes, mouths, and an occasional arm moving. It's definitely an acquired taste.

Everyone you meet has a distinctive personality and most end up playing some part in the game's plot—another strong point. With elements including blackmail, child abduction, murder and your own secret agent stake, there's plenty of intrigue, both personal and political, to draw you in. Once the ship hits the iceberg, the game takes on new urgency as you have just a short time to resolve various crises and collect the evidence you need to escape and change the world.

TOY BOAT

Unfortunately, gameplay doesn't live up to the game's promising plot. I know golden retrievers that are asked to do less fetching than you are in *TITANIC*. The constant carting back and forth of items quickly becomes tedious and serves little apparent purpose other than to pad the game's fairly short playing time.

Less than a handful of actual puzzles can be found and all have been done to



YOU SLAY ME Russian double agent Haydelfitz is murdered in the forbiddingly named "electric bath," saving himself the trouble of drowning when the ship sinks later.

death in countless other games. I can't imagine anyone being stumped for long since solutions are practically given away. How do you get into the shady art dealer's stateroom? There's a separation right by the cabin door to point out the fuse box responsible for the lights. And just so you don't ever have to figure out what to do next, your fellow spy will be more than happy to spell it out for you. If the ocean were as shallow as *TITANIC's* gameplay, the real ship would never have sunk.

Newcomers may have a good time, and *Titanic* buffs may enjoy the fetch-and-sporting "toys" included on the CD-ROM, but experienced gamers are bound to be frustrated by *TITANIC's* lack of challenge and the way it shortchanges its lively characters and plot. **S**

FAPPEAL: Novice adventure games, *Titanic* buffs.

PROS: Engaging, ably performed characters; interesting plot with multiple endings; excellent graphics. Web site material broadens multimedia content.

CONS: For the many fetching chores; short playing time; overly simplistic puzzles.



Price: \$59.99
System

Requirements: 486-56 or better processor (Pentium 90 or better recommended), 8MB RAM (16MB recommended), 40MB hard-drive space, Windows 3.1 or better, SVGA graphics card, 2x CD-ROM drive, mouse; supports Windows-compatible sound cards

of Players: 1
Copy Protection: None (CD-ROM must be in drive)

Designer: CyberFlux
Publisher: GTE Entertainment
Carlsbad, CA
(619) 431-4254
Reader Service #: 318

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Black And White And Led All Over

Track Down a Missing Shamus in Cyberdreams' Noir

by Charles Ardai

It seems to me that making a mystery game called *Noir* is a little like making a science fiction game called *Sci-Fi* or writing a romance novel titled *A Romance Novel*. "Noir" is a branch of mystery fiction often conflated (as it is here)

with hard-boiled detective fiction. If you choose to name your game after its genre, you run the risk of making the game appear to be...well, generic.

It's sort of like those canned foods that proliferated in supermarkets in the seventies. "Pitas," the labels read, black block letters on plain white paper "Beets," "Carrots." And so on. Honest, hard-to-reading labels, to be sure, but not very exciting ones, portending not very exciting contents within. Generic foods were sold on the basis of economy and predictability: they were cheap, and from reading the labels you knew exactly what you'd get. Fine, if what you're talking about is canned vegetables. But is this what you want from a computer game?

The irony is that *Cyberdreams' Noir* is a better game than its title would suggest—but it is, indeed, generic. You've got your tired private eye, smoking and boozing in tawdry dives; you've got your trenchcoats and your millionaires, your socialites and your tough-as-nails gangsters, your switches and your moonstars, you've got your 1930s Los Angeles scenery and your sap-phones warping on the soundtrack. Does the detective wear a trenchcoat? Does he



KEY FOR TWO Starting a game by searching through an old desk is fast becoming a cliché.

make shy wisecracks? Does he ever.

Noir is the latest in a recent run of hard-boiled detective games that started with Access' *UNDER A KILLING MOON* and has sustained itself through last year's *THE DARK WAS LOADED* from Philips and *PHILIP MARLOWE*, *POWER EYE* from Simon & Schuster. Each game tried to outdo the others with a gimmick: *KILLING MOON* had its fluid full-motion interface and science-fiction elements, for instance, while *PHILIP MARLOWE* featured the prose of Raymond Chandler and hand-drawn art designed to look like a period cartoon. *Noir*'s gimmick is that it's filmed in black and white. That's more or less it. It also has a nicely crafted set of six interlocking stories, but it takes

some time before the cleverness of the crafting becomes obvious, and I have a feeling that most gamers won't stick around long enough to see it come to life.

SIX OF ONE, HALF A DOZEN OF THE OTHER

Private investigator Jack Slayton has the office across from yours. When he doesn't turn up for a few

days, you take it upon yourself to go poking around in his desk. He had six cases pending when he vanished, three of them having to do with disappearances themselves: a singer's mate has vanished from a Chinatown hideout, an aging movie star's prize pooch has been dog-



OFF TRACK SETTING One of the six cases to be solved is the murder of a prize racehorse, requiring a nocturnal visit to the stables.



Price: \$39.95

System Requirements:

Windows 3.1 or Windows 95, 486DX-66 or better, 8 MB RAM (16 MB recommended), 10 MB free hard drive space, 2x CD-ROM drive, SVGA graphics, supports Windows-compatible sound cards

of Players: 1

Protection: None (CD must be in drive)

Designer: TSI

Publisher: CyberDreams
Culbassas, CA
(816) 223-8990

Reader Service # 320

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CLUB DEAD The night club where the torch singer works is heavy into Eastern decor, but you won't be very popular here

napped, and a bootlegger-gone-legit is looking for his wandering daughter. The other three cases are more varied: a friend of Slayton's hired him to find out how much a rare German book might be worth, *Wildens Cryptography* hired Slayton to test the firm's security and track down a suspected leak, and philanthropist Charles Winthrop hired him to look into

the death of his racehorse. Pegasus. No way to know which case led to Slayton's disappearance, so the only thing for you to do is start investigating them all.

This is the game's first and biggest problem: It's good for an adventure game to contain multiple stories and subplots, but it's bad to dump six storylines' worth of exposition in the player's lap right at the start of the game. It's just too much to absorb all at once. The game starts in the most boring and conventional environment imaginable—the detective's messy office—and asks you to spend your first hour or so opening desk drawers in one by one and reading through Slayton's files on each case. The most exciting moment comes when you get to use a key you stumble upon to unlock Slayton's Rolodex. *KILLING MOON*, *PHILIP MARLOWE*, and *THE DAMN WAS LOADED* all started in what was, for all practical purposes, the same office. Note to designers contemplating starting their games in

this way, it's been done.

Where do you go next? Well, if you're brighter than I am, you follow up on a hint in the Rolodex and visit the apartment of Jean LaFontaine, Slayton's girlfriend. If you try going anywhere else (either by walking out the front door and down L.A.'s mean streets or by choosing a location from a map in the office), you're likely to hit a lot of locked doors and dead ends. While the cases can nominally be investigated in any order, in practice you often can't visit certain locations until you've made progress at others. Unfortunately, the part of the game when it is hardest to make progress is the very beginning. I spent several hours wandering aimlessly around empty locations before I found one that let me get started on a case.

As you progress, the bottlenecks become fewer, but the empty locations do not—and this is *NOIR*'s second big problem. Great still photos of period locations

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FIERY PASSION PLAY These hot love letters tie together one of the intricate plot connections between the six murders.

may make good background art, but they do not make a good game. In far too many of the game's locations there is nothing for you to do except exit, often onto a screen that itself offers similarly little to do. The game's disorienting navigation scheme doesn't help: most scenes contain too few visual links between one view of a scene and the next for players to keep their bearings as they move around, while some periodically slow down the action by throwing in extra steps between two locations. (When trying to enter a taxi

or a bus that's right in front of you, you sometimes have to click on it four times before the game, which has been inching you forward in *leaky* steps, allows you to get inside.) The net result is a lot of humming in place and getting lost, mostly on silent, static, black-and-white screens.

Here and there are video interludes triggered by your actions, and some of these are effective. But they are too few and too sporadic. They are also too obvious: easy jokes, familiar situations, scenes you've seen a thousand times before.

THE PLOT THICKENS, BUT TOO LATE

Where the game stops being obvious is in the intertwining of its stories. The bootlegger's wandering daughter turns out to be conspiring an affair with Wilkins, the cryptographer, who in turn has something to do with the German book that ended up in the hands of Clayton's novelist buddy, Max. And who do you think penned the screenplay for the dog-loving movie star's biggest hit? Max,

Yes, after you've pounded the pavement for a while, knocked on a lot of doors that remained shut, and gotten thrown out of more joints than you can count, the stories begin to come together in a satisfying way. But it's too little too late. The gameplay remains a chore, the writing and acting never rise above the level of a B picture (though the plotting does), and the whole enterprise smells murky as a mothballed felon. **B**

APPEAL: Fans of old detective flicks may get a charge out of seeing a game done in black and white.

PROS: If you stick with the game to the end, the plotting will surprise you with its cleverness.

CONS: The unwieldy interface and blandly familiar situations practically guarantee that you won't stick with it to the end.



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Scotch Whimsy

Scoby-Doo Meets THE 11TH HOUR In Trilobyte's Scottish Cartoon Tale

by Robert Coffey

What do you get if you mix Saturday morning cartoon animation with the eerie but beautifully rendered environments of *The 7th Guest* and *The 11th Hour*? Something very much like *CLANDESTINY*, Trilobyte's weird and uneven adventure game/interactive cartoon that mixes traditional 2D animation with photorealistic 3D backgrounds. *CLANDESTINY*'s creators deserve credit for trying to shake up the traditional horror puzzle, but this effort never quite pulls it together, it is hampered by lousy gameplays and attempts at humor that often fall flat.

CLANDESTINY casts you as Andrew McPhiles, a meek American and last heir to the McPhiles clan of Scotland. Summoned to Scotland to claim your legacy, you're faced with dispelling the curse that has plagued 12 generations of your heretofore unknown family.

CLANDESTINY borrows heavily from other games, including using the mouse-driven interface from *The 11th Hour*, though the beckoning skeletal hand of that game seems oddly out of place here.

The co-opting of elements from other games wouldn't be so bad if something new were done with them. At the very least you'd hope that flurrying cartoon characters into the genre of stuffy, self-important adventure games would result in some pointed satire. Who doesn't want to see Sam and Mavis lose in the porous world of *MHS*? But *CLANDESTINY* poses up this golden opportunity in favor of doing a *Scoby-Doo* episode without the laughs or the great dance.

It would be easy to overlook this shortcoming if *CLANDESTINY*'s gameplay were strong, but it isn't. *CLANDESTINY* uses the



GROOBY GHOU-LIE Solve *CLANDESTINY*'s puzzles and you'll lift the curse on your ghostly ancestors like this delightful monster baby.

same mix of puzzles and riddles featured in *The 11th Hour*. All your old favorites are here: the coin game, the word maze, and hex slider puzzles. And don't worry,



CLICK, CLICK, I'M DONE Even on the highest difficulty setting, most puzzles, including this slider game, are a cinch to solve.

Trilobyte's old standby, the knight puzzle, is here as well, only with dinner plates taking the place of chess pieces. Anyone willing to assist me in stealing all the chessboards from Trilobyte's offices late some night, please contact me via CGW.

Another big problem is that it's just too easy; the game's three difficulty settings are basically moot. Should you run into a problem, the online hint system will blatantly nudge you toward the answer or even solve the puzzle, all without penalty. Absolute beginners may welcome the effortlessness of the challenges, but seasoned gamers are bound to feel cheated

as they charge right through the game.

CLANDESTINY's art is top-notch, with castle rooms sporting the same eye-catching attention to detail that distinguished *The 7th Guest* and *The 11th Hour*. The animated cut-scenes may lack any unique sense of character, but they are a dead-on re-creation of the Hanna-Barbera style both in look and voice-acting.

In the end, there's not a lot to say about *CLANDESTINY*, if only because there's so little to it. Newbies tentative about gaming may enjoy it, as may kids, though I doubt many kids are going to get jokes with obscure references to *Man Without Hats*' "Safety Dance." Despite its quality production values, *CLANDESTINY* just doesn't amount to much. **C**

PAPPEAL: Novice gamers and cartoon fans; anyone who thought *The 11th Hour* wasn't cute enough.

MPROPS: Trilobyte's usual high-quality graphics; animation and voice-acting that re-creates that special *Scoby-Doo* feel.

PCONS: Easy gameplay, flawless humor, a wasted opportunity to either satirize or do something new with the genre.



Price: \$49.95

System:

Requirements:

Pentium 60 or better

processor, Windows

95, 6MB RAM, 2MB

hardrive space, local

bus video with 1MB

RAM compatible with

DirectDraw 2.0 or later,

2x CD-ROM drive,

Microsoft-compatible

mouse, Microsoft-compatible

sound card.

of Players: 1

Protection: None (CD-

RDM must be in drive)

Designer: James

Yokota

Publisher: Trilobyte

Medford, OR

(800) 95-TBYTE

Reader Service #: 321



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[*Discworld II* features the voice of Eric Idle, former star of *Monty-something-or-other*.]



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Glyph Notes

Timelapse Is Just Another Myst-Conception

by Robert Coffey

know this way sound (cultured, but all these English art-house films about beautiful people secretly suffering are starting to give me a case of nervous distemper). You know, those movies featuring cast dewy brows, shimmering period costumes, and Fanny Thompson artfully stifling her feelings. Pretty? Certainly intelligent? Sure. But

do you find yourself silently wishing for someone to get medieval on Hugh Grant's *no? It's as if "adult" and "entertainment" were mutually exclusive terms. It's a problem MYSI had and one that Timelapse, a MYSI-warmabe if ever there was one, shares.*

PARADESE LOST

Timelapse puts you in the shoes of an archaeologist searching for his lost mentor, Professor Alexander Nichols. It seems the good professor finally found evidence to confirm his theories concerning the lost civilization of Atlantis and its estranger-nerstrial visitors. To find Nichols you'll have to jump through the dead, Atlantis-



CRIBBODDLE BLOCK A few action elements liven up gameplay, but most, like this crib-doodle, pose no real danger.

influenced civilizations of the Easter Islands, Egyptians, Mayans, and Aztecs before reaching the wiken city itself.

Each of the deserted cultural hotspots is rendered in gorgeous ray-traced graphics. While MYSI set the standard for such

hyperrealistic art, Timelapse raises the bar with rich, crisp images that positively shimmer. The graphics are so uniformly lush that even the dirt looks pretty. Timelapse further enhances its full-screen graphics with moments of occasional movement, unlike MYSI. Water splashes in the odd rock

crvice, and you dart through an abandoned temple, and a squirrel actually leads you to one clue. If the screens had been smooth-scrolling, instead of the step-by-step slide-show variety, it would have been really impressive.

An important tool for solving puzzles is your camera, essentially a limited screen-capture device. Many of the puzzles hinge on cross-referencing various symbols, most too complicated to sketch on the lone piece of note paper provided with the game. It's a useful feature that would have been more useful with a larger lens—a number of the clues are too tiny to be caught within the camera's restricted frame. You'll also have access to the missing professor's journal which, while basically a plot-accounting, does have some problem-solving information.

To succeed in Timelapse, you're going to spend a lot of time decoding petroglyphs, hieroglyphs, cave glyphs and other glyphs. All are very logical and fairly challenging, but the preponderance of symbols can leave you feeling more like a translator than a gamer. The Easter Island and Egyptian portions of Timelapse deal with such puzzles almost exclusively. To be fair, other challenges get thrown in, including



SNAKES AND LADDERS Timelapse isn't always a MYSI wannabe. Here it takes a page from The 11TH HOUR's book, with a sequence totally unrelated to the storyline.

some very limited action elements that make for an enjoyable diversion.

Timelapse's plot is promising, but because it's larded out through tedious journal entries and stagnant video recitations, it really doesn't drive the game beyond serving as an excuse for the puzzles. The designers' inspiration apparently got used up on the pretty pictures.

Ultimately, Timelapse is a pleasant if unremarkable diversion, the Merchants-Ivory version of a computer game. With stunning artwork and a new-age soundtrack, Timelapse tries hard to evade "class" at the expense of plot and originality. Like its obvious role model MYSI, it may appeal to casual gamers and couples on a first (and probably last) date. Hardcore adventures should skip it. **B**

APPEAL: MYSI fans, archaeology buffs, those who frown on Duke Nukem.

PROS: Beautiful graphics; logical puzzles of varying difficulty.

CONS: Plot is nearly irrelevant until the very end; glyphs and symbol puzzles grow repetitive. Just not very original.



Price: \$69.99

System

Requirements: 486DX2/66 or better processor, Windows 3.1 or later (Windows 95 recommended), 8MB RAM (16MB recommended), 16MB of RAM, 50MB hard drive space, SVGA video card, 2x CD-ROM drive, mouse, supports 16-bit Sound Blaster-compatible sound cards.

of Players: 1

Protection: None (CD must be in drive)

Designers: Ed Deneen, Lon Nichols

Publisher: GTE Entertainment
Carlsbad, CA
(619) 431-4264

Reader Service # 322

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Dance To This Tomb

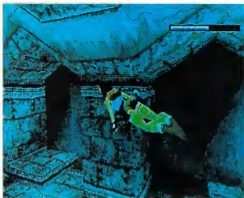
TOMB RAIDER Is Novel And Gorgeous

by Peter Dlafson

No doubt about it: Lara Croft is this year's girl. Just when you thought 3D games were permanently connected to your gag reflex, Eidos Interactive's *TOMB RAIDER* comes along and makes it all feel fresh and new again. It's effectively a 3D cousin of

Brosderbund's venerable platformer *Prince of Persia*. You'll send the athletic and acrobatic-turned-adventurer running, jumping, climbing and swimming her leggy way through 15 manicured and gorgeous levels across four worlds.

The core game is simplicity itself. You use the keyboard to command this fluidly animated amalgam of textured polygons as she plunders antiquities, dispatches a range of wiles (but unforgivingly aggressive) creatures, throws switches, pushes and pulls great stone blocks, solves object-oriented puzzles and at length makes her way to the exit, where you're given an assessment of take-downs, secrets found



UNDER THE SEA *TOMB RAIDER*'s graphics and environments are rich, underwater effects are amazing, and no still screen can convey how smoothly Lara moves.

and time invested. At episode's end, there's a pleasantly rendered story sequence.

A NEW LOOK

This isn't another first-person shooter. *TOMB RAIDER* is played in the third person, and that instantly gives it personality. Lara is at center screen virtually all the time, whether strolling or doing a sideways somersault, giving *TOMB RAIDER* a human presence.

That may also affect how you play. I found having a person in the game made me more cautious and protective: I wasn't just controlling Lara, I was looking after her as well. But that's also a function of the game's realistic environment. *TOMB RAIDER* looks spectacular, and never more so than when it is offering up vast, open architectures with wild, rough edges; pools whose depths can be plumbed; ledges that can be grabbed on the fly; rivers that whip you over waterfalls; collapsing chambers; columns that look like

columns, wall carvings that must have been drawn from life. These environments could almost be plucked from the rendered animation.

It's a sense that only blossoms when playing with the enhanced clarity and depth available with a 3D accelerator (I tried the game on an Orchid Righteous 3D card with the 3Dfx part). The game just lights up.

You'll be delighted to find how much of that world is accessible. The levels have been designed in intricate detail, with platforms and surrounding rocky outcroppings set at various tempting heights and angles. Discovering what you cannot reach is almost as fun as discovering what you can. In *TOMB RAIDER*, it's not winning that's the most fun; it's simply getting there.

Often, you won't get there at all. Failure in these leaps of faith may leave Lara in a crumpled heap at the bottom of a cliff face. (Death isn't a game-ender in *TOMB RAIDER*, but it hits you squarely in the heart. When she drowns, you can almost feel her body contort in its struggle for air.) Success may take you into one of the



Price: \$54.95
System

Requirements:

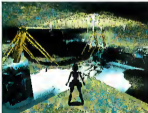
Pentium 60 (Pentium 90 Recommended), 8MB RAM, 20MB free hard-drive space, SVGA VESA local bus graphics card, 2x CD-ROM drive; most major sound cards supported; most major game pads and joysticks supported.

Protection: None (CD must be in drive)

Designer: Core Design
Publisher: Eidos Interactive

San Mateo, CA
(415) 513-8829

Reader Service #: 323



THE INDOOR SLOPES The levels in *Tomb Raider* feel cavernous and vast, and you'll have fun plumbing the depths of these dungeons looking for artifacts.

game's secret areas—each level has a handful—where you'll find ammo for the game's advanced weapons or first-aid kits.

This is not to say that *TOMB RAIDER* is ideal. The game engine has some quirks, the concept some limitations, developer Core Design will need to address both if the sequel—two are in the works—are to cement TR's status as a classic.

The camera angles are an occasional problem. While the camera reacts dynamically to setting and circumstance, it typically follows the heroine by a few paces. In tight and twisty places, this sometimes means that surrounding scenery slips between you and the young woman, and you can't see her at all. Moreover, the camera position is subject to the same constraints as Lara herself—it can't move outside the levels' walls—and this can lead to some bad moments in combat when Lara's back is to the wall and the camera swivels to show us Lara herself, neglecting to show the lion or bear she's fighting.

Sure enough, the game enables you to look in any direction with a keypad combo. That's very handy for finding secret areas, calculating jumps or just getting your bearings. But it's effective only when Lara's at rest. (You can't change your view and fire at the same time.) In back-to-the-wall situations, the game should be a bit more forgiving and adopt either over-the-shoulder or top-down views. Here, the engine's getting in the way of the game.

Clipping or collision detection is off throughout. Most of the violations are minor—Lara's leg disappearing briefly as she brushes an adjacent stone block isn't likely to send people back to the shops waving their receipts—but still annoying. There are moments here and there when this threatens to puncture the suspension of disbelief. At one point, you have to trigger the fall of a great hammer, which in turn knocks loose a pair of large stone blocks, which have to be used as steps to make progress. I pushed one of them into the hammer's head. Not up against it. Into and through it.

That said, I didn't find any crash bugs. But I did come across a glitch. Swimming against the current under water in a fast-

flowing river in the Lost Valley—not exactly pushing the boundaries of what the player might be expected to do—I found that, upon going over the falls, Lara was teleported to the ceiling and dropped into the top of the falls. Very weird.

The auto-targeting mechanism is another sore point. When her guns are drawn, Lara will automatically target the nearest available enemy. Now, leaving aside the issue of whether she should be doing the targeting for you—shades of *Descent III*'s annoying Guide-Bot—I found this tended to spoil the game's surprises. The auto-targeter routinely noticed enemies before I did and gave it away by shifting Lara's aim appropriately. Who's playing the game here?

I also found *TOMB RAIDER* too easy. I got through half of the game without ever needing to use anything other than the starting weapon—twin pistols—and I have an effectively inexhaustible supply of first-aid kits.

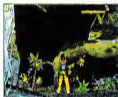
If you throw a switch and the consequences aren't local to the player, a quick cut-scene displays the results. Shouldn't that be up to me to discover?

Finally, the designers need to watch their pacing a bit. Things start brilliantly with that T-Rex on the third level, but the first episode ends with the *TOMB RAIDER* equivalent of Jethro Clauspet. The game has some relatively low-key stretches—including much of the second episode—and needs to better punctuate the levels with similar spectacles. (By the same token, the secret areas ought to be more compelling. In *TOMB RAIDER*, they're just item caches, not quite as interesting as the *DUNE NUBEM 3D* movie and TV spoofs.)

It may sound as if I'm down on the game. I'm not. *TOMB RAIDER*'s appeal is



OUR KINDA WOMAN Many of the creatures you'll encounter are aggressive monsters, but Lara knows how to handle a variety of weapons. What a babe.



CRETACEOUS PARK The pacing isn't ideal. You face the awesome enemy T-Rex on level three; after that, the creatures seem dull.

substantial, and it endures. If I hadn't enjoyed it so much, I wouldn't care so much about the fine points. When a game's a short walk from real greatness—and *TOMB RAIDER* is tottering on the brink—its few misdeeds are that much more noticeable. With a touch more polish, this would be Hall of Fame material. I expect no less from *TOMB RAIDER II*. ☺

APPEAL: Action gamers looking for a different perspective and lots of arcade and shooting action.

PROS: Gorgeous graphics, fluidly animated main character, good level design, realistic environment and actions.

CONS: Clipping problems; bad pacing; camera angles sometimes get in the way of action; auto-targeting is too easy.



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Extra Points For Violence

Activision Hammers The PC With A Brutally Fun Action-Sports Game

by Peter Olafson

This must be what people mean when they talk about "blood sports." Activision's **HYPERBLADE** is lacrosse played inside a blimp in which the criminal elite has been suspended. Anything goes in this Windows 95 sport. Everything goes. If you can't win, you're probably not being ruthless enough.

The object of this 21st-century pastime—a 3D descendant of the Blimp Brothers' celebrated **SHRIMP** 1.2—is to use your two forwards to throw a glowing sphere called a "rok" into the opposing goal at the far end of the blimp and help your goalie (who's on automatic) to keep it out of your own.

The keyboard controls are dead simple. You can switch between these Transformers-like polygonal figures, make substitutions, pass, break into a run, jump and fire off two different types of shot. (Be advised: the goalies are good.) And if the third-person point of view feels a little strange—it's easy to feel disoriented at first—you can check out a rear-view mirror to get your bearings.

BLOOD AND GUTS

You can also attack. That's perfectly OK. There's no penalty box. Indeed, the game hands out silly trophies for this sort of thing. Do enough damage, and the opposing player go down for the count and the game will dutifully report specifics of any damage you've wrought. Fractured skull. Severed bronchial artery. Slughtered tibia. This will eventually come as music to your ears.



HOCKEY'S FOR WUSSIES *HyperBlade* plays like an ultra-violent, futuristic roller-hockey game where the object is to throw a "rok" into an opposing goal while loading off enemy arms and heads.

Want to cut an opponent's head off and throw it in the goal? Pretty braver, but that's OK, too. Never mind about all the leaking blood. In fact, it's more than okay—it's worth four times the normal points and, as the docs blithely observe, "It's a great way of intimidating the opponent."

In fact, want to just kill off the whole other side? Go for it. If you kill all five opposing forwards—two starters and two subs—and then score a goal, you'll win under the league's "Wipe Out Rule."

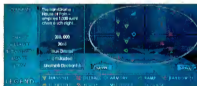
Small warning: the playfield is more like a

minefield. In the 12 unique domes, you'll find barricades (which can be washed), sharp-edged turrets (which are handy for cutting off close pursuit), ramps to launch long jumps, multi-pilers which enhance the value of a goal, breach-ous gates that are bisected by lasers, flags that activate "specials," and an

armory where you can collect a mine that will send opponents flying or a weapon that will stun them.

But it's important to note what the designers *haven't* done. To paraphrase the manager from *Ball Daze*, this is a single game: you throw the rok, you catch the rok, you rip the other guy's arms off and steal the rok.

It would have been very easy to over-



WELCOME TO THE DROME The game tries to replicate a futuristic sport, with 12 different stadiums and teams scattered over the globe. Each stadium, or dome, is unique, with different obstacles and items



Price: \$39.99

System:

Requirements:

Pentium 90 or better,
16 MB RAM, 80 MB
hard drive space,
SVGA graphics, 1 MB
VESA or PCI video
card, 2x CD-ROM
drive, Windows 95,
Windows 95 com-
patible mouse, Sound
Blaster compatible
sound card

of Players: 1-4

Protection: None (CD
must be in drive)

Designer: Wei Bang
Publisher: Activision
Los Angeles, CA
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Reader Service #: 324



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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #366



OFF WITH HIS HEAD Violence is your number one goal in *HyperBlade*. The more brutal you are, the more points you score. Decapitate someone's head and chuck it into a goal for bonus points.

complicate *HYPERBLADE* with a clutter of features, and that hasn't happened (though I suspect it was a near-miss). They've made it just complicated enough to keep things interesting, and left it basic enough that it feels fresh and classical.

They also haven't gone for glitz over gameplay. Even with hi-linear filtering and texturing enabled, the polygonal domes are relatively plain to look at (though they're very sharply rendered—especially on machines with a 3D accelerator). The appeal's more in the smooth-

ness of the movement, the persuasive gravity and the emphaticness of collisions.

It also would have been easy to soften up that game's metallic edge. But *HYPERBLADE* makes no apologies. It offers no disclaimers. The game's creators have given themselves entirely to this absurd, gruesome sport. (The one overt compromise to parental approval: You can turn off the "brutality fx" at the options menu.)

Like all good simple games, it's easy to play but hard to play well. If you lose at the training level, you've forgotten to turn your monitor on; this is an opportunity to learn the ropes and feel like an expert. (The opposition's just going through the motions.)

At the Pro level, you'll learn you are mortal. And at the All-Star level, every second of simple possession will seem a triumph, and the head that rolls the farthest will be thine own. Even the opposing goalie is a serious son of a bitch. Stand too close to him, and he'll skate down from his perch and flatten you—and hang around to kick you—whether you have the sk or not.

TIME OUT

Complaints? A few—but not the ones you would think. (I don't mind the violence; it's icing on the cake.) I don't think the designers went quite far enough.

For one thing, league play isn't supported. You can set up exhibition matches between any of a dozen teams—from 11 major international cities and (given) Leeds—or run a gamut of the 11 other teams. A seasonal schedule would have given the game a longer life. (Can't you just see the stat compiler categories? Top

Ten Sub-Dora! Hemotomas, ratios of bones broken to broken bones...)

The multiplayer mode is aimed only at networks, and doesn't support modem or Internet play (Am I alone in imagining that developers give such high priority to networks because it's the equipment they have in their own offices?) An object and physics editor would have been a natural inclusion.

And, from a packaging point of view, I'm not a big fan of discs-on-disk. *HyperBlade* comes with a 20-page jewel-box booklet that's little more than a troubleshooting and quick-reference card. The rest can be found by tapping F1 from within the game.

There's a big problem with online manuals: you can't read them in the tub, in bed or in the car. So, fine, put them on



POLYGONAL PASS In un-accelerated SVGA, graphics are decent, though flat shaded and a little rough. But, with a 3D accelerator, especially a Rendition-based card, you can get stunning results.

the CD. But also give us a proper manual for this great bloodsport that can be scanned at leisure. If I'm going to lose my head as well as my heart, I'd like to know why. **S**

APPEAL: Fans who remember *Street Fighter 2*, or action and sports gamers looking for fast, heart-pounding, ultra-violent action.

PROS: Excellent atmosphere, thoroughly enjoyable and extreme violence, good AI, fast and fun.

CONS: No league play; no modem or null modem support.



Unlocking The Secret Teams

There are two secret teams in the game, a Jamaican team and an absolutely brutal team called Nemesis. Both can be accessed by typing the code "SHIUN."

Once that's done, you'll have enabled both teams.

The Jamaican team is fast, but weak. Their asset is their speed, but they do very little damage and rarely deliver good hits. Attack the Jamaican starters brutally and try to get them out of the game. Then, rack up the goals in the second half and play keep away with the scrubs.

The Nemesis team is a much more difficult challenge. They are fast, strong and brutal. The best way to play against the Nemesis team is to attack them before they attack you. Beat on them consistently and rotate your bench frequently, because the Nemesis team will undoubtedly get many good kicks on you, and each attack that connects will be vicious. Also, try not to hold onto the rok for too long. Keep passing it, because if you don't, the unlucky player stuck with the rok will get smashed repeatedly.

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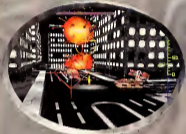
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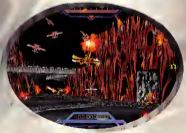
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Crash Course

A Nice Paint Job, But Gameplay Gets The Wrecking Ball

by Rick Broida

If you think NASCAR RACING is more fun when you turn your car around and head into oncoming traffic, *DESTRUCTION DERBY 2* may be just your cup of motor oil. As one of the few racing games that actually encourages contact with other vehicles, Psygnosis' sequel gives new meaning to the words "crumple zone."

To say the original *DESTRUCTION DERBY* was a smash hit is to make a very bad pun. The game had dismal documentation and an unwieldy interface, but it was terrifically playable. Unfortunately, the sequel suffers from the same flaws, adds a few new ones, and doesn't match the fun quotient of its predecessor.

As in the original, there are three modes of play: Wreckin' Racing, Stock Car Racing, and the obligatory *Destruction Derby*. In Wreckin' Racing, your goal is to inflict as much structural damage as possible on your computer-driven opponents, while keeping your own car intact for the finish line. Points are accrued by wrecking or spawning other cars. In Stock Car Racing all you do is head for the checkered flag, ensuring someone's trunk does you no good. The Derby, of course, is what the game is really all about. You show up in one of four



FENDER BENDERS The gorgeous hi-res graphics and great textures are greatly offset by poorer gameplay than the original.

areas and smash hoods until you're the last one standing.

CRASH TEST, PART 2

So, what's different? For starters, *DESTRUCTION DERBY 2* has matured into a visually opulent game. The hi-res version looks gorgeous, with textured everything and plenty of flying debris. The tracks, seven of them in all, are longer, wider, and far more varied than in the original. Psygnosis has added a cool, raucous-sounding soundtrack, but unfortunately, it doesn't drown out the annoyingly frequent and annoying comments.

Hearing him cry "Oof" every time you scrape a wall gets tiresome very quickly.

A big change is that your car can now go airborne. Most of the tracks have jumps, but a hard hit can give you wings as well. In the Derby, for instance, it is possible, through some wacky law of physics, to get knocked hundreds of feet into the air. This makes for a great replay, but can get a little silly.

All this would be fine if the game were as playable as the original, but, alas, it isn't. Although you start in the lead position of each race, you'll see all

19 opponents zoom past if you so much as scrape a wall. After that, it's impossible to catch up. Because the tracks are wider, there are no bottlenecks to use to your advantage. Even the Derby lacks its former charm; the action has become so frenetic, there's

no chance to savor a smash.

On my 100MHz Pentium system, the hi-res version of the game was choppy, while the 320x200 low-res version seemed too fast. I couldn't find a happy medium, and, thus, I couldn't enjoy the game. Perhaps the toughest pill to swallow is the lack of multiplayer support. Up to nine players can take turns competing individually (gee, what fun), but you can't play head-to-head via modem, network or Internet connection.

I'm going back to the original. Though less attractive and equipped with fewer tracks, it's a heck of a lot more fun. **S**



Price: \$49.95

System

Requirements: Pentium 75, 16MB RAM (Windows 95), 8MB RAM (DOS), 2x CD-ROM drive, VGA graphics, 57MB hard drive space; supports all major sound card.

of Players: 1

Protection: None
Designer: Reflections
Publisher: Psygnosis, Ltd.

Foster City, CA

(415) 438-7794

Reader Service #: 325



DN A ROLL New in DD2 are end-over-end, sky-high flips (as this vehicle will soon demonstrate). Plus, you can still pile up wrecks in the Derby play mode.

APPEAL: Die-hard fans of the original and anyone who enjoys heavy metal—when it's flying through the air.

PROS: Improved graphics, good soundtrack, more and better tracks.

CONS: Poorly designed option screens, no multiplayer support; heavy system demands; terse documentation; no new race options; impossible to recover from falling behind.





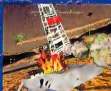
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Short Circuit

Eight Missions In The Sequel To FUTURE SHOCK Can't Change History

by Thierry Nguyen

Say the word "Skynet" to most people and you'll probably get either a blank stare or a sign of recognition as they recall the cool computer that altered history in the Terminator movies. Say it to sci-fi fans, and they may talk about SKYNET being one of the more marauding AIs to be introduced in the sci-fi genre, even though it never makes an appearance. But say that word to an action gamer and you're likely to hear complaints about game design and mechanics.

A while ago, Bethesda brought us the sleeper DOOM-clone, TERMINATOR: FUTURE SHOCK. The only pre-Quake game that featured a true 3D engine, FUTURE SHOCK was mostly overlooked when DURE NUNEM 3D took the market by storm. SKYNET was originally planned as a simple multiplayer patch for FUTURE SHOCK, but it grew to become a full-fledged mission pack. Now it's finally arrived, but gamers hoping for a better gaming experience will discover that this was one "patch" that was released way too early.

NUCLEAR WINTER

The plot of SKYNET is simple: Skynet and its Terminators have discovered an extremely powerful nuclear missile that wasn't used in Skynet's first strike against humanity. Mulling over the nuke's ability to obliterate a city, Skynet decides to create a better world for itself by launching the nuke and wiping out John Connor and the entire Resistance. As one of Connor's lackeys, your job is to stop Skynet from launching that missile.

All this takes place over the span of a mere eight missions. Each mis-



▶ **HASTA LA VISTA, BABY** Skynet, originally planned as a multiplayer patch to Future Shock, is a stand-alone game. It does offer SVGA graphics and multiply, but is short on missions and full of bugs.

sion is multistaged (i.e., enter the base, find the nuke, then run like hell out of the base and into your jeep), but still, eight is a small number. Some missions end with very nice-looking cut-scenes, and you are given an FMV briefing (with the usual bad acting) in between every mission.

GOOD RESISTANCE MOVEMENTS

The good news is that the computer-generated cut-scenes between missions look very nice, though the acting isn't as good. The characters in multiply also

look different from each other, rather than being the exact same character in different color schemes.

Despite its many weaknesses, the Xngine does have a few good features. Water is modeled more accurately than in other games, rendered as a clear liquid rather than a sheet of solid color. You can also enter every building in the name of Los Angeles, which are all realistically detailed (a bookstore has bookshelves and a disco club has a dance floor).

MULTIPLE TERMINATIONS

Skynet is primarily designed as a multiplayer game. Yet SKYNET offers support only for IPX LAN and Kab play. That's right. There is no normal modem play. This is a big letdown, since every 3D action game thus far has had simple head-to-head play via modem. SKYNET hence caters to a limited audience. Even though I own Kab, I was hard pressed to find any games of SKYNET to join.

Since SKYNET was designed for three or more players, most of the levels are quite large. However, in response to those who complained about the tedious associ-



▶ **WHO DOES THE DECORATING?** Skynet, though possessed of a 3D engine, has a very primitive 2D look to it. Levels are also fairly basic 2D designs.



Price: \$39.99

System

Requirements: 486-66 or better, MS-DOS 6.0 or higher, 8MB RAM, 31MB hard-drive space, VGA graphics card, 2x CD-ROM, supports all major sound cards.

of Players: 1-8 (IPX LAN)

Protection: None (CD must be in drive)

Designer: Motion

Merop

Publisher: Bethesda Softworks
Gaithersburg, MD
(301) 953-2022

Reader Service #: 326

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Terminate The Bugs

As mentioned, the inclines are the cause of most of SkyNET's bugs. Bethesda put in a model that calculates falling damage based on height. But this model was flawed to the point that small, one-foot rises on a hill hurt as much as a 10-story drop. Also, you can climb only to a certain point on these inclines, which wouldn't be so bad except that enemy robots can go farther. How did they get up there when I couldn't?

In the first mission, there is a building next to a hill. Squeeze yourself in between the two and you will die instantly. Why? Because you are technically falling, but the building is in your way. When you finally touch the ground, the game thinks you've been falling the whole time and kills you on the spot.

One interesting bug is that SVGA doesn't work in some cases. When I used a small TSR to install the VESA 2.0 standard, SkyNET wouldn't go to SVGA. I had to turn off this utility and use my bare-bones VESA 1.2 config to get SVGA. SciTech Display Doctor 5.3 should give you SVGA, but I find that it slows down my performance. Also, gamers have complained online about having problems getting SVGA working on their Matrox boards.

ated with finding someone in a large level, SkyNET gives you a device called the motion sensor. Just aim and point it, and anything moving will show up as a blip on your screen—a very nice innovation from Bethesda for hunting down elusive death-match buddies.

Perhaps the coolest multiplayer feature of all, though, is the ability to play as a Terminator. Playing as the Terminator gives you infrared vision and a built-in motion sensor (so you can keep a weapon aimed at all times). The main disadvantages are that every-

thing is red and the motion tracker has a smaller range. But, hey, how often do you get the chance to play the Terminator? You had this unique point of view wasn't used in the single-player game.

I'VE FALLEN AND I CAN'T GET UP!

The XEngine used in SkyNET looks like it needs some major polishing. While the engine is true 3D, the levels look more like the 2D design in DUNE: NOVA 3D. The



SEEING RED SkyNET's multiplayer suite let you play the Terminator, seeing through its mechanical eyes and taking advantage of some of its unique abilities. Too bad it's not available in solo play.



What you get to do: Shoot with gun, shoot with D-pad, shoot with D-pad and partner, shoot with gun and partner

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ALL WASHED UP You can't swim underwater (though your enemies can) but you can drown. Other than that, the only difference between this and dry land is the blue colors.

textures are bland and uninspiring, and the world seems to be made up of inclines jumbled together awkwardly. Hills are inclines, wrecked buildings have inclines that make no sense, and some stairs are just inclines that look like 2D polygons. In fact, it's these inclines that are responsible for some of the worst bugs in *Star Wars* (see sidebar).

Another massive engine flaw is that, although you can go into the water, you can't swim. Granted, the appearance of water is accurately modeled. But when you are in the water, that realism is thrown out the door. The only

difference between being on land and being in water is that when you are under water, you see everything in blue, and you can drown. Since you can't swim, the only way to get out is by climbing ramps or inclines. Marines and other enemies can swim, but Resistance soldiers (and Terminators in multiplayer) can't. Odd design choice in my opinion.

JUDGMENT DAY

Star Wars held great promise. It does implement *FUTURE SHOCK* (giving PS the SVCA option) and supplies the multiplayer option that was promised in PS. But the flawed engine ends up costing *Star Wars* a lot of points. In the end, if you really liked *FUTURE SHOCK*, you may be interested in *Star Wars*. But for the rest of us, it's a gamble. And not one I'd want to wager my future on. **C**

APPEAL: Pass of the original *Terminator*. *Force Sens.*

PROS: Ability to portray Terminator in multiplayer, some other new multiplayer elements, nice looking cut-scenes.

CONS: Engine filled with both mechanical and design flaws; only eight single-player missions. With no direct modem support and Kall opponents hard to find, multiplayer is essentially LAN-only.



ool with D-pad and gun, shoot with gun in each hand. What you don't get to do: Recite poetry, pick daisies, hug lovable stuffed animals

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Phorget Me Not

MARATHON INFINITY Brings Bungie's Mac Shooter To A Classy End

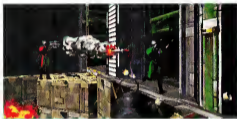
by Jeff Green

Being a Mac gamer can really suck sometimes. Just ask me. Here I am, the sole Mac gamer at the CCW office, forced to listen to my fellow editors prattle on endlessly about such hoo-hah as the latest QUAKE hack or the new 5,000-level DUST; add on, while I'm still grateful just to be able to play DOOM on my shrink's machine. Adding insult to injury are the hoards of decision that greet me every time I log the praises of Bungie's outstanding MARATHON series. The sad truth is that it wouldn't really make a difference if this was the greatest game since Twister. The answer would still be the same: "Yeah, but it's just a Mac game!"

Well, ride my broomstick, weisenheimers. For while the MARATHON titles may "just" be Mac games, they still offer a cool combination of intelligence and bloodshed that few shoot-em-ups on any platform can equal. What Bungie does best is combine fast-paced, first-person action with a story that actually is a story. Part Newsweek, part Atlas, part Zorro, Bungie has fashioned a witty, complex space opera around what could have been just another point-and-shoot fest. MARATHON INFINITY, the latest and apparently final game in the series, continues where MARATHON 2 left off, with a new scenario called Blood Tides of Li'owon. Though it doesn't break any new ground, it should offer enough thrills to please longtime fans.

LI'OWON SHARKS

When the game begins, you find yourself on a distant space station in the Li'owon solar system, where the normally arrogant Al Durandal is freaked out over a mysterious, chaotic force that the



GUN ENVY Marathon Infinity's new rapid-fire Rocketo gun will mow down your enemies with deadly precision, but the rocket launcher foregoes precision for punch.

evil Flor have unwittingly unleashed — and that now threatens to destroy the galaxy. As usual, the primary goal is to kill everything that moves. But each level has its own secondary objective — as well as a distinct look — that makes you want to continue, just to see what's next. As you attempt to discover what's going on and destroy the Flor, you'll travel all over, from the wide-open smooth canyons of Li'owon to the claustrophobic, labyrinthine pathways of enemy spacecraft.

Last year's MARATHON 2 was a quantum leap over the first game, with better graphics, a better engine, and better levels than the original. Bungie makes no such leap this time — the engine is essentially the same, and there's only one new weapon — and for some games, especially those familiar with the stunning immersion of QUAKE, this will be a letdown.

The good news is that this game is actually much tougher than MARATHON 2. Even when playing on Normal difficulty, there are a few levels, like the maddening Acme Station, that will defy you to survive beyond the first few minutes. And is it just me, or are the levels much stinger with ammo, recharges and pattern indices this time?

INFINITY PLUS TWO

For many gamers, the biggest reason to buy MARATHON Infinity is the inclusion of Forge, Bungie's level editor, so you can create your own levels (hence the game's title). The editor is wonderfully easy to use, with a palette-based interface that should be familiar to anyone who's used art programs such as Adobe Photoshop. Also included is Anvil, a super utility that lets you add your own graphics, sounds and physics to any MARATHON 2 or INFINITY map.

Bungie has said that this will be the last of the MARATHON games, and you can't blame them for wanting to move on. Credit them, at least, for taking the time to develop a cool scenario that closes the series out with a bang. It's not QUAKE or DUNE, but if you only have a Mac, this is still the best shoot-em-up around. ☘

FAPEAL: Marathon fans, Mac 3D shooter fans who can't wait for MacQuake.

PROS: Better, more challenging levels than previous versions. Level editor included. Still the best Mac shooter in town.

CONS: Engine beginning to show its age. Not much new here.



Price: \$34.99

Requirements: Macintosh with 68040 or better processor, 13" 256-color monitor, System 7 or higher, 8 MB RAM

Protection: None
of Players: 1-8 (2 players with each copy)

Designer/Publisher: Bungie Software
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A Lame Duck

Hunting For A Killer Pail Shooter, Virgin Comes Up Empty

by Mark Clarkson

In the old days, a shooting gallery game was something you played in a smoky pool hall. You'd stand, holding a diminutive rifle, and squeeze off round after round at a parade of tin hoans and ducks propelled endlessly past on bicycle chains. Hit the ducks and they'd fall over. Hit the bear, and he'd stand upright and roar.

Today, kids have NEO HUNTER. The box promises high-tech crime fighting, including DNA analysis, but don't be fooled: this game is a shooting gallery. You'll spend almost all of your time putting the cross hairs over bad guys of all descriptions and clicking, clicking, clicking.

Instead of standing and roaring, the thugs sport such witty rejoinders as "Shoot his butt off" and "He must be wearing steel underwear!" Big improvement.

SAME OLD, SAME OLD

NEO HUNTER is a rail shooter, but one where you shoot while standing still rather than moving down corridors or flying through asteroid fields. The scene does scroll back and forth and zoom in and out to follow the action.

All actions are preordained. If you fail to clear the level before you run out of

shields, you die and have to start over, reliving the mandatory opening barrier and then replaying the entire shootout. The same bad guy jumps out of the same doorway at the same time, every time. You can eventually learn to clear the levels by rote.

Worse, NEO HUNTER is set in a future where clones

are evidently the height of fashion in body-guards and personal security forces. Whether you're breaking into a drug dealer's mansion or facing a gang of street punks, even though you have to drop several dozen bad guys, they're all the same three or four guys, over and over again.

Some levels have you confronting a dozen or more "bad guys" simultaneously. You can have multiple weapons in your inventory—some deadly, some not—and cycle between them while you fight. Your left mouse button fires the left-selected weapon, and your right mouse button fires the right-selected weapon. You can even throw grenades while simultaneously shifting, energy back and forth between your shields and your stunner.

It sounds exciting, I know, but there are just so many targets, that the excitement rapidly devolves into tedium. NEO HUNTER's smattering of shareware-quality puzzles does little to improve things. You kill 50 guys. Listen to some witty dialogue. Kill 50 more guys.



CONNECT THE DOTS: NEO HUNTER has two forms of badly implemented gameplay. There is shooting gallery action of a style much worse than *Virux Sowa*, and then there are puzzles like this for the brain-dead.

Listen to some more witty dialogue. Play a MURDERMIND knock-off. Kill 50 more guys. Ad nauseam.

NEO HUNTER's graphics are pure comic book. The publishers call it "anime," but to my admittedly uneducated eye, the artwork looks far more western, and the overriding impression is one of cheapness. WETLANDS did it better.

Although there is a plot involving the assassination of a senator, and it is your goal to uncover the motive and killer, it's totally irrelevant. All you do is shoot bad guys non-stop. Fans looking for an NYPD Blue experience need not apply. ☹

FAPPEAL: 14-year-old fans of twitch-fests and comic books or those looking to give their mouse fingers a serious workout.

PROS: The comic book look will appeal to some; there are lots of (the same) things to shoot.

CONS: Way too much of the same shooting gallery action, over and over again.



Price: \$49.00
System

Requirements: 486-66 or better processor, 8MB RAM, 2x CD-ROM drive, VGA graphics, 5MB hard-drive space, Windows 95 or DOS, mouse, supports most major sound cards.

of Players: 1
Protection: None (CD must be drive)

Designer: Ronin Entertainment

Publisher: Virgin Interactive Entertainment

Irvine, CA
(800) 874-4607,
(714) 833-8710

Reader Service #: 328



ANDRE IT ADVT: Virgin says the game's look is "anime" or Japanese comic art, but it isn't. While some of the cinematography is like anime, the quality is woefully bad, especially with the low resolution

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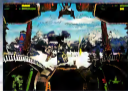
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You're It

Virgin's Arcade Game Of Tag Runs Out Of Steam

by Scott A. May

Because retro gaming is all the rage, I was hopeful upon hearing the name of Virgin's arcade outing, GRID RUNNER. Could this be an update of Jeff Minter's frantic classic from 1982? Nope. This is retro gaming from a more recent era, originally born as a 16-bit cart called EUB-It for the SNES, remixed and remixed last year for the 32-bit PlayStation, and now ported to Win 95. Too bad for everyone

CAPTURING ALIEN FLAGS

The setting is a massive alien complex, consisting of levels of convoluted platform mazes. To survive imprisonment by the evil Empress Vorga, you must progress through 57 rounds of increasingly difficult challenges and face a barrage of alien warriors. But forget the wacky-time sci-fi story line—gameplay is essentially a '90s take on two venerable childhood games, Tag and Capture the Flag, with plenty of bells and whistles tacked in for effect.

Playing in an overhead third-quarter view, you guide your grid runner along the narrow pathways, tagging your opponent "it." When you're not it, the goal is to capture a predetermined number of flags. The challenge is to reach the flags while avoiding your opponent's touch. Once you're "it," the rules reverse.

To make things more interesting, numerous magic spells and power-ups are attainable, for teleporting out of danger, gaining speed, slowing down your opponent, placing mines, and casting fireballs. At higher levels, Empress Vorga dis-

patches a variety of space pests to make your task even more difficult.

CHARM VS. CONFUSION

As a single-player game, GRID RUNNER has its charms, thanks to the disparate grid layouts of its 15 worlds. Some are quite striking, while others are simply confusing, due to poor visual distinction between the grid and the elaborate backgrounds. And despite creative changes in grid layouts and alien obstacles, gameplay eventually becomes too repetitive to sustain long-term interest.

On the other hand, two-player mode can be a blast, because a human opponent is far less predictable than the computer player. Rather than advancing through progressively higher levels, the game randomly culls 26 rounds from the 15 available worlds.

The only drawback to multiplayer mode is lack of remote (modem or LAN) support. Instead, the game screen is hor-



CHILD'S PLAY Your goal is to chase an opponent through various levels, tag him and then hunt for flags. Sound familiar?

izontally split, giving you substantially less room to work with. As in the single-player mode, if your opponent is not visible, a green arrow next to your character continually tracks its current position. At its best, this almost matches the flavor and intensity of BOMBEMAN, one of the best two-player console games ever created. Almost, but not quite.

GRID RUNNER is a handsome game that's easy to learn and initially fun to play. There's just not much substance behind the glitz, suggesting that the designers should have spent more effort bolstering gameplay, not just special effects. With greater content and a remote two-player option, this might have been a hit, not just another close call. **S**

APPEAL: Arcade/puzzle fans.

PROS: Multiplayer mode is a gas. Graphics are colorful and varied. Large number of increasingly difficult levels adds long-term play value.

CONS: Single-player mode eventually runs out of steam. Texture-mapped graphics are blocky and frame rates is poor on slow machines. No support for remote two-player gaming.



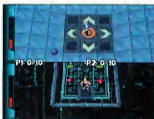
Price: \$29.95

System

Requirements: Pentium 60 or better processor; Windows 95; 8MB RAM; 2x CD-ROM drive; 1MB video card; supports Win95-compatible sound cards, joysticks, and gamepads.

of Players: 1-2
Protective: None (CD in drive)

Designers: Radical Entertainment
Publisher: Virgin Interactive
Irvine, CA
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SPLITTING TIME Grid Runner's best feature is multiplayer. Sometimes, though, the frame rate and blocky graphics can interrupt the action.

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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #271



A Near Miss

QUAKE Marines May Shy Away From Playing Cop

by Scott A. May

It's amazing how game designs that seemed so fresh and vibrant a few short years ago can suddenly become passé. Such is the case with Sega's *Virtua Squad*, one of many tried-and-true arcade hits now being ported to Windows 95. The phrase "too little, too late" certainly comes to mind here, as Sega milks every penny from its archive of arcade glories.

Originally titled *Virtua CCE*, the game was an instant hit in the arcades, then subsequently used as a system-seller for the Saturn. Here's the setup: You play an elite cop tracking a syndicate of gun-runners in *Virtua City*. Your job is to patrol different sectors of the city, flush out the bad guys, and dispatch them with your trusty sidearm before they get you.

The game unfolds in three stages: Black Arms Market, Underground Weapon Storage, Gang Headquarters. Along the way, you can pick temporary weapon power-ups (machine gun, rifle, magnum, and shotgun) as you track down each of the syndicate's four bosses.

READY, AIM, FIRE

Presented from a first-person perspective, gameplay consists of targeting enemies with your sowing gunsight as they step into view. Most of them don't move, but occasionally the menotomy is broken by a charging villain, an incoming projectile (which you must shoot in midair), or a hostage situation. As with other rail shooters, play mechanics boil down to simple twitch, point, and click. However, the pacing is a little better than the typical rail shooter fare.

The fundamental concept certainly isn't new. The difference here is a pseudo-3D environment, rendered in rough-cut polygon graphics, and a real-time sense of urgency. The 3D environment is a boon for gamers because it offers a partially interactive environment and realistically modeled villains. You can shoot and shatter windows, destroy crates, shoot out tires and blow up cars. The bad guys also react in real-time to your attacks. If you shoot one in the hand, he'll grab it in pain. Hit his kneecap and his leg will crumple as he



TOP OF THE ACADEMY *Virtua Squad* does have some nice features for a rail shooter such as interactive environments (like breakable windows) and neat villains

crawl. One welcome addition to an otherwise fair port is two-player modem or LAN mode that can be either cooperative or combative. However, even this tends to get repetitive after awhile.

Perhaps there's a market for these ports with Win 95 newcomers who don't want to give up their arcade/console memories. As is often the case, however, what once looked so cool and innovative now seems pretty lame, especially when compared to content-rich, graphically superior titles like *Eidos' Tomb Raider* or *E&S' Fate to Black*. Most computer gamers expect more than what they will get with this game. Sega should have either overhauled and improved the original or left well enough alone. **C**



AN OLD BEAT *Virtua Squad* was a hit in the arcades, but despite decent pacing and fun gameplay, it's just a simple, repetitive rail shooter

falls to the floor. The limited interactivity and the realistic villains do elevate this game above the usual rail shooter crowd, but they still aren't enough to offset the predictability and repetitiveness of the gameplay.

Despite its rudimentary design, *Virtua Squad* requires a lot of computing muscle to be playable. Sega offers keyboard, mouse and gamepad control options, but the mouse is best. Unfortunately, the mouse also makes the game a little too

APPEAL: Rail shooter fans and arcade gamers who liked the arcade and console versions.

PROS: Realistic character motion and death, interactive environment, two-player modem and LAN play, better pacing than other rail shooters.

CONS: Rough polygons and poor texturing, high system overhead, repetitive gameplay, an old port.



Price: \$44.95
System Requirements:

Pentium 75 or better processor, 16MB RAM, 20MB free hard-disk space, Windows 95, 2x CD-ROM drive; supports Diamond Edge 3D graphics cards, all Win 95-compatible sound cards, joysticks, and gamepads.

of Players: 1-2 (modem/MPX LAN)
Protection: None (CD must be in drive)
Designer: AM2
Publisher: Sega
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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #363

GT
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Bloodmobile

More Bugs In Gameplay Than On The Windshield
Mar NECRODOME's Vehicular Splatterfest

by Robert Coffey

Developed by Raven Software, the same folks responsible for *HEXEN* and *HEXEN: NECRODOME* seems to promise more than the average 3D shoot-'em-up delivers. But bogged down by lack of imagination and some infuriating bugs, the game never realizes its potential.

NAPALM IN THE MORNING

NECRODOME is set in yet another post-apocalyptic future where gladiators man heavily armed cars called Raiders, battling in arenas across the United States. As a Raider you're pitted against each arena's defenses in what is essentially a game of Capture the Flag. You can pick up six different weapons to mount to your Raider as well as a number of single-use "Blast gear," but despite the variety, you'll find only two or three of the weapons useful as you progress through the game.

In a novel twist,

NECRODOME requires you to leave the safety of your vehicle to succeed, since many power-ups and switches are reachable only on foot. Hitting the Delete key pops you out of your Raider, turning you into a vulnerable, shotgun-toting Runner. When your Raider is destroyed, you live on as a Runner—if only for a short while. Dodge and shoot your way back to the arena's starting point and you'll find a new, stripped-down Raider you can command.

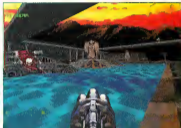
Though *NECRODOME* supports a mouse or joystick, only the keyboard controls can be customized.

RUNNING ON EMPTY

Visually, *NECRODOME* is a mixed bag. While geared-down infantrymen erupt into a mess of twitching limbs and vehicles blow up better than a '76 Pace, most enemy vehicles look nearly identical and absolutely nonthreatening. A few arenas feature ice patches and lava flows, but most sport the same dreary look of gloom.

The level design in *NECRODOME* is similarly unimaginative, never taking advantage of the true 3D environments. All arenas are wide open spaces, eliminating any real chance for ambush or surprise and, therefore, any possibility of excitement. Plus, almost every arena forces you to hit a series of switches to get to the flag. It's uninspired, repetitive gameplay.

NECRODOME's biggest drawbacks are a number of terrible bugs. Chief among these is your Raider's tendency to get stuck on corners and edges of walls. You cannot move, despite the fact that nothing is blocking you. You must either take time to slowly steer clear of the phantom obstruction or jump out



WATERED DOWN *NECRODOME* isn't much better than the typical 3D shooter. Plus, bugs and uninspired level design take away much of the fun.

of the car and shoot it dead so you can get a new one. Neither option is appealing when a rocket-blasting Sentinel is approaching. Equally unattractive is restoring a saved game, since *NECRODOME* can be saved only after beating an arena. On top of this, you sometimes lose all control of movement after your Raider's destruction. Throw in periodic lock-ups and you're assured some bald spots from hair-pulling.

There is some value in multiplayer gaming—in a cooperative play option two players can man one Raider. But unless you're mad for first-person shooters, *NECRODOME* is just another also-ran. ❌

FAPPEL: Gehard shooter fans and particularly violent bumper car enthusiasts.

MPRO: Big guns, big targets, and big explosions; good multiplayer action over network or modem.

ICONS: Noadscript level design; repetitive, connect-the-dot single player gameplay; some really annoying, game-halting bugs.



Price: \$49.99

System

Requirements:

Pentium 60 or better processor, 8MB RAM, 20MB hard drive space, Windows 95, 2x CD-ROM drive, 1MB SVGA graphics card, supports mouse, joystick and Windows 95 compatible sound cards

of Players: 1-4 (LAN)

Protection: None (CD-ROM must be in drive)

Designer: Raven

Software

Publisher: Mindscape,

inc.

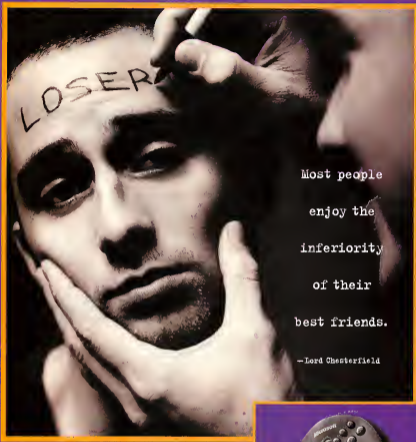
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HOOFING IT One nice change of pace is that you can run around on foot. Also, if your vehicle gets destroyed, you can always hop out and find another one.



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Toss The Dice

A Lot Of Risk, A Lot Gained For Hasbro

by Terry Coleman

While it never sold as many copies as Monopoly, Risk was still popular enough over the past few decades that old Mr. Penny bags himself might have occasionally felt a

twinge of jealousy. After all, who wouldn't be tempted to leave even the lavish confines of Boardwalk and Park Place for a chance to visit—much less conquer—the mysterious lands of Yulask, Madagacar, and Komchutak? Make no mistake: Like its cousin STRATEGY, Risk is no wargame, despite the neo-military trappings; yet it certainly has more depth than MONOPOLY, CLUE, or any other classic board game we grew up with. But all the attempts to bring Risk to the computer up to now have been lackluster at best, hampered by middling AI and a lack of good multiplayer options. Luckily, Hasbro learned its lesson, because now in some ways, Risk even outshines MONOPOLY CD-ROM on the computer.

THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

If Hasbro had simply given us an SWCA version of the classic game with multiplayer options, Risk addicts would have been happy. The big surprise is that the design team preserved the flavor of the original while offering an advanced game that greatly increases the depth of the game without really increasing the difficulty.

Classic Risk is the game we grew up with, complete with unpronounceable territories—except the "armies" are now called "battalions." The

addition of new maps—with more odd-sounding territorial names—for America, Europe, Asia, and the world is the perfect way to keep the game fresh. Meanwhile, the mechanics are still familiar; you turn cards in for lots of armies and win by rolling dice better than your opponent. The AI is far better than in previous versions, and if it cheats, at least it doesn't seem to peek at your cards.

Unlike MONOPOLY CD-ROM, this Risk conversion includes most of your favorite house rules. You may turn in sets of cards for rapidly increasing sets of armies or have the armies allotted adhere to a fixed amount. When you conquer an enemy, you may immediately turn in the captured cards for a set or negate this option to keep officers in the game longer.

Free Test Drive

While I would heartily recommend Risk CD-ROM to anyone, some Risk purists may be nonetheless unsure about the prospect of Ultimate Risk. If you're worried about the liberties the enhanced version takes with your old favorite, just log on to <http://www.hasbro.com> and check out the Risk Online Challenge for a test drive. The AI isn't as strong as in the full game, but this demo will give you a taste of advanced game options and styles of play.



If you don't like playing with (and against) those steamroller armies of 70-plus battalions, simply limit battalions to ten per territory.

Some of the options are unique to the CD-ROM version; my favorite is "Island Risk." This is simply flag of war, where you know the strength of enemy forces only when you are adjacent to their specific territory. Outposts and reserves become a necessity, and the possibilities for ambush are nicely enhanced.

RISK GROWS UP

But the best toys are to be found in the aptly named ULTIMATE Risk. The biggest change is that every time you go into battle, you choose tactics for your army on the battlefield (see the "Reckling Down The Battlefield" sidebar). Unlike the vanilla (if possible) maps of CLASSIC Risk, ULTIMATE Risk actually adds a



72-TERRITORY SHUFFLE Limiting in cards for battalions hasn't changed much, despite the new graphics. The program will prompt you if you haven't gained a card (by conquering a territory) on your turn—a nice touch.



Price: \$39.95

System

Requirements: 486 DX2-66 or better processor, 3MB RAM (16 recommended), 27MB hard-drive space, Windows 95, 1MB SVGA graphics card, 2x CD-ROM (4x or better recommended), 14.4 baud or better modem, mouse; supports Sound Blaster-compatible sound cards.

of Players: 1-8 (LAN and modem)

Protection: None (CD must be in drive, but "second player CD" included for multiplayer)

Designer: NMS

Original Board Game Designer: Albert Lamorisse

Publisher: Hasbro Interactive

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Breaking Down The Battlefield

In *Ultimate Risk*, each time you battle for a territory, you are greeted with a tactical display similar to this one, where there is a lot more going on than a succession of 3D models in military parade dress. (The terrain here is normal, but the tactical display will reflect mountains, heavy forests, etc., as applicable.) Troop strengths in this battle are almost identical, but Green's 29 battalions lack the charisma of the famous General Ali Pasha, who leads Purple's 32 battalions. Green is in desperate straits over most of the board and launches an all-out attack with a frontal assault card. Purple would like to conduct a fighting withdrawal, but decides against it, as Pasha would lose effectiveness should he abandon the Purple capital to the enemy (note the capital symbol next to the general in the display).

Thus, Pasha plays an attack card of

his own and meets the enemy charge in the center. Unfortunately for Purple, the scales of fate (in the center of the display) tip dramatically toward Green. Note how the display shows Green's forces enveloping those of Purple, forcing their retreat, and capturing the Purple capital. Worse, the brave Ali Pasha is struck down!

Alternatively, Purple could have tried defending one flank or the other, with a smaller chance of losing his general. And all is not lost in any case, as Purple may simply trade three of his battalions received as reinforcements next turn in for another general—provided he can afford it, given his worsened strategic situation. Keep in mind that tactical cards,

unlike territory cards or mission cards, are retained and reused from one turn to the next; it's better to think of them as options rather than cards per se. All of the best part of *Ultimate Risk* is that all of these enhanced tactical options merely add to gameplay, not complexity; the computer handles all the various combat modifiers.



number of terrain types to the mix, desert, swamp, mountains, jungle, forest, and even arctic. All of these difficult terrains limit the number of battalions that you may place and give some advantage to the defender.

If the game wasn't tough enough for a prospective conqueror, defenders may build forts that take hits during combat and are equivalent to 21 defensive battal-

ions. Forts take more damage if not enough troops are available to man them. If, for example, a territory had but seven defenders, the fort (worth 21) would take hits at three times the normal rate. Realistic? Well, it is a clever game mechanic. And let's be frank: *Risk* is to serious wargaming as *MONOPOLY* is to exacting economic simulations; don't lose sleep over it.

Regardless, the fun doesn't stop with forts. There are famous generals who pop up, for a mere cost of three replacement armies, and add their values to the tactical fray. You may play short games in which the objective is to capture enemy capitals, eliminate a specific player, or merely capture 50 percent of the known world (rather than all of it). Network and direct modem support let

more human field marshals join in the fun, and there are several "historical" scenarios to keep things lively for many campaigns to come.

Is there anything to dislike? The documentation is minimal, but this is one game where an online manual works well. About the only thing missing is shuffling the cards and picking up the little wooden pieces by hand. And for the added enjoyment that comes with *ULTIMATE RISK*, that's a sacrifice that even old-timers like me will gladly make. ☺



NOT TOO NAPPY The "1792 European" map for this *Ultimate Risk* scenario adds some color; but despite the generals, forts and wonderfully varied terrain, no one is going to mistake this for *EMpires* or *AWES* or *Nirxova's Last Battles*.

APPEAL: Anyone who's ever enjoyed *Risk*, *Stratego*, or similar classics.

PROS: The best Classic *Risk* ever for the computer. Hasbro took a chance with *Ultimate Risk*, and it paid off with a superb enhancement to a classic game.

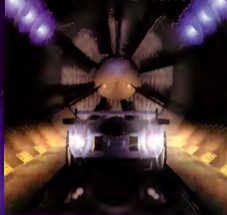
CONS: Despite the excellent online manual, paper documentation could be better. No right mouse button functionality or hot keys. Fairly high system requirements.



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Actual IBM screens shown



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Fleeting Fun

BATTLESHIP Is Surprisingly Addictive, Disappointingly Buggy

by Mark Clarkson

I know, I know, I laughed too. Computer Battleship? Come on! I don't think there is any excuse for electronic talking Battleship, so I wasn't expecting much from Hasbro Interactive's new "ultimate word warfare game." I'm happy to report that I was pleasantly surprised. Hasbro has spiced up the old game considerably, adding island bases, mines, helicopters, fighter planes, AWACS, cruise missiles, new ship types and truly fetching 3D cut-scenes that run underneath the play area. And, in keeping with the cruise sweeping through computer wargames, *BATTLESHIP* has gone real-time.

You start each game with a given number of points to spend on ships. Small destroyers cost only 30 points, while a supercarrier with its four squadrons of aircraft will set you back 200. Each ship takes from two to five squares on a 10x10 grid. This is a fleet.

Once placed, individual ships cannot be moved. The fleet, on the other hand, is free to move about on the larger 6'x6' ocean. Think of a 10x10 grid from an old Battleship game, complete with its complement of plastic ships, sliding from tile to tile around a large kitchen floor. And, depending on the scenario, you may control up to four fleets of different configurations—a carrier group, destroyers for minesweeping, submarines to harass enemy shipping, and so forth.

INTELLIGENCE

As always, the key to beating your opponent is finding him. This new *BATTLESHIP* provides plenty of alternatives to firing blind. In most scenarios, a spy satellite passes overhead regularly and records the locations of enemy fleets at

that moment. Over time, this snapshot becomes less and less accurate.

Carriers can launch planes and helicopters to reconnoiter over a wider area, and fighters can dogfight enemy squadrons and bomb land targets. You can also launch AWACS "eye in the sky" aircraft from islands you control to reconnoiter the surrounding sea.

Finally, enemy fleets appear if they are close enough to your own fleets. At the

although the game ostensibly has two speeds—fast and slow—I was unable to set the slow speed no matter what I did.

BATTLESHIP theoretically goes head-to-head over a local area network, via modem, or across the Internet by way of MPlayer. But you may find, as I did, that you are unable to establish a connection of any sort for multiplayer action. Worse, when I logged on to MPlayer, I found *BATTLESHIP* as yet unsupported (although



HOLY FRIGATE Whether viewed from the main screen or in close-up, the fast action and violent explosions leave the board game behind. Let's hope that Hasbro gets the multiplayer bugs worked out soon.

greatest distance, you'll know what square the fleet is in but not how it's laid out within that square. At close range, you'll see exactly which ships are where and can target your fire accordingly. Of course, you can't see which square the fleet is in even though you can see how it's laid out.

Even right up close, most of your shots will miss for one reason or another, and sinking larger ships such as carriers requires multiple hits per square. Ships won't attack on their own, so you must be everywhere at once, directing each shot fired by a couple dozen ships and as many aircraft while controlling fleet defenses and moving fleets about the ocean.

If you think *WARCRAFT II* and *RED ALERT* turn into frenzied click-fests, you should see a four-way, four-fleet game of *BATTLESHIP*. A scenario can play out in 10 or 15 hectic minutes. Don't think. Worse,

it ought to be in place by the time you read this). I was all set to hate this game, then I was all set to love it until the head-to-head bugs and stick-throttle speed tamped my joy. While I find the single-player version fun, I'm also disappointed, because *BATTLESHIP* could have been that much more fun multiplayer.



Price: \$39.95

System

Requirements: 486-66 or better, 8MB RAM, SVGA graphics, Windows 95, 2x CD-ROM, mouse, modem; supports Sound Blaster-compatible sound cards.

of Players: 1-4 (LAN, modem)

Protection: None (CD must be in drive)

Designer: NMS Software

Publisher: Hasbro Interactive

Beverly, Massachusetts (508) 921-3700

Reader Service # 335

APPEAL: Anyone with a quick mouse finger looking for a brisk, real-time contest.

PROS: Hardly the kids' game we grew up playing, *Battleship* is an addictive game with great sound, graphics and a big fun factor.

CONS: Unlimited depth, serious bugs in game controls and multiplayer options.



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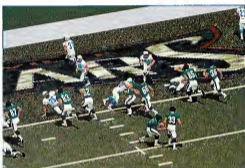
Broken Field Runner

With '97 Edition, FPS FOOTBALL PRO Again Shows Its Championship Mettle

by Dennis McCauley

You'd have to search a long time to find another sports title with as celebrated a history as Sierra's FRONT PAGE SPORTS: FOOTBALL PRO series. With the December release of FOOTBALL PRO '97, the Engadget Bunny of football sims is back, this time in a colorful new Windows 95 uniform. Once again you can take the helm of your favorite team and enjoy the ride as GM, coach, player or all three. Although not without occasionally well-deserved criticisms, Front Page somehow keeps on going and going.

To be honest, I was convinced that this was the year that the batteries would finally run down on this series—and I wasn't the only one. Last year's edition, the end of the MS-DOS line, had little to commend it over 95 CCW Sports Game of the Year other than improved graphics, if left games, and industry observers wondering if the design team was coughing up the ball. In the perceived innovation vacuum, a hungry band of competitors led by EA, Accolade and GT Sports announced major pigskin titles of their own. Now that the referees are getting to the bottom of the pile, however, FRONT PAGE still holds the ball. EA'S MADDEN '97 and GT Sports' ABC MONDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL underachieved, while Accolade's LEGENDS NFL '97 vapor-locked, never even making it onto the field. Like a well-designed draw play, FPSFB '97 has fooled everyone, barreling into the open field while its competitors guggle all around it.



RED ZONE REALISM With the improved SVGA graphics and (finally!) jersey numbers, even the old trap play takes on new life.

WHAT'S NEW PUSSYCAT?

The major buzz with FPSFB '97 is that it's now a native Windows 95 product. The transition is seamless, provided your system files are up-to-date. The game has a very clean graphic look, and player numbers finally adorn the jerseys. The player movement is better than ever, and there are far fewer phantom tackles than in past releases. Sierra's league-leading Camera/Angle Management System (CAMS) is back, with its infinitely flexible views of on-field action. The '97 version has also added team-specific profiles and game plans, making coaching chores easier, but more about that later.

While the graphics are mostly fine, a few design zits do manage to blemish the game's good looks. First, if you want the game to run in full screen, you'll have to set your Control Panel to 640x480. At 800x600 an annoying black border surrounds the field. On offense, receivers

merely seem to catch balls in stride. Even in practice mode with no defenders on the field, wide outs often stop their fly patterns and wait for the rock to arrive. And, in a shortcoming that's unfortunately universal among football sims, FPSFB '97's stadiums are totally vanilla. When will pigskin gamers be treated to authentic renditions of classic NFL venues such as Cleveland's Dog Pound and Chicago's Soldier Field? Are baseball games the only ones destined to enjoy the graphic flavor of their favorite sports shrines?

COACH WITH EASE

FPSFB '97's move to the Windows 95 platform has made coaching chores decidedly easier with a new 32-bit play editor using pull-down menus and a Quick Plan feature that speeds up creation of game plans. The new edition also offers team-specific coaching profiles and game plans. The game's innovative new



Price: \$54.95

System

Requirements:

486/DX2 66 or better

processor (CGW

strongly recommends

a P90 or better), 8 MB

RAM (16 MB recom-

ended), 30-100 MB

hard disk space,

Windows 95, SVGA

graphics adapter, 2x

CD-ROM drive, mouse;

supports Windows 95-

compatible sound

cards, 14.4 modems

and network cards for

multiplayer play

of Players: 1-2

(modern and network)

Protection: None (CD

must be in drive)

Designer: Scott

Youngblood

Publisher: Sierra On-

Line

Bellevue, WA

(206) 649-9800

Reader Service #: 339



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Bugs On The Field

Several bugs in the shrink-wrap release affect FPSFB 97's gameplay, while others tarnish its charm. Sierra is working on its usual patch that addresses these and other "issues." (The patch should be available by the time you read this.) The game's new awards feature, for example, would be a clever addition if players didn't all-too-frequently receive their recognition in the wrong conference. In another league management issue, category leaders are mistakenly based on career stats, not those of the current season. And then there's the rain. For some reason it's black. (Is this an environmental statement of some sort?) I was even able to make it pour down inside Indianapolis' Hoosier Dome.

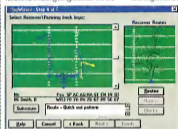
Joysticks appear to be vexing some users, causing troublesome GPF's at times. At the play-calling screen there's no visual cue to inform you that you've made a selection. In previous editions, the chosen play was outlined in white. This time, you're left guessing, and the resulting confusion can really bug you if you accidentally select the



wrong play. In advanced action mode, an old problem has resurfaced that causes unrealistically frequent blocked kicks—sometimes five or more in a single game. While you're

waiting for Sierra's update, drop by the player editor and tweak the AC numbers of your kickers and punters upward to fix this one.

ability to create player sets makes situational substitution a snap. Want your "good hands" players on the field for an onside kick? Pick the players ahead of time, save them as a set, and then simply send them onto the field when the situation arises. FOOTBALL PRO's new Play Wizard speeds up the Xs and Os, leading computer offensive coordination through a five-step process that includes selecting the formation, pre-snap logic, pass routes, holes and blocking assignments. On the



PLAY-CALLING WINDOWS The move to Windows 95 brings 32-bit programming, which leads to easier and more robust play editing.

defensive side of the ball, the Play Wizard walks the user through a complex maze of coverages and defensive looks, making effective play design much simpler.

Unfortunately, Sierra missed a chance to take advantage of a Windows 95 staple: Play names are still restricted to eight characters, which completely ignores Win 95's long filename capabilities. Wouldn't it be simpler to provide descriptive play names rather than force computer coaches to chew on the likes of 266STCHT while reaching for a big play in the heat of battle?

This year's model also features the long sought-after ability to make multiplayer trades. Now you can pull off those megasweeps of up to 3 players per side. Another plus is the printed manual, which Sierra wisely chose to retain rather than going to an online help system. The game's new multiplayer options (modern, network and Internet) are a welcome addition, but are restricted to coach-only mode and exhibition play. Gamers who were hoping for multiplayer arcade action will have to keep the

cardie burning, as will those who dreamed of conducting longer games over the modem. As they used to say in Brooklyn, wait 'til next year.

STILL THE SAME

Those who expected a radical departure from past versions of FOOTBALL PRO may be disappointed by the '97 edition. With the exception of the new features in the play editor, the game's framework is virtually indistinguishable from last year's edition.

The player graphics seem somewhat crispier, with the jersey numbers long overdue. Some of the nifty features that CGW spotted the '96 edition for have been added here, like modern play, while others, such as a salary cap option, didn't make the cut.

From here it looks as if the move to

Windows 95 consumed the bulk of Sierra's efforts, and it must be said that the transition was a smooth one. It looks then, as if Sierra's game plan is to tackle incremental design changes in successive editions rather than to reinvent the wheel in any given year. Last year it was the graphics. This year, Windows 95 and modern play. Next year? Who knows? All I know is that I've reviewed FOOTBALL PRO SPORTS: FOOTBALL for three consecutive years, and I wind up saying the same thing every time: it's still the best football sim on the market. ☺

FAPPEAL: Football gamers of all stripes whether they enjoy coaching or arcade play.

PROS: Great graphics, familiar Win 95 interface, tried-and-true game system, modern and Internet play.

CONS: Some bugs in initial version, including glitches in awards and statistical leaders, far too many blocked kicks, and joystick problems.



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"The soundtrack is incredible, so I love the fact that I can change the music as I play!"



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CIRCLE READER SERVICE 1080



IT SEEMS TO US

(CLICK)

SWINGING A CLUB

(CLICK)

IN MOST PC GOLF SIMS

(CLICK)

ISN'T EXACTLY
LIKE SWINGING A
REAL CLUB

(WHOOSH)



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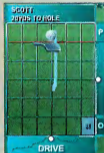
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Different Strokes

Forget fancy terrain and multiplayer modes—the most important aspect of golf, whether real or simulated, is how you swing the club. But how do you accurately represent this action on the computer? One of the earliest golf sims, Accolade's *Max 18*, introduced the swing meter, a somewhat clumsy but serviceable method of simulating backswing, follow-through, hooks and slices. The swing meter has since become the standard, evolving with only slight variations of design (circular or bar style).

Unfortunately, swing meters aren't exactly true-to-life, but rather an exercise in often frantic, perfectly timed mouse clicks. Despite being the bane of many computer golf enthusiasts, no one has dared to offer an alternative. Until now.

In *SimGolf*, *Maxis* introduces the first attempt to change the physics of simulated club action: the MouseSwing. Rather than rely on click-and-hitch reaction timing, players now visually pull the club head for backswing, then move



PUSH IT, BABY *Maxis'* new MouseSwing is a bold attempt to replace the standard swing meter, but it has some drawbacks and requires learning a new system.

forward for impact. It's an ingeniously simple method that—*theoretically*—allows for greater ball control. Put in practice, however, it can be a confusing system to learn.

The vertically oriented Swing Indicator displays the ball and club head resting on the upper Hit Line. The area below is divided into four swing lines, calibrated in quarter marks of increasing force. Simply click and hold the club head, pull the mouse back for the desired backswing, and push forward to make contact. Actual execution is easy, but understanding the subtle intricacies can be daunting. Although greater control is its aim, some diehard golfers may question whether they have any control at all.

For one thing, the power of your shot actually has less to do with the Swing Lines than how fast you push the mouse forward to connect with the ball. For example, a forceful swing from the 1/2 Swing Line can send the ball twice as far as a more casual swing from the Full Swing Line. Another frustrating variable is how straight you can move the mouse during the follow-through. A little off to either side can produce a pronounced hook or slice. You can replace the MouseSwing with a more traditional swing meter, but *Maxis'* version is probably the weakest of its many incarnations.

The MouseSwing does offer excellent spin, fade and draw control. However, the process of learning this new control method may initially put a damper on your game while sending your score sky high. It's a viable idea, and I applaud *Maxis* for their effort, but it may need some fine-tuning to become a clubhouse standard. This is definitely a case of buyer beware.

An icon bar runs down the left side of the screen, offering easy access to instant replays, a chat window, score card, multimedia tips and online documentation. Other options allow you to adjust variables such as weather and terrain. Finally, you can zoom the main view in or out, adjust your aim, and display both an on-screen wind indicator and contour grid.

With the exception of the new MouseSwing (see sidebar), *SIMGOLF's* play mechanics are pretty standard. Screen updates are instantaneous and the golfer animations are fluid. The only weak point is that the ball remains the same size on the tee as it appears 190 yards down the fairway. Although the terrain is nicely shaded and scaled to show distance, this weak representation of the ball tends to shatter the illusion of depth.

ROLL YOUR OWN

Tired of playing the same old holes? Tired designing your own with *SIMGOLF's* Course Architect, a separate program that interfaces with the game. Essentially a CAD program with cheats, the Course Architect gives you control over every aspect of the game. You can pick and place terrain styles, objects, elevations, slopes, green sizes, bunkers, pans and fairway shapes, among many other variables. Try out your designs before plunking down green fees, and modify existing courses to increase or decrease the challenge. This is absolutely the best course designer to date (Accolade's *JACK NICKLAUS 4* will be a formidable challenger, though), but the Architect's steep learning curve may scare off less adventuresome players, which would be a shame, since it's one

of the game's biggest selling points.

Overall, *SIMGOLF* is on par with its more established competitors and offers something they can't: a full-featured course construction kit and Internet play (at least until Access releases a Net patch for *LANE 1 S*). So give *Maxis* credit in an incredibly crowded field; they've come out swinging in a big way. **G**

APPEAL: Avid golfers with a desire to create their own courses.

PROS: Good course designer, crisp graphics, the first golf sim to offer Internet play.

CONS: Performance can be painfully slow on 486 systems. Steep learning curve for both MouseSwing and course architect.





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The Great Race

Sierra Revs Up NASCAR Sequel With Host Of Outstanding Improvements

by Gordon Goble

With a track record that includes landmarks such as INDIANAPOLIS 500: THE SIMULATION, INDYCAR RACING, and NASCAR RACING, it's hard to imagine that Papyrus Design

Group is capable of building anything less than a winning race sim. Let's face it: Dave Kammert, Adam Levesque and company know all about very fast, very authentic computerized automobiles.

Be assured that Papyrus/Sierra's NASCAR RACING 2 continues down that near-legendary road of glory. Like INDYCAR II, NASCAR 2 is a sequel to what was already an outstanding game. But unlike INDYCAR II, this is a nearly wholly revised course—one that I make it impossible to go back once you've checked it out.

CHROME JOB

The upgrades are obvious from the outset, with a racing system that's far more intuitive and sophisticated than that of NASCAR I. Most intriguing is the Driver's Info section, which includes full stats and head shots of all participants (yes, that includes one Mr. Earlhardt), and access to the revised car paint utility. Although it's still fairly primitive, the NASCAR 2 paint shop will let you customize your car the way you want it.

The NASCAR 2 garage, meanwhile, displays all pertinent details on a single screen and looks a little like a crew chief's clipboard. A Comments section for each specific setup is a nice touch, but, in keeping with real-life NASCAR mandates, adjustments to the front air dam and stagger are no longer permitted.

Addressing one of the more vociferous complaints about NASCAR I—that of



LAST LAP TAKEN it may not be of much use after incidents such as this, but the NASCAR RACING 2 replay now comes with tons of vital information.

"It's too hard!"—Papyrus has computerized auto-braking and auto-shifting with steering assistance and, believe it or not, a pure arcade mode! Now, don't go getting vitasans of DAYTONA USA in your head, but the arcade mode certainly removes some of the four-tire dynamics of a full simulation, and gives the less patient (skilled?) driver a chance to run in the big leagues. Too bad arcade lap times stood as all-time track records—this is something Papyrus shouldn't have allowed.

TOO REAL

But for those of us who hunger for cutting-edge driving realism, NASCAR's never been better. Although Papyrus has managed to do away with some of the more difficult (read: income) parts of the original, they've replaced them with far more authentic yet no less taxing tests. No longer will you find yourself burdened with cold tires at the green

flag while the computer cars streak away, an unrealistic wobble through tight turns, or brakes that just don't work. And you can forget about grass that feels more like ice.

What you will find is a car with enough power to let you do standing-start 360s, something that'll get you out of some tight predicaments on the track and in the pits. This performance is enhanced with better brakes and more race-car-like handling—this isn't a modified street car and it doesn't feel like it anymore.



WHO NEEDS DECALS? The NASCAR 2 paint shop will let you blend colors, slip on decals and import .PCX files.

Price: \$54.95
System Requirements:
486/95 or better processor (Pentium 75 or better recommended), Windows 95 or MS-DOS 5.0 or greater, 16 MB RAM, 22 MB hard disk space (98 MB recommended), 320x200 VGA graphics (256-color SVGA display recommended), 2x CD-ROM, mouse, supports all major sound cards, wheel/pedal combo, joystick, 9600-baud modem or greater (for multiplayer).

of Players: 1-8 (modem)

Protection: None (CD must be in drive)

Designers: Papyrus Design Group

Publisher: Sierra On-Line

Bellevue, WA
(206) 649-9800
Reader Service # 338

Right on Track

One of the best things about NASCAR 2 is that the tracks have been significantly altered and improved over the original version. For starters, the new game ships with sixteen circuits. That's seven more than the original, and although licensing issues still block the inclusion of the storied Daytona Speedway, there's more than enough variety (including both the Watkins Glen and Sears Point road courses) to keep anyone occupied for a long time.

Speaking of Watkins Glen, there is perhaps no better spot to check out the big changes Papayus has furnished this time around. When you first hit the track, you'll notice a furious attention to detail—buildings, towers, clouds, distant farms and even the individual leaves on a tree. There's far more shading too, on objects like grandstand supports, foliage, signage, and more. Even track texture, which has been there all along, has been improved so it really does simulate blurred pavement.

Virtually everything in the game has a newfound clarity with a lot less "sparkle," from the rear bumper of that far less angular and jagged car ahead to your silo on the horizon. Interestingly, Papayus has managed to package all this stuff with an improved frame rate, one that had me running high-resolution, full-field races at the Glen with all but grass detail cranked wide open.

And the good news doesn't end with hot graphics. NASCAR 2 offers a schedule brimming with character-laden tracks, while narrowing the gap between the frustratingly difficult and the apocalyptically easy. At the Glen for instance, that horrid Inner Loop has been widened and marginally "de-kinked," as a result claiming far fewer victims than in the past. At



WATKINS GLEN = CRUMPLED HOODS That speed and gear overlay on the left may be switched on or off in-game. So can those tire temps, but they're far more valuable, especially on ovals.

Phoenix, the desert demons have been completely exorcised and it's suddenly become a great track. Just try blasting out of the pit exit then hurtling through its dog-legged back straight—a veritable impossibility in the past—and you'll see what I mean.

But while traditionally tough courses are less intimidating, the mundane "easy" tracks have a new edge that make them that much more compelling. Wide multi-grooved NASCAR 1 courses like Michigan and Talladega for example are still wide but far less grooved in NASCAR 2, with an apron and low line that can be positively hellacious. Stand on it and turn left? Hardly. Darlington too has seen a ton of refurbishing, and now you've got a no-banked low line that transforms abruptly to a high-banked high line, something that's sure to keep racers honest and up near the wall.

What about the two dozen drivers out there with you? Well, for the most part, they're up to Papayus' high AI standards, but some of what was broken back in NASCAR 1 hasn't been fixed in the sequel. This means it's entirely possible to have a full train lined up behind you following a spin, the poor mannikulls getting diagonal and knowing not where to go. It also means they may refuse to recognize your existence if you've done something stupid, like get wobbly along the apron. Should a pileup occur, there's a bevy of crash sounds that vary depending on the severity of the incident. There's also a nice ka-chunk when shifting, improved wheel spin noise, and most importantly, the talking crew chief/pitstop.

Ah yes, a guy who'll undoubtedly save

your bacon time and time again. He'll guide you through traffic ("Car right! Still there? Clear!"), around accident scenes ("Watch that crash straight ahead. Stay low!") apprise you of current status ("Okay, those three cars ahead are far position") and both berate ("What a bonehead move!"), or congratulate ("You just won yourself a race. Dinner's on me."). He can be adjusted or turned off, but since he'll do everything for you but save your current race (where did that feature go?), he's better left on.

NASCAR 2 ships with support for 3D accelerator boards based on the Rendition chip, and is ready for 32-player Net racing via EEN, when that system is up and running later this year. When you factor in the typically stunning Papayus

nplay mode that now gives current position and stats throughout and the usual superb crash effects and break-apart cars, NASCAR Racing 2 is one hell of a ride. **C**

APPEAL: Anyone with an appreciation of what it takes to modify and race stock cars. NASCAR Racing vets looking for more excitement and realism.

PROS: Graphic detail and clarity that blows away any other Papayus game to date. Exceptional car model and more sensible track depiction. Less quirks than the original and a second pair of eyes to help you through.

CONS: Basically wonderful. A few weeks under unusual circumstances. No save race feature.



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caddie you can turn to for advice. So when you're ready to stop playing a round...start playing British Open Championship Golf!



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Penalty Lap

Some Coin-Ops Are Better Left At The Arcade

by Gordon Goble

The coin-op version of Daytona USA, with that big screen in front of you, a force-feedback steering wheel and foot pedals, huge sound and a real person to drive against, is arcade racing at its inimitable best. Now Sega offers a little of that big-time stock car excitement to computer gamers with DAYTONA USA. Unfortunately, that's just what you get—a little of the excitement mixed with heavy-duty system requirements, inexcusable control problems, and lots of confusion.

ENGINE TROUBLE

You'll need a beefy machine just to get to the starting line. Even the recommended P90 with 16MB RAM may not be enough with just that system, I was forced to go with a small, postcard-sized window for all on-track action. Worse, by selecting a joystick as my control device and assigning the forward/backward motions for acceleration and braking (a

The game refused to remember my button/axis preferences after shutdown, so I had to reenter everything each time I played. Incomplete? Odd? How's about a program that calls a joystick a "PC handle"?

For that matter, how's about a manual that says "Press ALT or F9 to access this menu" when the F9 key doesn't do a thing? How's about a Win 95 game that doesn't acknowledge the existence of a mouse? Finally, in bold lettering, there's the "Difficulty Level" setting. I definitely had some difficulty with that one.

With such hurried pre-Christmas programming evident throughout, the racing seems almost secondary. However, DAYTONA does offer decent 3D textured mapped graphics on a par with, say, Interplay's WINDSURF, multiple viewer perspectives (including in-car without mirrors), end-over-end crashes, and an interesting driving model that rides the line between simulation and pure arcade—just like the coin-op.

But though the racing is relatively entertaining, it is limited to just a trio of tracks. And, the program does not offer qualifying, custom car modifications, or anything other than single one-off races—so you can forget about contesting a full series of events. Plus, multiplayer driving is not supported—we're not down at the arcade anymore, Toto.

A "PC mode" has been added for this port, one that asks you to win the race



WHEEL-TO-WHEEL ACTION in the default exterior perspective, note the gauges, dials and displays that fill the Daytona USA screen.

rather than run the circuit and hit the checkpoints before time expires. It's a nice touch, as is the optional manual tranny and cars that can spin out and even drive backward. Unfortunately, your vehicle will merge through other cars at times rather than collide with them, especially when backtracking. Dang. No NASCAR RACING-type head-ons here.

Throw in some insipid Beach Boys-type synth music (this must be the only game that could grow an entire tune from the phrase "Rolling Start?"), out-of-sync engine rumbles and chopped audio clips, and DAYTONA USA becomes a sleepy stock car exercise that pales in comparison to NASCAR RACING 2's arcade mode. Consider yourself warned. ☹



NO AIRBAGS ALLOWED There's no such thing as a break-apart car in Daytona USA, but you'll be sure to get airborne after certain collisions.

natural move for a veteran racer), no longer could I toggle through the game's menus. In the end, I got pretty good at choosing the keyboard for menuing, then switching to the stick for driving, but it was uncomfortable to say the least.



Price: \$44.95
System

Requirements:

Pentium 90 or better,
Windows 95, 16MB
RAM, 2x CD-ROM
drive; Windows 95
compatible sound and
peripherals supported.
of Players: 1

Protection: None (CD
must be in drive)
Designer: Sega of
Japan

Publisher: Sega
Redwood City, CA
888-SEGASALES
Reader Service # 339

APPEAL: Coin-op vets who want to spruce up their game without dropping money for each attempt.

PROS: Looks and plays just like the arcade game. With wheelspin, drifts, and sensitive steering, offers a middle ground between arcade and sim driving models.

CONS: Heretofore control implementation, no multiplayer mode, and a sense of incompleteness to the entire program.



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A Fine Cuban

It Flies Like The Real Thing, But This Hog Has Warts

by Robin G. Kim

The Warthog: it sounds mean, it looks mean, and with the biggest airborne gun in the world and 90 percent more endurance than a B-1, it is mean. When the engine of the game is close air support, the A-10 Thunderbolt II has no peer. Despite the A-10's popularity among flight sim fans, the only serious treatments of it have been for the Macintosh, in the form of Parsoft's A-10 Assault and its sequel, A-10 Crowd With Activision's War 95 port of A-10 CUBA. PC owners finally get a chance to check out the simulation engine Mac flies have been bragging about for so long.

Because A-10 CUBA is priced more like a mission disk than a full game, it should not be surprising that some shortcuts have been taken, the most obvious and lamentable being the lack of a printed manual.

Documentation is instead provided as a Windows help file. Consists have also

been cut when it comes to gameplay, but mostly on the infrastructure side. A-10 includes just four simple training missions plus a dozen canned combat missions in Cuba. It has no support for campaigns, pilot careers, or flight planning (though you are able to make your own weapon selections). Mission debriefing consists merely of a "you win/you lose" message, no scores, no kill statistics. The focus of this sim is clearly on what happens after you've hopped into the cockpit,

INTERACTIVE COCKPIT

The first thing that strikes you when you enter the plane is the meticulously re-created instrument panel, which contains so many gauges and indicators that a look-down view is necessary to take them all in. Supplementing the complete set of key commands, almost every button, knob, dial and handle can be manipulated with the mouse—a welcome option for players who hate memorizing keys and prefer a more hands-on feel.

Looking around from the cockpit is done by panning among 64 evenly spaced

otherwise bog down, the graphics engine cheats a bit by slowing the passage of game time, sometimes by a factor of two or more, but these time warps usually aren't noticeable.

Although the terrain looks rather blurry, it's varied enough to make for interesting low-level flying. Shrub and trees appear when you're close to the ground, providing good altitude references during daylight missions. Object graphics are well done, showing such details as external ordnance, rotating turrets, and moving control surfaces on all A-10s.

CLEARED TO TAXI

Most sorties start with you in or near a hangar, ready to taxi out onto the runway with the other aircraft accompanying you on the mission. This is a nice touch of realism, but the process sometimes takes minutes and there's no way to skip past it. Once in the air, you'll be treated to a truly state-of-the-art flight model that performs realistically across the entire range of speeds, altitudes, G-loads, and weapon configurations. Regrettably, this wonderful flight model is



AIRPORT FROM HELL The huge towers in the wackier multiplayer arenas may not be realistic, but having something to hide behind makes for exciting aerial deathmatches.

view directions. The system is adequate for navigating and attacking ground targets, but its narrow field of view and huge blind spot overhead make it entirely unsuitable for dogfighting. The flat-shaded polygon world beyond the canopy looks primitive by today's standards, but edlists high 640x480 frame rates compared to most texture-mapped sims. Pentium 90 and faster systems can get smooth updates even at 1024x768. To maintain a good frame rate when performance would oth-

er hobbled by deficient joystick handling settings that make fine control difficult, create confusing problems on many PCs, and cause rudder pedal inputs to be reversed. These flaws nitn what would otherwise be a pleasantly fluid feel, and can make aiming weapons an exercise in frustration. A patch is in the works to improve joystick response and fix the rudder pedal reversal, and it should be available on Activision's Web page by the time you read this.)



Price: \$34.95

System:

Requirements: 486/55 or better, 8 MB RAM, 40 MB hard drive space, SVGA video card, CD-ROM drive, Windows 95, full support for DirectX 2.0 drivers, Sound Blaster 16-compatible sound card

of players: 1-8 (modem, IPX, or TCP/IP, one CD required for every two players, additional players can license the use of the same CD for \$15 each)

Protection: None
Designer: Eric Parker
Publisher: Activision
Los Angeles, CA
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Reader Service #: 340

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Fun With Physics

The most impressive aspect of A-10's virtual world is the verisimilitude of its basic physics modeling. Every object seems to have real mass and responds appropriately to forces exerted on it. Thus, your A-10 leans to the outside when taking a turn a bit too fast on the tarmac, and it may even start to skid. Hit the wheel brakes to regain control and the nose will dip. When landing, if you touch down too hard or while improperly aligned, your gear may collapse or it may only bend, remaining usable but frozen in place, for the duration of the mission.

Shock waves from explosions are also well represented. If an enemy Su-25 attacking your base drops a bomb a short distance away, your plane might be shoved to one side by the blast, in addi-

tion to any structural and systems damage it sustains. In the air, the same can occur from near misses by flak or SAMs.

The physics model manifests itself in flight in a variety of interesting ways. Weight and drag effects for external ordnance take into account the placement of each weapon, so asymmetric loads will cause a slow roll to one side. The massive 9000-lb recoil of the GAU-8 Avenger 30mm cannon causes a noticeable deceleration when fired, just as you'd expect, and the rounds are downward due to gravity. Most remarkable of all is the way the plane handles



▶ TAKES A LICKING The Warthog soldiers on despite tremendous damage. Just don't use your A-10's split-airframe style air brakes with half a wing missing unless you enjoy flying sideways.

with parts of its wings and/or tail blown off. Dealing with the resulting roll and yaw movements requires careful handling to avoid stalling out.



▶ UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL Even the most resilient enemy tanks are no match for the A-10's powerful 30mm cannon.

A wide assortment of ordnance types is available for each mission, from cluster bombs to Maverick missiles. Some weapons are simulated with great accuracy—bombs, for example, can be dropped singly, in pairs, or riddled with a user-defined interval between each release—but others are less than realistic. Mavericks cannot lock onto targets, greatly reducing their effectiveness. Hypervelocity rockets are present, even though they never saw production, and unlike the laser beam-riding prototypes, the ones in A-10 are unguided. HARMs (high-speed

anti-radiation missiles) can also be carried in the sim, but not on the real plane.

MISSION IMPOSSIBLE

Stickers for accuracy might wish to avoid loading weapons unavailable to real A-10 pilots, but most of the combat missions are already extremely difficult due to the high threat level and multiple objectives you must accomplish and would be virtually impossible without taking along at least some HARMs. Missions are made even tougher by the realistic lack of missile launch warnings—you must spot the telltale smoke trail yourself—and the need to identify air targets visually. The AI of enemy air and ground units is outstanding, but your wingmen and escorts are just as capable. Unfortunately, there is no way to communicate with your wingmen or other flights.

The game includes smooth running network and modem play for those who tire of matching wits with a computer, but it supports only air-to-air death-matches—not exactly in keeping with the plane's intended purpose—and lacks a chat feature. The dosing environments range from the mundane to the other-

worldly, one arena involves low gravity combat in an asteroid field.

DEPTH OVER BREADTH

A-10 CUBA doesn't have much breadth, and although its missions are sufficiently complex to warrant trying different approaches and the scenarios are interesting enough to encourage exploration, replayability is still relatively low. What the sim does offer is a limited—but intense, immersive, and realistic—experience that should appeal to hard-core flight sim experts who are up to the significant challenges it presents. **✎**

▶ APPEAL: Veteran flight sim players desiring exceptionally challenging missions in a realistic environment; die-hard Warthog fans.

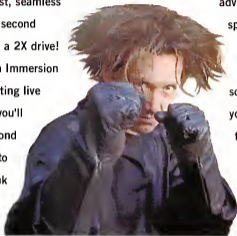
▶ PROS: Interesting missions, great flight model, excellent AI, fast SVGA frame rates.

▶ CONS: No campaign, limited replay value, quirky joystick handling, no wingman commands, inadequate cockpit views, no printed manual.



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Lightning Strikes

The Third JETFIGHTER Is Less Authentic But More Intense

by Scott A. May

Mission Studios shoots for the middle ground between hard-core sims and aerial shoot-em-ups with *JetFighter III* (JF3), and scores a sizeable hit. This is the long-awaited sequel to designer Bob Dinneman's two previous hits, published under the Velocity brand. As before, this is essentially an entry-level sim, designed with a short learning curve, yet long on detail and replayability. Novices will like it because it's fast, fun, and easy to get into. More advanced pilots may initially scoff at its reduced flight model and tactical liberties, yet they won't be able to deny the game's dazzling environment. Can a sim have it both ways? JF3 proves that it can.

UN REAL

The action in JF3 unfolds in the near future, circa 1998. You assume the role of an elite fighter pilot, part of the United Nations Rapid Deployment Force (URDF), stationed aboard the *UNS Protector*, a Nimitz-class nuclear aircraft carrier. Your ultimate goal is simply to quash aggression and maintain world peace, through "whatever means necessary" (read: deadly force). Your enemies include drug cartels, terrorists, and evil dictatorships.

The game is campaign based, covering—but not limited to—three general regions: Cuba, Argentina, and Chile. Covering more than 3.5 million square miles of real-world terrain (culled from USCS terrain databases), your airspace also includes parts of south



FLY BY WIRES It's easy to find the electrical plant you must bomb—just follow the power wires. JF3's landscape is chock full of such details.

Florida, the Bahamas, Puerto Rico, and bordering South American countries. Enough praise can't be heaped on the game's pinpoint terrain mapping, covering every peak, valley, river and coastal inlet. Fly low enough and you can even follow roadward power lines from village to village.

The three campaign scenarios are nonlinear, featuring more than 90 missions that branch according to your performance. Mission tasks range from routine surveillance and air support to aerial combat and attacking ground targets on land

and sea. In addition, instant missions give you a taste of action without affecting your campaign score. Included in the instant missions are 13 training lessons, which can be played individually or as a campaign. Here you'll learn the basics of combat flight, from takeoffs and landings to navigation and all variations of weapons training—each supplemented by in-depth printed instructions. Finally, there's a free flight mode for those times you just want to test your wings and bask in the sights.

AERIAL TOURS

The game supports four graphic resolutions (320x200, 640x350, 640x400, and 640x480), which can be changed on the fly via in-flight menu or function keys. This means you can engage in combat at lower, faster resolutions, then switch to hi-res for nonaggressive sightseeing. Unfortunately, not all video cards are created equal. My My Comos Logic PCI card, for example, stubbornly refused to display anything but the lowest and high-



BOLTER! BOLTER! Although carrier landings are forgiving, they're still challenging, as JF3 models the speed of the approach better than its predecessors.



Price: \$50

System

Requirements: 486-100 or better (Pentium 133 or better recommended), 8MB RAM (16MB required for 640x480 resolution), 4x CD-ROM drive, MS-DOS 5.0 or greater, 30MB hard-drive space, 256-color SVGA graphics, supports most joysticks, rudder pedals, throttle controllers, and Sound Blaster-compatible sound cards
of Players: 1
Protection: None (CD must be in drive)
Designer: Bob Dinneman
Publisher: Mission Studios
 Inverness, IL
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TRAILS TO HELL One of the most impressive aspects of JF3 is being able to spot aerial misses from miles away by the numerous missile trails.

est resolutions, all others produced only screen garbage. A universal VESA driver is supplied, but even this won't guarantee success.

You're given the option of flying two planes, the F-16 Hornet and the F-22 Lightning II. Puntish beware: despite the fact

that the Navy never chose to order F-22, this sim features an "F-22N" carrier-based craft. Both aircraft are a blast to fly and are nicely rendered (although no match for Naval grade's similar F-22 Lightning II). It's up to you to decide which aircraft will accomplish each mission most effectively.

This sim features a solid, but not totally unrealistic, flight model. There are some quirks—the ailerons are effective in full stalls, and rudders work at high speeds. Also, there seems to be little discernible difference in flight dynamics between the F-22N and F-16 Hornet—certainly not the case in real life. Still, while the hard-core crowd may scoff, the flight model is basically satisfying, unlike arcade games like *SILENT THUNDER*.

There are many nice touches, such as turbulence burps and concussion shocks when flak explodes nearby. The best effect, however, is the game's tangible sense of velocity, whether you're screaming down the center deck or zipping 200 feet above the landscape. Few flight sims can match the realistic, gut-level feeling of speed like JF3.

ARMED AND DANGEROUS

Your onboard ordinance includes the standard stuff: missiles, air-to-air and air-to-ground rockets, and bombs. As you advance through the campaign, the skies become increasingly crowded with a wide range of

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More Free Stuff!

Mission Studios maintains a strong online presence, with support on the Internet (www.missionstudios.com), CompuServe (go PSFDRUM or GAMEPUB), and America Online (keyword: mission studios). In addition to the usual patches, FAQs and updated product announcements, the company offers a Mission of the Week. These new instant missions are created by Mission Studios staff, often using ideas submitted by users. Though a far cry from an actual mission editor (promised, along with new campaigns, in the first add-on disk), this is the next best thing.

On another fun, but slightly trivial, note is the Decal of the Week. These are graphic logos—created with the game's built-in paint shop—that can be applied to your aircraft from the hangar deck within the game.

More substantial product support offers updated drivers that address problems with joystick, rudder, and throttle calibrations (such as the Microsoft SideWinder, Thrustmaster, and CH Force FX). Also upcoming: drivers for high-end 3D video cards, including 3DFX and Rendition-based boards; additional sound card drivers; and a patch that will let you customize custom joystick button assignments.

fighters, bombers, interceptors, and support aircraft, both friend and foe. Enemy aircraft AI is quite good at offensive and defensive maneuvers, setting the stage for some intense, prolonged dogfights. Lately, your wingmen feature AI cut from the same cloth, and you do have some basic control over their actions.

Other notable features include a scrolling virtual cockpit, clearly functional gauges, terrain masking (to cloak enemy radar), and the heart-stopping evil of incoming AAA trails. Carrier takeoffs and landings are simplified but realistic, from the jet blast deflectors to the vessels bobbing motion in water.

By far the most impressive aspect of the game is its visual display, which boasts with graphic detail: dynamic light-source shading, translucent clouds, realistic base effects, smoke, fire, and more. Slam the ground and prepare to be assailed at the accurately ren-

dered buildings, airports, electrical towers, trees, houses, highways, and diversely textured farmland. If your processor or video card produces a frame rate stutter, try turning off the clouds or reducing the display area to letter-box size.

The game features a cinematic walking tour of your carrier home base, with multiple decks and rooms to choose from. Die-hard flight jockeys may see this as a straggle filler—multimedia window dressing designed to lure newcomers or, for the truly cynical, merely bulk up the game.

Others will view it as an immersion technique, capturing the atmosphere of ship-board life, thus pulling you deeper into the game.

Evidence of this can be found in the shipboard library, with its multimedia encyclopedia of more than 500 photos, diagrams, and audio commentaries.

Jetfighter III is currently the overall best entry-level combat sim available. Even hard-core sim-shockies are likely to bend their standards a little, once

they feast their eyes on the game's meticulous graphic details and action-filled combat environment. Regardless of expectations or experience, few will deny that JF3 is flat-out fun to fly. **S**

APPEAL: Entry-level flight sim pilots and sim fans looking for an intense if somewhat fantastical combat experience.

PROS: Branching mission free adds to the immersion factor; tactical graphics and sound and an amazing terrain engine; best feeling of speed yet in a flight sim.

CONS: Relaxed flight model and creative liberties will upset sim purists. If you're flying on a P133 or slower, you'll need to turn down the graphic detail.



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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #133

Sub Lite

Tom Clancy's Sub Game Plays More Like A Slow, Wet Flight Sim

by Denny Atkin

Although it's the first effort from Clancy Interactive Entertainment, SSN isn't the first game adaptation of a Clancy novel. The late 1990s saw the wonderful RED STORM RISING from MicroProse and Mindscape's blockbuster HUNT FOR RED OCTOBER. Also, serious submarine gamers may not want to shove their ancient copy of RED STORM RISING yet, as SSN clearly targets the first-time submarine gamer. In fact, it plays more like flying a plane in slow motion than piloting a submarine.

DIVE PLANES

SSN puts a unique perspective on sub-



OH SHIP You'll rarely want to fire at enemy shipping from periscope depth, as you'll become the target of an antiship helicopter

marine control. Instead of popping back and forth between the traditional series of control stations, you control SSN using an external view of your submarine with a simplified control panel below. (Real submarines don't even have periscopes.) On the control panel you'll find a radar-like sonar display, a target classification window, and a multifunction display. The latter handles torpedoes, Tomahawk VLS, and damage control, as well as communications and map and waypoint readouts. You control your sub using a joystick, your

mouse, or the keyboard arrow keys.

Acquiring targets consists of cruising patiently at a slow speed, varying your depth and direction, and trying to spot enemies with your sonar without being noted yourself. You generate noise by firing torpedoes, moving too fast, or using reverse power. Your sonar has active and passive modes, but search is limited to the front and sides.

While you won't be doing any analysis of the sounds in the game, the audio is impressive. Hear sonar pings to your hull creaking to whale songs, sound does much to immerse you in the game—especially if you wear headphones.

DN PATROL

SSN's primary campaign puts you on patrol in the Spratly Islands. After the discovery of oil, the Chinese decide to annex the islands. Your submarine, the USS *Cheyenne*, is almost single-handedly responsible for defending the area from the hostile Chinese fleet. The 15 missions involve attacking enemy ships and subs, escorting allied ships, and launching Tomahawk missiles against land targets. All of these boil down to wiping out every enemy ship you can find, in fact, until all targets are prosecuted, you can't move on to the next waypoint. The missions, introduced by convincing FMV newscasts, grow increasingly challenging. The battle action is fast-paced, with you launching against enemy boats while using decoys, maneuvering, and thermoclines to evade their torpedoes. Unfortunately, these bouts of fast action are punctuated by long periods of searching for the next target. There's also a pre-



NAVY JONES' LOCKER A Chinese Han-class submarine meets its fate, you can set your torpedoes to stealth mode and take out enemies before you're ever detected.

tree game that allows you to create instant missions against up to eight enemy ships and submarines. And a second disc contains a video interview with Clancy.

TAKING THE PLUNGE

SSN should appeal to first-time virtual submariners looking for an easy familiarization experience, and to gamers more interested in action than realism. But experienced sub-game fans looking for a realistic simulation of a nuclear attack sub are better off waiting for *JANE'S 688 ATTACK SUB*. Clancy fans can pick up a trade paperback novelization, but it serves more as additional background than a hint book. **S**

APPEAL: Beginning submarine gamers, SeaQuest fans.

PROS: Very accessible for beginners learning the basics of submarine combat; wonderful visual and sound effects.

CONS: Unrealistic depiction of submarine control; oversimplification means important aspects such as navigation, knocking, and towed arrays are ignored; no time-compression feature.



Price: \$59.95
System

Requirements: IBM-compatible Pentium 80 MHz or better (120 MHz recommended), 8MB RAM (16MB recommended), 10MB hard drive space, SVGA graphics, Windows 95, 2x CD-ROM, Sound Blaster 16 compatible sound card, mouse.

of Players: 1

Protection: None (CD must be in drive)

Designers: Clancy Interactive

Entertainment and Virtus Corporation
Publisher: Simon & Schuster Interactive
New York, NY
(800) 718-4368
Reader Service #: 342

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IBM WARGAMES

Age of Empires 348



Return To Orion

MicroProse Launches A Winner In The Space Race

by Martin E. Cirulis

It's been more than three years since I reviewed **MASTER OF ORION**, a game that revived the entire genre of spaceplottition games almost by itself and established the designers as the flavor of the half-decade in strategy gaming. Now, after three name changes and six-odd months of missed release dates, the sequel **SF** gamers have been sweating in their spasoots for is finally here! **MASTER OF ORION 2: BATTLE AT ANTARUS** is a big game with a big name, but does it measure up to all the long-to-waiting expectations? The answer, as you might have expected, is a complex tale of "Yes and No."

THE GOOD

If you were a fan of **MOO** then you'll be a happy little cow once again, because **MOO2** is a bigger, flashier, more refined game. The basic idea is unchanged; the 4Xs are still important—to win the game you have to *Explore, Expand, Exploit* and *Eliminate* your way to a controlling interest in the Galaxy or at least your neighborhood of 40-odd stars and their surrounding planets. As far as background for this game, **MOO2** is more like a remake than a sequel. The mysterious and beautiful Orion is still here, its devastating technological treasures still protected by the *Uber-Dead* nought known only as *The Guardian*. But now, taking out this city-sized battleship to get a tech edge on your fellow empire is not the only subplot. It seems that the old enemies of the Orion, the pesky *Antarans*, are still alive in hyperspace somewhere, and they pop out from time to time to harass the remaining races of the galaxy. Using ultra-powerful weapons and ships that act like vessels twice their size class, they never capture or colonize, only destroy. So while you have the original carrot, conquering the

Guardian of Orion, there is now an added mission—to make your way into hyperspace and put an end to those psychotic *Antarans* once and for all.

The biggest change to mechanics is the number of ships that can realistically appear in the game. Gone are the days of fleets consisting of 700 frigates and 250 destroyers. In fact, each individual ship now appears on the battlescreen, there are no more "Stacks" at all because, although you might be able to build them, you could never afford the upkeep. **MOO2** uses the concept of command points, generated every turn by starbases, to set a practical limit on the number of ships you can field. Ships require a certain number of com-

munal research model used in other games, where you eventually study everything that catches your eye, players are forced to choose one out of two or three possible discoveries in a discipline. After they make that one discovery, their scientists move on to another discipline, forever losing the remaining technologies in the former discipline unless they trade or steal them from another civilization. This touch is enough to make dealing with the other races much more interesting, and it forces you to make tough choices as well as create a technology profile distinctive to your style of play. This can make for some fascinating "guns or better" choices, a direction sorely missing in other **SF** games.

As for the rest of the game—such things as alien races, ship classes, structures and weapons—it's all bigger and it's all so spiffy. **SVGA**. Everything from the first **MOO** is here, plus a third more goodies. Even old



Price: \$48.99

System

Requirements: 486-66 or better, 8MB RAM, 75MB hard-drive space, SVGA graphics, 2x CD-ROM, DOS 6.0 or Windows 95; supports Sound Blaster-compatible sound cards.

of Players: 1-8

Protection: None (CD must be in drive)

Designer: SimTex

Publisher:

MicroProse/Spectrum
HoloByte
Alameda, CA
(510) 522-1164

Reader Service #: 343



BILLIONS OF STARS Though you're still out to carve a galactic empire, now the pesky *Antarans* are back from space exile to derail your plans.

mand points every turn based on their size; the bigger the ship, the more points it requires. Now you can still have more ships than are supported by your maximum command points, but every point that you go over costs you 10 points of revenue—not a prohibitive sum, but even the most efficient empires will be hurting if they go a death star or two over their command limit.

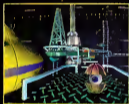
The other major change is in the way technology is researched. Instead of the

fanatics will have enough new toys to keep them busy for hours to come. The computer opponents are good, if not strong. They know most of the dirty tricks and are generally relentless when you're on the run. The AI is definitely the strongest I've yet seen in an initial release from SimTex. All in all, while not revolutionary, **MOO2** shows some welcome signs in design evolution, enough to get the game clear of the **MOIS** (more-of-the-same) stigma.

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AND THE BAD

Where MOCC fails to entirely satisfy is in gameplay itself. The command point system was a great way of limiting those ridiculous monster fleets, but unfortunately the way it's set up now, it completely favors the attacker. Moreover, games still have a tendency to devolve quickly: the first person to build a monster fleet wins. Since your number of ships is so limited, it's impossible to protect all of your planets or even really chew up an attacking fleet by naggng it over two or three star systems. If your big fleet loses to the enemy, it's all over but the crying. 9 times out of 10, a disappointing end to a big game. A small modification, like reducing the command cost of ships sitting in their own star systems, could have made the endgame less of a *fort o'omph*.

Another botched play-balancing idea

was to allow players to create their own custom races without thoroughly testing the impact of the various advantages and disadvantages. Apart from the fact that I personally think it's dumb to treat an entire species like a Leader from *MASTER OF MAGIC*, the inclusion of something called the Creative Advantage renders an extremely cool part of the game completely irrelevant. Being Creative allows a race to receive all the discoveries in a discipline instead of just one—meaning the cost of tough choices is over once you make up your own race.

The multiplayer aspect of this game is also unimpaired. There is no effective player communication and no means for players to smoothly quit or rejoin a



A BIG BANG The welcome departure from untidy huge fleets has been replaced by an equally unbalanced command point system, which still favors the attacker and handicaps defenders.

game in progress. Combine this with very few gameplay options, and it seems more like a network patch for the old MOO than a game meant for the modern age of connectivity from the ground up. You can play this one on TEN, but you probably won't be able to with all the cool options on unless you and your friends have a lot of time and money on your hands.

THE AGE OF ANTARES

Despite these odd shortcomings, *MASTER OF ORION 2* is still way up there on the list of games I have played this winter, just not as high as I would have thought. It's a great game, but I suspect that once the initial rush is over, I'll be glad I didn't give up my copies of *DEADLOCK* or *SINCEWARD* (10/4). What will keep me MOOing long into '97 though, is the fact that it still does some things better than all the rest. So while it may not be all that it could have been, *MASTER OF ORION 2* is more than likely to make you feel like a winner in the space race. ☺

APPEAL: Any aficionado of space-pollution games.

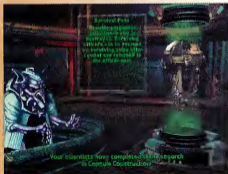
PROS: Some nice developments from the original and some truly awesome technologies. An excellent ship-to-ship combat module.

CONS: Some play-balancing problems, a few initial release bugs and a primitive (by today's standards) multiplayer suite.



Racial Superiority

If you are finding it hard to win with the standard races, go into the custom menu and see what you can do. Most players should pick the zero modifier Dictatorship as a government type. Use your initial points to pick up two crucial advantages: the game unbalancing "Creative" characteristic discussed above, and the Warlord aspect, which gives you bonus command points, allowing you to create larger fleets earlier in the game. If you find yourself needing a disadvantage to pay for extras, the -10 to spying is probably the least painful. Try to avoid negative modifiers to research or revenue, as they will come back to haunt you.



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Red War II

Westwood Sheds Real-Time Light On The War That Might Have Been

by Martin E. Cirulis

Backstory is usually an afterthought in strategy games. With one or two notable exceptions, the premise is usually just enough to inform you going there and killing that. So, it was a real surprise when Westwood's refinement of real-time wargaming, **COMMAND & CONQUER**, offered us a story so good that it enticed you to play just to see the next cut-scene. The material was strong enough that it even prompted a prequel.

Whatever is pseudo-science for us is a reality in this game, and it is nicely reflected in both unit technology and storyline. Here we have Yaski's work going into giant coils that fly Allied units at long range—and Eastern himself is a prize of war. Even the dark and terrible Stalin is a prominent figure in the storyline, and his frightening grin and gillows humor will haunt you in just about every cut-scene on the Russian side. RA picks up a lot of points on style alone.

Whether you play Allies or Soviets, the bootie action is watch the same as in

time to think. While it is possible to adjust the game speed up to above-average C&C time, the increased size of the on-screen playfield still allows for more realistic maneuvers and planning.

Also, you can now give large groups movement orders and force them to remain in their original formation. This alone practically doubles the tactical value of the game. The unit AI is also strong on defense, and units tend to react very well to intrusions into their zone of control, allowing you to rely on them defensively.

And speaking of AI, the computer players in RA may not be anything to write home about, but they have learned a few nasty tricks. In general, any lack of wit is well compensated by numbers, and enemy harassment attacks are now much stronger and tend to come from two directions simultaneously. The only real disappointment here is that your opponent is still usually as blithely unaware of being blasted from long range as he was in C&C. Pathfinding AI is still sometimes questionable, and players should avoid long-distance movement commands.



UNCLE JOE: The cut-scenes, acting and storyline of Red Alert are first rate, as you meet Eastern, encounter strange sci-fi and get briefed by the evil Josef Stalin.

RED ALERT is a real-time strategy game that takes us into the past of C&C: "reality," where your job is to fight an alternate World War II with the Western Allies facing off against the Soviet Union for control of Europe. Whatever the result, this world will be the one that greets the arrival of Tiberium and the Chaos we battled in C&C.

EVERYTHING OLD IS NEW AGAIN

The world of RA seems to be drawn from the journal of non-reproducible results from the Philadelphia Experiment to Yaski's mistif purported breakthrough,

C&C; you build bases, harvest "minerals," build structures and units, and move through the plot by completing one combat scenario after another. The biggest change for RA is the switch to true SVGA graphics. While this is a purely cosmetic thing for most wargamers, here it has two important effects on gameplay. First, the increase in resolution translates into smaller and clearer graphics, effectively doubling the viewable area of the playing arena. Second—for those who complained that C&C was only about mouse-clicking—the SVGA graphics have slowed the action down, allowing more

IRON CURTAINS AND FORTRESS EUROPA

C&C fans looking for new toys won't be disappointed. The new units for the Soviets range from guard dogs that can tear a soldier to shreds in a second (but do very easily themselves) to hunter-killer subs and ground attack fighters. Even their standard artillery piece is the deadly and exotic V2. The Allies have less flash to their new weapons, but there are interesting additions to the usual tanks and machine-gun jeeps. The Western answer to the Russian sub fleet is a whole set of naval vessels the garbost, the destroyer and even a heavy cruiser. The Allies can also produce medics who automatically



Price: \$54.99

System

Requirements: 486-66 or better processor (Pentium 90 or better recommended), 8M5 RAM (16 MB RAM for Win 95), 40 MB hard-drive space, Windows 95 or DOS 6.0, VGA graphics, 2x CD-ROM, mouse, Sound Blaster-compatible sound card

of Players: 1-8

(modern, null modern, Internet, IPX)

Protection: None (CD must be in drive)

Designer: Westwood Studios

Publisher: Virgin Interactive Entertainment
Irvine, CA
(800) 874-4607, (714) 833-8710

Reader Service #: 344

heal any soldiers they come in contact with.

Apart from the new units, the cut-scenes and music are both at least equal to the very high quality market set in C&C, and the introduction alone is one of the hipper things to be found on a CD-ROM these days. Both storylines are involving and actually quite graphically pleasing from the get go, especially for the Allies. There are some scenes that should be kept out of the hands of kids—unless you think Hannibal Lector is a fine role model. The acting is good by computer game standards (though Einstein is dreadful and Stalin isn't quite spooky enough), and it's a treat seeing the imaginary history of C&C, including the birth of the Global Defense Initiative, being fleshed out.

The scenarios themselves are tough, being much better designed than those in C&C, and they are meshed more tightly to the storyline. There is still the mix of base battles versus quests, where you must



BETTER RED THAN DEAD In this alternate world history, the Soviets are especially nasty, brimming with "what if" technology—including the electrical tury of the Tesla coils.

NEW WORLD ORDER?

My only complaint about RED ALERT is that some aspects look much better than others. Sometimes it feels like you are playing with the tools of a much more ambitious design that was tied up quickly about halfway through. The Soviet units seem very cool and innovative, while the Allies have only a couple of good ideas and a lot of holdovers from C&C, as if they were worked on last and there wasn't much time left to make them unique.

The introduction of more air and sea units could have signaled a real expansion for the game, but instead it is relegated to the bit-for-bit school of game balancing: the Allies get three ships and the Soviets get one, the Soviets get three attack aircraft and the allies get one. The game never really expands into those new areas the way WARSAW II did with naval warfare. This same undercutting of potential exists on the infrastructure side of things as well. While there are oil wells and exploding drums everywhere, it seems that the part where they would have been integral to an expanded resource system is gone, and they just lie there like volatile cherticles.

There are a couple of other flaws that may aggravate some players. Underlying DOS aficionados will feel cheated by the buggy and inadequate DOS version of this game, which doesn't play in SVGA. The other small problem is the choice of subject matter. Those with long memories or a working knowledge of history may be somewhat bothered by Josef Stalin telling the player what a great guy he is.

Despite this, and the fact that RED ALERT could have been a real leap forward instead of a very cool expansion, it is still easily the best real-time strat game of the quarter. It will make the thirst of any COMMAND & CONQUER fan while we wait for C&C2 to arrive, and it offers a solid enough game in and of itself to make an excellent entry game into the genre. So unless you absolutely hate real-time strat games, RED ALERT is an excellent alternate history lesson. ☺

APPEAL: Any fan of real-time strategy games, especially *Command & Conquer*.

PROS: Excellent SVGA graphics that actually enhance gameplay, big music, and two excellent storylines with well-integrated scenarios.

CONS: Doesn't add as much to gameplay as it could have, poor DOS implementation, some aspects of the storyline could offend.



AIN'T WAR PRETTY? One of the many improvements in Red Alert, besides better multiplayer options and cooler units, is the SVGA graphics, which have enlarged the playing field and slowed down the action a bit.

achieve an end without building up a base to support your efforts, but now these two types of scenario play are often combined. You might have to conduct a secret bombing of a key enemy installation with commands before your construction unit arrives, or you might have to capture and protect certain enemy buildings while utterly destroying the others. All in all, it's a much more organic and realistic string of scenarios that form the campaigns for each side.

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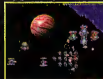
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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #273

Medieval Mayhem

Turn-Based Strategy And Real-Time Combat Liven Up The Middle Ages

by Tim Carter

Given the number of fantasy games that utilize quasi-medieval settings, it is interesting that so few of them deal with real-life medieval situations. **LORDS OF THE REALM II**, from Sierra Impressions, demonstrates that you don't need flying dragons or Elven wizards to make the Middle Ages interesting and fun. Some good old-fashioned wamwam-ging will do nicely, thank you.

As a run-of-the-mill European nobleman circa 1200 A.D., you find that you cannot in good conscience allow the recently vacated throne to go unclaimed. That selfish conscience, of course, also precludes your recognizing the pedigree of the other pretenders to the throne. Conflict is inevitable and won't be resolved until one of you has united the kingdom, most likely under a man-covered boot.

There are numerous thrones to vie for, as the game provides maps for England, Scotland, France, and Germany, as well as for the Crusades and for a number of Oriental locales. A few generic maps are also included, although I found that the game lost much of its atmosphere when not set to a particular locale.

YOUR PARDON, MY LIEGE

LORDS II is essentially a wargame, with little of the political flair of the period. There are no marriages, foreign aid, friendly ties and the like. If it were a play, I'd have to say it's all blood, without either rhetoric or love; it's really just raise an army and go a-stompin'.

Economics plays a fairly central role, however, as you must not only build or purchase weapons and mercenaries, but also feed your people so as to have a large and healthy population from which to draw soldiers.



BUBBLE, BUBBLE, TUDL AND TROUBLE One of the best aspects of *Lords II* is being able to dump boiling oil on your enemy—especially in multiplayer games.

Food is the single most important commodity in the medieval economy; without it you won't be able to keep your people happy, and without a decent surplus your army will starve as well. Each county under your control has a number of fields, a fifth may be allocated for cattle or wheat farming or left fallow.

Your economy is rather fragile and can fall apart quite easily if all the realism options are selected. Overusing your arable land will cause it to deteriorate, requiring you to allocate many peasants to reclamation. A variety of random events such as livestock raiding can also destroy a field, and since you will likely need every square inch of territory, it's a good idea to keep on top of your land use. Without decent agricultural practices, you will soon run short of food. Without enough food, your population will begin to die or emigrate, possibly to countries controlled by your opponents. Also, starvation will destroy morale, which in turn will hurt your income while encouraging further emigration.

In all, it's a delicate balancing act, made more difficult by the need to periodically draft large numbers of your population into the army. At the same time, you must also

have spare peasants to work the mines, quarries, and forests for natural resources to build castles and weapons.

BURN, SIEGE, PILLAGE

As far as other lords don't seem willing to immediately acknowledge your call to greatness, a little conspiring with order. Army creation is pretty simple: you draft as many people as you think your population can spare, arm them with whatever weapons you have built or purchased, and send the whole mob off to do their worst.

Armies may fight in the open field,



NO WOOL SWEATERS While some lords may miss the sheep, the rest of the strategic game has been improved from *Lords I*.



Price: \$54.95
System

Requirements: 486-66 or better processor, 8MB RAM, 34MB hard-drive space, Win 95 or DOS 6.0+, 2x CD-ROM, mouse; supports sound cards with DAC.

of Players: 1-4 (via modem or network)
Protection: None (CD must be in drive)

Designer: David Lester/Impressions
Publisher: Sierra On-Line, Inc.
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Stopping Your Way To The Throne

While the road to the kingship is relatively straight—beat up everyone and it's yours—seignior noblemen can still profit from a little strategic and tactical advice. Economic management must be based on balance. Begin reclaiming fields night after night, and remember to let some lie fallow for a year. Manipulate your taxes frequently to keep your population happy enough that they won't revolt but not so happy that your land becomes overpopulated. Higher taxes bring in more money, which is obviously useful.

If one computer player begins to dominate the map, as is often the case, begin waging a systematic economic campaign against him (or her). When pillaging, be careful not to totally decimate a county right before you are about to take control of it.

When going after border counties, focus on wiping out the opposition's peasants—this reduces his army but leaves the fields intact for when you take over. Remember, most of those peasants would have died defending their homes from your army anyway.

When fighting in the open, try to attack from as many sides as possible—provided you have

at least equal numbers. This will allow you to get amongst your opponent's archers, keeping his missile fire to a minimum. Don't forget that you can direct the fire of your own archers.

engage in castle sieges, or simply pillage and burn the countryside as they go. Battles are fought in real-time (as in *LORDS I*), although you may pause the action to give your units their orders. Animated figures representing each of the various types of soldiers (archers, crossbowmen, swordsmen, knights, pikemen, etc.) will march and fight as you require, although they do tend to bunch up or get disorganized when made to move long distances. They will also respond verbally to orders, including a Mel Gibson-like "Follow me!" when the swordsmen are ordered

into the attack.

Throughout the game the command interface is easy and intuitive, and I found the real-time combat to be quite enjoyable, even if many open-field battles seemed to degenerate into mob scenes after a while. I suspect this is pretty robotic, frankly, and many historians have noted that medieval armies were generally given a double ration of alcohol right before entering battle.

The artificial intelligence in *LORDS OF THE REALM II* is fairly competent but uninspired. This is a game that will appeal more to multiplayer gamers, as both strategic action and tactical combat is quick and simple enough to be played online.

My favorite battles were undoubtedly the castle sieges. I love you send your men scurrying to the battlements to rain arrows and boiling oil on the oncoming armies—or throw huge numbers of peasants and swordsmen against a moat, filling it in under fire while catapults try to breach the walls or battering rams knock in the gates. The architecture of the bigger castles make for a good fight, and I had a great time trying to keep a small garrison alive against a much larger invader.

Unfortunately, the computer doesn't do a particularly good job with castles, and for the full effect you really need a human opponent. The computer opponents also have a major flaw in their strategic response to some types of threats. Frequently they will not consolidate their forces before moving against you, allowing your defenders to overcome two or more weak armies, when a single combined force would have created a much bigger problem. In addition, it is possible to wage systematic economic warfare against the computer by repeatedly pillaging



BESIEGED AND LOVING IT Regardless of realism questions, you'll find that assaulting a castle is more fun than pitched battles on the plains.

wealthy enemy-held districts, with little fear of retaliation.

My only other gripe with this game is the half-hearted attempt at historical flavor. On the one hand, the maps look very authentic and add to the feel of the game, while on the other, each county plays more or less like all the others—meaning it doesn't really matter where you start. Also, the opponents are all generic, with names like The Baron or The Bishop, and no attempt has been made at accurate heraldry. Given the ease with which these effects could have been added, particularly titles such as the Duke of Burgundy or Lord Cornwall, their exclusion takes away from an otherwise superior product.

As a game, *LORDS OF THE REALM II* is fun, fast, and easy to learn but still challenging enough to keep strategy games occupied for many hours. The lack of realism and a somewhat weak AI detract a bit from the final product but not enough to make it any less of a success. **S**

APPEAL: Medieval enthusiasts, strategy gamers looking for a relatively quick and easy game to learn.

PROS: Clean, fun, simple, with decent tactical combat and a distinctive strategy system based on the time period.

CONS: Weak computer opponents, generic roles, and little or no politics erode some of the game's potential.



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Sails Unfurled

TalonSoft's Real-Time Sailing Game Springs A Few Leaks

by Bob Proctor

IN AGE OF SAIL (AOS) TalonSoft weighs in with its first real-time design. There are actually five clock settings: paused, real-time, and three accelerated settings called fast, faster, and fastest. Yet things happen much slower than in your average flight sim, and you will spend very little time with the clock running in real-time.

Perhaps the team continuous action is more appropriate. Then again, did you know it takes an average of five minutes to reload a cannon? And almost as long for a 104-gun behemoth to complete a 45-degree turn? Smaller ships are more responsive, but I think you begin to see the appeal of a fast clock.

For those who are murky on just when the Age of Sail occurred, the game covers the period from 1775 to 1820, in other words, from the American and French revolutions through the Napoleonic wars. There are 105 scenarios, of which 70 represent battles between England and France. An even 100 are historical battles, four are just for learning the game, and one is a fictional battle taken from C. S.

Forster's Hornblower series. Ships from 11 different nations are included—more than 2000 in all! The small U.S. Navy is well represented with about 70 ships and 20 scenarios. There is a campaign game in which you start as an ensign in the British, French, Spanish, or American navy. If you are successful



BATTLE OF TRAFALGAR This top-down, 2D display shows two British columns bearing down on the French-Spanish in scenario 76. The lead ship in the upper column is being fired on by the French Hero, *Santissima Trinidad* has fired and is almost reloaded.

in the historically plausible encounters that follow, you receive promotions and larger ships to command. If all that isn't enough, a scenario editor lets you modify any of the 105 scenarios or create new ones.

A CAPITAL SHIP ON AN OCEAN TRIP

You can't play by e-mail as in TalonSoft's *BATTLEGROUND* series (no item), but there is a provision for modem play. Unlike other recent real-time games, AOS has no provision for network play. For solo play there are three settings for AI: manual (off), automatic (on), and automatic with fog of war. Both sides are set independently, but there is no way to have the AI control some ships on your side and leave others under your control.

The AI seems competent at first, but more familiarity reveals a number of significant faults. For example, when the wind shifts and catches the computer's ship from dead ahead, the AI doesn't change course, but lets the ship sit there motionless. The AI always changes to chain shot at close ranges, even when it shouldn't. Then, if you sail away beyond the range of chain shot, it sometimes sits and waits for you come back in range instead of reloading.

These faults are the sorts of thing that



Price: \$49.95

System

Requirements: 486-33 or better processor, 8MB RAM, 5MB hard-disk space, SVGA graphics, Windows 3.1 or 95, 2x CD-ROM, mouse, supports all Windows-compatible sound cards.

of Players: 1-2 (modem)

Protection: None (CD must be in drive)

Designer: John Tiller, Jim Anderson, Joseph Hummel, Jim Rose
 Publisher: TalonSoft
 Forest Hill, MD (800) 211-6504
 (410) 821-7262
 Reader Service # 346



NAVAL CAMPAIGNING Use the character generation screen to choose a name, a picture, a country, and a time period. Keep in mind that promotions to higher rank and larger ships are based on your prestige rating.

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Age Of Sail vs. Wooden Ships & Iron Men

The most obvious difference between *Age of Sail* and *Wooden Ships & Iron Men* is that AOS is real-time and WS&M is turn-based. Real-time for ships, planes, etc., works best when the player has a single point of view. If, in a flight sim, you also had to fly your wingman's plane, you'd go crazy jumping back and forth. Thus, in AOS, the emphasis (75 of the scenarios) is on single-ship action. In battles with multiple ships, however, you are forced to jump around, and the interface begins to get awkward.

Take navigation commands, for example. There are only two: Turn Right 45° and Turn Left 45°. If you want to make a 135° turn, you click the button 3 times—the ship will “remember” the commands and perform them even if you jump to another ship. If, however, you want to turn 45° left (say, to bring guns to bear) and then turn 45° right (to resume the former course), you can’t just click the buttons in that order, since the right turn button also serves as the cancel command for any left turn orders (and vice versa). You have to order the left turn, wait several minutes for it to complete, then order the right turn.

As long as this situation occurs on only one ship at a time, it’s not hard to command a squadron of five or six ships. Things are happening slowly, remember? In large battles (and there are 11 of these) there are usually four to six squadrons and you can give commands to an entire squadron. So it is possible to manage dozens of ships in real-time and only go a little crazy. Squadron commands are tricky, however, since different things happen depending on which ship you have selected when you give the order. And when your squadron gets out of a neat line of battle, it becomes impossibly confusing, because all ships perform the order no matter where they are on the map.

AOS and WS&M do share some qualities. They each have 8 points (directions) of sailing, 5 levels of crew competency, and omit land, shallow water, and anchoring (although AOS allows ships to remain motionless, even in a strong breeze). Each game includes scenario editors but not ship editors, and both have “campaigns” that are little more than random scenario generators. In AOS’ scenario editor, you choose from 2000+ ships listed alphabetically (no dates given); in WS&M, you choose ships by period, by country, and by class and can rename them.

They differ most dramatically in that WS&M has a more realistic sailing model, with drift and tacking maneuvers; AOS’ model lacks momentum and drift and all maneuvers are combinations of 45-degree turns. In both games, crew quality affects the accuracy of cannon fire; but AOS crew level also affects the rate of fire (score one for real-time). WS&M crew quality affects strength in melee; in AOS crew size affects strength, but crew quality does affect willingness to surrender. WS&M is limited to 25 ships per battle, while the AOS limit is unknown (but is at least 70 ships). The bottom line for now is that the



THIS IS NUTNY *Age of Sail* (left) and *WS&M* (right) appear very similar here, and we were winning in both battles. But unlike *WS&M*—where you decide how long to fight—a couple of hull hits and our poor crew forced us to surrender in AOS, even though we were winning!

can be fixed in patches—version 1.02 has already been released—but I think they show that this title was hurried to market in time for Christmas shoppers. The campaign game has similarly rough edges, the text explaining the battle does not always appear, and the red X showing the battle’s location is sometimes in the middle of a land mass. These peculiarities have little bearing on play; more significant is the apparent lack of thorough play testing. If you’re successful, you eventually get promoted to a ship of the line and then spend the rest of your career trying (and failing) to catch smaller craft that know better than to engage. After ten or a dozen of these futile efforts, retirement begins to look appealing.

TRADITION OF VICTORY

Another problem with the game is that a crew of the poorest quality will surrender automatically when damage or casualties reach some arbitrary threshold, even if you are winning the battle! Really bad crews are rare in scenarios, but in a campaign, you almost always get a ship with a poor crew at some point.

Although I’ve done a lot of fault-finding, there are things to like about AOS, particularly the graphics, the absence of program crashes, and the enormous ship library. AOS does capture some of the flavor of the period, and it is a game with lots of potential. Many of its problems (and otherwise) could be fixed with patches. *TalonSoft* has shown with its *BATTACROUND* line that the design team improves steadily from one game to the next in a series. For those of us who enjoy real-time sailing, we hope they’ll do the same with *AGE OF SAIL*. **S**

APPEAL: Old sailors, officer brasses, and powder monkeys.

PROS: Beautiful graphics, huge number of scenarios, enormous ship library.

CONS: Weak AI, slightly awkward interface, lack of network play.



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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #95



Carnage In The Cornfield

ANTIETAM Is The Best Of An Excellent Series

by Bob Proctor

THE BATTLEGROUND engine showcases larger-than-life battles, from Waterloo to the Bulge. But despite the improvements made to their ARDENNES game (now titled BULGE), the system is at its best when simulating 19th-century conflict. Virtually identical to BATTLEGROUND

4: SHILOH in terms of functions and features, ANTIETAM is such a fine example of how much TalonSoft has improved its BATTLEGROUND engine from rough beginnings to the best on the market that it should make corporate America jealous.

The gorgeous maps—painted by Charlie Kibler, who did nice maps for so many Avalon Hill board games—and the use of small figures as unit icons invite you to come in close to see the detail. Zoomed in, you see less of the map, which means that with the longer-ranged weapons of the 20th century, you can't see who's shooting at you, and the movement of mechanized units is always going off the edge of the screen. That means lots of scrolling, which is the one weakness (performance-wise) of the BC engine. The map gets "chunked" in memory, and when you scroll across an invisible seam there is an agonizing wait. It's really only five seconds or so, but it seems like forever.

In spite of this, the game plays very well on computers with just the minimum requirements, especially those that support a resolution higher than 640 x 480. The BC engine supports three different screen resolutions: 640 x 480, 800 x 600, and 1024 x 768. (The difference can be seen in the screen shots, done at different



FILE THE BODIES HIGH America's hi-res graphics beautifully depict the bloodiest day in American history. Here at Miller's farm and cornfield, losses on both sides are high.

resolutions on the same 14-inch monitor.) Whereas the visible map is 7 by 9 hexes at 640 x 480, you can see about 14 by 15 in 1024 x 768—about three and a half times more area! This is large enough to display 80 to 90 percent of the map for the smaller scenarios, which means you'll hardly ever have to scroll. If your system supports only 640 x 480, you'll have to choose between scrolling more or playing in "zoomed out" mode where the hexes and units are much smaller. If they get too small, I find the 2D display mode a little clearer. It uses squares or counters for unit icons and just doesn't have the visual appeal of the 3D mode. It's also possible to make the map full screen by dropping the unit information at the bottom, but that makes it harder to see the data. Besides, I enjoy seeing the different uniforms of the regiments. For the first time, a wargame has me wishing for a bigger monitor—much bigger! I can see 800 x 600 as a reasonable compromise for now—and it's nice to have a program that supports enough options that compromises

are possible. But, hey, if I'm going to buy out my money for a 19" tube (don't I think 21"?), I want TalonSoft to support 1280 x 1024 as well!

"DESTROY THE REBEL ARMY, IF POSSIBLE."

—A. LINCOLN

It was a fracturing battle, the single bloodiest day in U.S. history. The Union Army had superior strength, but their uncoordinated attack resulted in several separate encounters on different types of terrain. What these clashes had in common was that they were confused, desperate, and bloody. This chaotic approach makes the battle easy to break into smaller scenarios that work very well in terms of meaningful objectives and good play balance. That's the primary attraction in ANTIETAM: the large number of interesting and varied short scenarios. This makes it a good choice if you are buying your first BATTLEGROUND title. The historical scenarios lock in two factors—the time that McClellan released the Union forces



Price: \$49.95

System

Requirements: 486-33 or better processor, 8MB RAM, 6MB hard-disk space, SVGA graphics, 2x CD-ROM, Windows 3.1 or better, mouse, supports windows-compatible sound cards.

of Players: 1-2 (hot seat, modem, or e-mail)

Protection: None (CD must be in drive)

Designers: John Tiller, Jim Ross, Charles Kibler

Publisher: TalonSoft
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The Scenarios Of BG: Antietam

There are 25 scenarios, of which 18 deal with September 17, 1862. Four represent the entire battle—all day, all locations. One is historical and three are "What if?" scenarios. Five scenarios represent "half battles" with half the map and about half as many turns. Three of these are the northern half (one historical and two "What if?" scenarios) and two represent the southern half (one historical and one, slightly longer, that asks "What if Burnside had attacked sooner?").

The other nine scenarios all portray pieces of the action, seven of them historical. The names—Carnage in the Cornfield, Bloody Lane, Burnside's Bridge—will be instantly recognizable to anyone who has read about the battles or walked the battlefields. They range in length from 5 turns to 23 turns (about half the full battle), with four of them in the 8- to 12-turn range, a good amount to play in one sitting. The battles in the north center on Miller's farm and cornfield, an open area surrounded by woods on three sides. Farther south there are fewer trees, but the rolling hills provide cover, and there runs the sunken road known as "Bloody Lane" to the far south. The Confederate forces around the town of Sharpsburg face Burnside's Corps across Antietam Creek, the banks heavily wooded but the heights on either side relatively open. In the center is the bridge where Burnside struggled for hours to force a crossing, but close by are the fords where his troops could have crossed easily.

to attack and the time the Confederate forces from Harper's Ferry arrived. Many of the hypothetical scenarios do nothing more than randomize the timing of these events—an ingenious way to make solo-play more unpredictable while retaining the overall feel of the battle.



VULTURE'S EYE VIEW In the 2D strategic view, Antietam Creek runs along the bottom, the town of Sharpsburg is upper left, Bloody Lane is smack in the center and the Miller farm is upper right. And check out the variety of those Union uniforms!



PLUG THAT GAP! This 640 x 480 screen shows Fox Gap from South Mountain. The rebels (on the left) take advantage of stone walls and uphill positions.

Of the remaining seven scenarios, six cover the Battle of South Mountain, which occurred three days before Antietam. Three of these portray the entire day's fighting (two are what ifs) and three show the key actions in short 10-turn scenarios. The map has much higher hills and is mostly wooded, but many roads and trails make flanking maneuvers possible. The Rebels are always outnumbered but have the advantage of good defensive terrain and an uphill position. These are good scenarios to begin with as they have low unit density. The last scenario is a skirmish on the evening before the big event. It is just six turns, with relatively low unit density and good balance.

The AI has been getting steadily more aggressive. In ANTIETAM, it is just as aggressive as it was in SULLY and this leads to statistically high casualties—I ran up more than 4,000 (for both sides) in three hours in the cornfield! It seems like the AI's judgment has improved in many situations.

It's a nice mix of melee, counter-battery fire, and protecting supply wagons. If there is a weakness, it is that the AI is too aggressive on defense, particularly conducting a fighting withdrawal. For this reason, I think my favorite solo-play game will be conducting the Confederate defense against the Union onslaught. Play-balance in most scenarios

seems even. A few seem to favor the Union if you avoid the historical mistakes, but you'd expect that with any halfway decent simulation. Of course, if you're willing to sacrifice a bit of realism, you can adjust the balance in any scenario by using the "Advantage" slider to give one side or the other a permanent die roll modifier in combat. BATTLEGROUND: ANTIETAM is a wonderful addition to a great series. I can hardly wait for BULL RUN. **B**

FAPPEAL! Anyone with an interest in gaming historical situations.

PROS: The BATTLEGROUNDS engine is the best yet for 19th-century battles, with top-free programming, beautiful graphics, and a wide variety of scenarios. And this is the best of the lot.

CONS: Slow scrolling on some systems; no scenario editor.



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Numb Skull

Our Resident Aztec Expert Dissects *THE CRYSTAL SKULL TOUR*

ad-ventur-
ous, but par-
underak-
tion



They've taken on cities, islands, and farms, golf, helicopters, health and the earth. Now Maxis weighs in with one of the world's hardest things to simulate: a decent adventure game. Like many game companies before them, Maxis has chosen to ride the apparently unstoppable wave of Mass-ables with *THE CRYSTAL SKULL*, a three-CD adventure complete with pretty graphics and full-motion video. It's not the worst game in the world, but we don't recommend that Maxis abandon their sim franchise just yet.

The story is set in the time of the Aztec empire, during the reign of Motecuhzoma II, known more familiarly (though incorrectly) as "Montezuma II." It is just before the arrival of the Spanish, and Motecuhzoma sees bad omens everywhere, including his dreams.

Ascending figure in the dreams is Quetzal, bankeeper in the royal zoo, and our hero. The emperor wants to see him and orders Snake Skat (his trusted advisor) to

bring Quetzal to the palace. Snakey has other ideas, however; he orders the guards to kill Quetzal instead. So, at the start, Quetzal must avoid the guards and come up with a safe way to visit Motecuhzoma to learn

main cursor changes shape as it moves around hot spots on the screen; a pointing arrow for movement, an eye for something to look at, a talk balloon for people to talk to, and a hand for



HONEY, HAVE YOU SEEN MY KEYS? Quetzal's quest for a mysterious crystal skull will send him to a variety of locales in ancient Mexico.

what's going on. When he gets there, the emperor orders him to find the crystal skull, and the rest of the game is taken up with Quetzal's efforts to obtain the mysterious artifact.

HINTING AROUND

The game's interface is very simple. The

items that can be picked up or manipulated. At the bottom of the screen is the toolbar, where you can save/restore, examine your inventory, pick up some info on Aztec culture, bring up a map, shape-shift or get a hint for a difficult situation.

The map is not a typical automap; it is complete when you look at it, and some locations are "enabled," meaning you just click on them to go there. Only a few of these locations are enabled on any section of the map. While this cuts down on some travel time, for the most part you'll still do a lot of walking around. The inventory pouch shows everything Quetzal is carrying. Using an item is simply a matter of picking it up with the cursor, then clicking the cursor where you want to use the item. If an object can't be used in a partic-



CRYSTAL BALL

▶ If you liked the look of Sierra's recent *Kings' Quest* games, but thought the gameplay was a bit too syrupy, you should consider SirTech's *Faerie: The lush high-res animation of an ex-Disney artist is complemented by four huge worlds and some four dozen characters with which to interact. Whether this adventure will "challenge your moral fiber"*

continues on page 202 MW

“ Some nice touches aside, Maxis' first adventure game is simply mediocre. ”

CRYSTAL BALL

In the same way as *ULTIMA IV* has yet to be seen, but *Sir-Iech* deserves a lot of credit for taking chances in an era of pretty—and empty—Myst-dones. ▶ *Cyberdreams'* *Blue Heat* is nearing release. You may not have heard much about this game from Orion (Pictures) Interactive because its content is likely to be somewhat controversial. It's a murder mystery built around a photography studio that specializes in men's

magazine photos. Featuring 5,500 stills and 2 hours of video (much of the footage featuring female frontal nudity), gamers will need to question 16 suspects and follow up to 400 clues to solve the mystery. A host of familiar television and film stars enliven the acting. *Blue Heat* is definitely a step beyond *Near* in both subject matter and game size, a *Silk Stalkings* for the computer gamer.

All it does is make a free of the whole thing.

Not content with that, they also bring in time travel, with *Quetzal* going back to the founding of the Aztec Empire. Much of the game, in fact, takes place during that time period. Why? I don't know, except that time travel seems to be "in" these days for adventures, and possibly the designers felt they should jump on the bandwagon. Whatever the reason, it doesn't add anything worthwhile to the game.

There doesn't, for that matter, seem to be much worthwhile about this game in the first place. *Quetzal* hunts around, finds the skull, and then he and his girlfriend end up in modern-day Mexico at the finale.

NOT CRYSTAL CLEAR

As far as the puzzles are concerned, most are no great shakes, and some are just dumb. At one point, you enter the marketplace and do some trading of items you have for other objects. Then the best man turns up, and the only thing he'll take as payment is something you traded away

earlier, and he doesn't appear until after you've given the item away. So you have to return to the market and trade around again to get the item back.

Elsewhere, you receive a pass from *Motecoathuna* to get by a guard so you can leave town. Only the pass doesn't work; you actually need that for something else later in the game, and have to find another way around the guard. Things like this don't add much, if anything, to the play value.

Overall, *THE CRYSTAL SKULL* is a disappointment. While pretty to look at, the game offers little of substance besides the culture notes. The puzzles are often dreary, and the atmosphere is lacking. This is one of those products that is neither terrible nor good, only mediocre. What could have been a fascinating visit to Aztec times turns out to be merely silly and dull. ❧

ular situation, you can't take it from the inventory.

The in-game hint system is extensive, with clues and answers for just about every puzzle or difficult situation. Each set of hints begins with a vague nudge, and proceeds on, becoming more obvious until the complete answer is revealed. You must choose at the start of the game whether or not the hints will be active. If you decide not to have hints, the only way to get them later would be to start a new game.

Conversations are usually begun by clicking on a person, although occasionally they happen automatically. Sometimes, there is no real dialogue; the person just tells you something. At other times, *Quetzal* must say something or respond to a question. When this happens, three small pictures of *Quetzal* appear at the bottom of the screen. Each represents a different response, and you decide which one he gives by clicking on it.

20TH CENTURY KNOCKS

Some people may be worried about scenes of violence, especially in the Aztecs were famous (or infamous) for their blood rites. While they certainly did kill many thousands—both their own people and war captives—as sacrifices, this is not a part of *CRYSTAL SKULL*. There are no gory bodies or gruesome visuals here. One prisoner of war does have his heart cut out, but this is shown from behind the high priest, and more by implication than anything else. In this respect, at least, the designers show good sense by not dwelling on the unpleasant or sensationalistic.

Graphically, the game is very pretty.

The new is find-poner for a change, with *Quetzal* on the screen all the time, set against a background of authentic-looking Aztec buildings and the like. Indeed, a lot of research obviously went into this game. Wherever you are, you can click the codes icon to see a screen or two of information on how the current location relates to Aztec culture. All the characters appear to be dressed in typical Aztec style.

So it's a great pity that all this effort is largely wasted, because while the setting is authentic, the characters aren't. They run around with 20th-century attitudes



▶ **HARDLY SHAMAZEC** *Crystal Skull's* autopop feature is about the only thing that looks remotely like the company's failed sims. Too bad the rest of the game isn't as good.

and speech. When references are made to Swiss army knives, George Harrison, open-heart surgery (meaning the Aztec blood rite of cutting out hearts), and the like, the atmosphere is completely destroyed. Any feeling of being in Aztec times rapidly disappears soon after the game begins. Perhaps the designers thought this would inject a little humor into the game. If so, they thought wrong.



Price: \$29.95
System

Requirements: IBM-compatible 486 DX2/66 or better processor, Windows 3.1 or Windows 95, 8 MB RAM, 3 MB hard disk space, 2x CD-ROM, 256-color SVGA monitor, mouse, supports all Windows-compatible sound cards (Macintosh version requires 68040-based processor or better).

Protection: None (CD must be in drive)

Developer: SOME Interactive

Publisher: Maxis
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"One minute I'm leaving the wings off flies in my room, the next I'm a space detective for purple people from another planet!" slurred the stunned high school student. Strangely enough, the liaison between Earth and Ampt VI was none other than Steve Menzby, whose extensive experience with aliens had been well-documented in "The Hazzbaker's Guide to the Galaxy" and numerous other space epics.



Mind-reading mogul Smith celebrates with soused patrons of the Thirsty Tentacle, the bar where he uncovered multiple clues.



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A glowing computer monitor with a white screen displaying the words "THE SITE" in a stylized font. The monitor is surrounded by a blue and purple glow. A computer mouse is visible on the left, and a remote control is on the right. The background is dark with some light streaks.

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Online Add-Ons Bring New Life To Rusting Warbirds



Do you have a shelf devoted to old flight sims, titles that were once in heavy rotation on your CD-ROM drive that now sit gathering dust? Well, it's time to rattle that shelf. A number of creative folks out there have reverse-engineered their favorite sims and created editors, add-ons, and even entirely new campaigns for them. Whether you're looking to add a little excitement to Su-27 FLANKER or fill the gap while you wait for somebody to ship a new WW II sim, there's something out there for you. We'll sample some of the more popular riffs here, but keep in mind that a quick web search can find utilities for nearly any popular sim.

FLANK ATTACK

Mindscape's Su-27 FLANKER has one fatal flaw—it comes with a limited number of missions. Once you've flown those, you're stuck either browsing the web for the limited number of available user-created



MIG CLASSIC A MiG-3 turns to attack a Fw-190B-8 in a heavily hacked copy of Axis Over Europe.

ated missions, or creating your own challenges in the program's mission editor and fringing the support factor.

Now there's another solution—Mark Hernandez's free-to-use Su-27 RANDOM

MISSION GENERATOR. This utility will generate both air-to-air and air-to-ground missions. You can adjust the number of flights in the skies, AI skill levels, and friendly and enemy air bases. The missions created by the utility aren't quite as

twisted as user-created missions, but they're easily as challenging as many of the missions created by F32000's Wargen system.

A HEANER EUROFIGHTER

Speaking of Wargen, the innovative but sometimes mangled mission generator in Ocean/DIE's EP2000, Ray Purvis of Viper Software has set out to address some of the complaints about that system.

The shareware EP2000 CAMPAIGN

GENERATOR lets you create five different types of campaigns. The Easy setting faces you off against very poorly armed Russian forces. Moderate offers more of a

“ There's a certain thrill in buzzing your neighborhood airport in an F-4 Phantom II... ”

ON THE RADAR



Microsoft's simulations Product Unit that said “the Su-27 FLANKER team is indeed here at Microsoft,” it turns out that only two of the Su-27 developers actually defected, along with a few other Eagle

► “The rumors of our assimilation by Microsoft are greatly exaggerated.” At least, that's the word from SSI's Russian Su-27 FLANKER team at Eagle Dynamics. Despite an internet post from the program manager of

Dynamics employees who weren't directly involved with the product. Mindscape assures us that not only is there still an Su-27 FLANKER team in place, but that it's also double the size of the original crew.

► All this works out better for us, since we'll see two Su-27-influenced sims this year. SSI will be releasing an interim update to the original product in the form of a mission disk in coming months, to be followed by late in the year by FLANKER 2.0, which will bring improved visuals, a better interface, and some surprising new features to the hardcore sim. Meanwhile, the word is still mum on what the Microsoft team has in store, but it appears to be a combat flight sim to replace the aborted F/A-18 sim that was in the works in cooperation with McDonnell-Douglas.

DENNY ATKIN

challenge, but doesn't over-equip the Russian forces. *Hard* sets up the sides with a balance suggested by Jane's information on Soviet and NATO air power. The "Day Three Special" drops you into a campaign where NATO is winning big, giving you the opportunity to fly missions deep into Russian territory. Finally, "Minibite Ground Defenses" gives the enemy limited ZSU anti-aircraft capabilities at the beginning of the campaign, forcing them to move the guns from supply areas to forward bases.

Viper's RANDOM MISSION GENERATOR is similar to the quick combat option in the EF2000 TACTCOM add-on, but it gives you many more options. You can fly against Russian and NATO aircraft, adjusting a variety of settings such as ground or airborne start-up, AWACs and weapon support, and so on.

Both products are reasonably priced at only \$10 each. You can register them using Compuserve's SWREG facility; otherwise, you'll have to use seal-mail to

moment, you can alter HUD art or aircraft textures. DnsSoft is working on a 3D editor that will even let you change aircraft shapes. Alter weapons characteristics, including gun burst speeds, missile hit percentages, and damage inflicted.

The pilot editor lets you neve a dead file, or skip a mission you just can't complete. Or, just go in and modify the mission to your liking.

With enough effort, you could probably even arm the Moose object, giving enemy attackers the surprise of their lives. The only downside to the utility is that there's no way to check for its use in head-to-head battles. So if you're flying AIF head-to-head and your opponent's A-10 suddenly takes off at mach 3, the AIF TOOLKIT is probably to blame.



BIRD PROCESSOR The AIF toollet lets you modify nearly every aspect of the planes in Jane's AIF and Nem Fighters.

is the Soviet Air Force add-on by Nick Tedesco and James E. Title. This Soviet/German battle is populated with never-before-simulated aircraft such as the La-9, MiG-3, LaGG-3, Su-2, Yak-3, and Il-2 Stomovik. The terrain has also been modified to realistically depict the snowy eastern front. It's not a complete edit by any means—for instance, pulling up the map shows Soviet bases as being in England—but given the fact that AOF was never designed to be user-modifiable at all, the effort is quite impressive. You'll also find an Italian Air Force module set in the Med, with fighters such as the Fiat G.50.

COMMERCIAL ENTERPRISES

Not all the modifications are user-created. Microsoft has



RARE BIRD Mike Hill's RCAF F2H-3 Banshee flies in FLIGHT SHILLATOR FOR WINDOWS 95, courtesy of Microsoft's free FLIGHT SHOP converter.

FINDING IT ON THE NET

Su-27 Random Mission Util
Viper's EF2000 Utilities

AIF/Nem Toolkits

New ADPSPACE aircraft and scenarios
Flight Shop converter for Flight Simulator
Net Dual 1.1
Kali

<http://csoe.wis.ac.uk/8001/~in1053/lanke/su27.html>

<http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/7PURVIS> or
Compuserve's FSCOMBAT Forum
<http://users.aol.com/fuseoff/private/DnsSoft.htm>
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<http://www.microsoft.com/games/tslm/convertet.htm>

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EVEN MORE ADVANCED TACTICAL FIGHTERS

Have you ever wanted to dig into a sim and change the way it works? DnsSoft's \$20 shareware AIF TOOLKIT is a Swiss army knife utility that will let you modify dozens of parameters in Jane's ADVANCED TACTICAL FIGHTERS and the NATO FIGHTERS add-on. (A similar but more limited utility is available for US Navy FIGHTERS.)

You can modify performance, weight, handpoints, and damage resilience for each of the aircraft in the sim. At the

EASTERN ACES

Sometimes "editing" a sim gets out of hand, to the point that you end up with an almost entirely new program. Such is the case with the venerable ACES OVER EUROPE (AOE). Early on, users started hex-editing aircraft to modify their performance to fit different models of those planes. Eventually, the editors got more sophisticated and people were able to create new aircraft graphics. Nowadays you'll find dozens of modified and all-new aircraft for ACES OF THE PACIFIC and AOE.

But even more impressive are the entirely new scenarios created for AOE by dedicated users. The most impressive

released a wonderful utility that will allow you to import aircraft and adventure's created with BAO's FLIGHT SHOP into FLIGHT SHILLATOR FOR WINDOWS 95. Searching the web turns up dozens of unique aircraft that you're not likely to find any time soon in other sims, from an XB-70 Valkyrie to the PBY Catalina to the T-45 Goshawk trainer.

We mentioned NET DUAL, the multiplayer add-on for FLIGHT DUAL, in this space before. Now version 1.0 has been fine-tuned to better support Internet play over KALI. Check it out for some awesome head-to-head action at no cost other than what you pay to connect to the Internet. **B**

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The Rise and Fall of Napoleon I will be form Talonsoft because he had a vision: to create stunning, marketable wargames that still captured the authentic feel of the period being simulated. Ever since

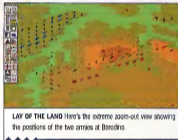
BATTLEGROUND:

CERNUSING gained acclaim as the best American Civil War game in nearly a decade, Talonsoft's games have steadily improved, so that they now stand unquestioned as the finest series of 19th-century battle games.

While ANTIETAM and SHILOH may be closer to my heart (I grew up within minutes of the latter), my personal favorite in the BATTLEGROUND series is WATERLOO. From the exquisite walked chesssets to the tightly-packed, colorful formations of cuirassiers, WATERLOO has all the appeal of a miniature tabletop game, with all the convenience of the computer.

My favorite's status, however, is in danger, because Talonsoft is set to release the

rage of Bonaparte with BATTLEGROUND 6: NAPOLEON IN RUSSIA. It's a fascinating subject, because all of Napoleon's later problems in Germany, France, and of course, Waterloo, can be traced to his ill-advised invasion of Russia.



LAY OF THE LAND Here's the extreme zoom-out view showing the positions of the two armies at Borodino.

WHERE'S MY FUR COAT?

What you won't see in this game is a detailed view of the big picture: the scorched-earth policy of the Russian army as it fell back toward Moscow, leaving Napoleon swatching at air. Instead, the

beginning of the game finds the French tired, cold and hungry, constantly harassed by Cossack cavalry. His lines of supply and communication a shambles, Napoleon attempts battle Kutusov at Borodino, crushing Russian resistance on the road to Moscow. But the Russian bear will not give up its prize city so easily...

Borodino is a difficult game to simulate. If you aren't careful, it degenerates into a confused slugfest, with little room to maneuver. NAPOLEON IN RUSSIA avoids this

pit, however, by offering the largest Borodino map in any wargame to date. The fighting to the north is usually ignored, but here Kutusov's deployment is accurately shown. The Russian commander feared that Napoleon would attempt to outflank him to the north. That the game provides this opportunity is a viable French "What-if?" option is a real treat.

DON'T REDOUBT ME

The first thing you notice in NAPOLEON IN RUSSIA is the increased size of the soldier sprites. Added to the typically excellent Charlie Kibler map graphics, this is arguably the most viscerally beautiful BATTLEGROUND game yet—high praise indeed for a game set in the snowy confines of 1812 Russia. The multimedia aspects of the Battleground series are again showcased, this time with extensive

“ Napoleon's riskiest campaign comes vividly to life in Talonsoft's NAPOLEON IN RUSSIA. ”

BRIEFINGS

A recurring rumor is that Talonsoft is attempting to sign a well-known computer game designer. According to our sources, this famous personage is not Gary Gygis (who seems very happy with SSI). But, it could very well be Norm Koger of AGE OF RULES fame.



▶ On the southern Pacific front, our Aussie friends at SSG are finally ceasing publication of their Run 5 magazine—at least in paper form. Editor Stephen Hand (designer of Fury of Dracula, one of my favorite boardgames) will continue as the publication moves online, offering a similar mix of

continue on page 210 >>>

BRIEFINGS

historical articles, previews, and new scenarios for SSG products.

In other SSG news, *THE LAST BATTLES*, Roger Keating/Ian Trout's epic Battle of the Bulge treatment featuring some exciting new combat mechanics, is finally scheduled to ship this Spring. And *Broderbund* looks to knock one out of the park by distributing SSG's *WARLORDS III*. Finally, SSG's long-awaited *REACH FOR THE STARS II* should challenge *MOO II*'s galactic dominance sometime this summer when it will be distributed by Microsoft. While Microsoft hasn't officially announced the news, our sources confirm that *CLOSE COMBAT II* is underway, once again designed by Atomic Games, and possibly based on the action surrounding *Amhem* (Operation Market-Garden).

After a brief stint with parent company Mindscape, Joel Billings, SSI's founder, has returned to the roost. Joel is back to his first love—producing games—and is currently working on new scenarios for *PANZER GENERAL ONLINE*, where he seems blissfully happy. In another SSI “returning to our roots,” they have recently recruited David Landrey. Most recently,

Landrey's Novistar Games has cranked out numerous scenario disks for *TANKS*, *STEEL Panthers*, and other popular wargames, but we'll always remember him for his early SSI designs with Chuck Kroegel, particularly the classic *BATTLES OF NAPOLEON*.

► *X-COM: APOCALYPSE* by MicroProse will evidently not be real-time! The design team decided that it was



X-COM: APOCALYPSE

better to stick with the tried-and-true turn-based tactical system—which certainly will make sense to the more than one million fans of the first two games in the series.

footage from the film *War and Peace*.

Nonetheless, *NAPOLEON IN RUSSIA* offers more than just pretty pictures. The imposed AI from *ANATHEM* and *Shah* makes this a greater challenge in single-player mode than *WATERLOO*. And if you're concerned about the micro-managing necessary to play games in the *BattleGround* series, *NAPOLEON IN RUSSIA* brings more visible command control to the battlefield, making it easier to delegate command of part of our army while you leave the system.

NAPOLEON IN RUSSIA is everything the

BATTLEGROUND series has come to stand for. It's longer than life, filled with desperate defenses, great (and abysmal) generals, thunderous cannon, and just enough fog of war to keep things interesting. *Talosoff* is trying to balance a new counter-charge system for cavalry without adding overmuch to the already numerous phases within a turn. What we've seen so far looks promising, especially with the added spice of the Cossack cavalry.

If you liked the way terrain affected *BC: SHILOH* and *BC: ANATHEM*, you'll love the way it's handled here. The

Russian winter affects the troop quality ratings of both sides, particularly the French because of their expectation of a swift, victorious campaign. Some creeks and streams are frozen, while other areas are rendered impassable by the snows. Still, it's the Great Redoubt, that wonder of Russian engineering, that stands as the dominant terrain feature. The design team is currently

working hard to accord the fortifications their proper historical weight, without tying players down to a frontal assault strategy.

SEND IN THE OLD GUARD

In real life, the two armies clashed, with neither able to truly break the other. Tsar Alexander retreated, leaving Moscow open to be pillaged by the French. The “triumph” for Napoleon was Pyrrhic at best, as the burning of the great city did little more than fan the flames of Russian defiance. Unable to bring Alexander again to battle, the French army disintegrated, leaving over 100,000 dead in the snows of the barren steppes. Napoleon would never replace these veteran losses, and forever reminisced about the victory that escaped his grasp at Borodino.

It is to *Talosoff*'s credit that they take battles such as these, less well-known but just as significant as say, *Waterloo*, and breathe new life into them. That the *BattleGround* engine is the best simulation of 19th century is a great fact each game seems even more entertaining than the last is something all wargamers should be thankful for this Spring, when *NAPOLEON IN RUSSIA* captivates their hard drives. ☺



DUG IN The close-up view shows Ney's cannons, infantry and Cossacks ready for action in the famous entrenchment.



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CIRCLE READ NUMBER 1336



A Graphical Adventure

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STRATEGY & TIPS

Diablo

Do Not Abandon These Strategies, All Ye Who Enter Hell

by Elliott Chin and Greg Fortune

Like thousands of adventurers, we have been lured into the seductive world of **DIABLO**, where evil demons, led by the infernal Lord Diablo, have risen up from the darkest pits of Hell to engulf the peaceful town of Tristram. The Lord of Terror, though, is not an adversary to be trifled with. Tread his dungeons carefully, amass magic and build your experience. In the struggle versus this infernal power, you will need all your wits and resources. You are now a player in the Great Conflict—the eternal war between the forces of Light and Darkness—and only this tome you hold in your hands can guide you on your narrow path to victory.

For the next three months, CGW will bring you tips and strategies to beat one of this year's hottest games: Blizzard's **DIABLO**. To help you overcome this devilishly hard game, we'll give you detailed solutions for each quest, monster stats and general control tips and character-specific hints. This month, we'll tackle control issues, so you can maximize the interface and concentrate on killing, not clicking. We also have the statistics for the first few monsters you'll encounter in the beginning levels of the dungeons, as well as solutions to the easier quests.



Goat Man

In Control

While the control setup in **DIABLO** is very simple and easy to use, there are a couple of tricks that will help keep you alive when the fighting gets particularly fierce. While the mouse is an integral part of the game, there are some functions for which it is not the best controller. By keeping your non-mouse

hand poised over a couple of select keys on the keyboard, you can have several functions available at all times while remaining vigilant with the cursor. Just us, it's not particularly entertaining to be scruffling about with the mouse, closing screens while the Burning Dead hack you're in pieces. It's much better to hit the spacebar to close all windows, stay in the fight and listen to the bones fall!

MOUSE MOVEMENT

The most popular method of exploring the dungeon is clicking on your character's desired destination with the mouse and letting him or her choose a path to that point. Sometimes, however, that can cause your character to walk in an unwanted direction and attract the attention



CONTROL FETISH Notice the belt with potions and scrolls. The numbers at the corner correspond to the number keys. Press the appropriate number key and you'll use that potion or scroll.

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of Hell's minions when you can lead afford a pitched fight. By holding the mouse button down and moving the mouse, you can control exactly which direction your character travels, allowing you to sneak along walls and stay in the shadows when the character's natural tendency would have been to walk out in the open.

USING SCROLLS AND POTIONS

Keep the potions and scrolls you are likely to need in a hurry (like healing, rejuvenation and mana) handy in your belt, represented by the small line of eight boxes just below the main screen. As you place items there, a number will become visible in the lower-left corner of the box. That item can now be activated by pressing the corresponding number key on the keyboard. So if your health is running out, and you are under attack, do not move your cursor away from the battle or you're as



SPELL CASTING 101 From this massive list of spells you can select four and save them with function hot keys. When you need one of those four spells later, just press the appropriate function key from F5 to F8.

good as dead. Use your belt shortcuts and keep backing away if those hellgones.

EASY SPELL USE

Shortcuts can also be assigned to skills and learned spells. Click your spell item in the lower-right corner or use the "S" key to bring up

the spell icons. Move your cursor over a spell and press a function key between F5 and F8 and the game assigns that function key as a shortcut to that spell. When you need the spell again, simply press the assigned function key to select it. You'll still have to use the right mouse button to activate the spells, but you can skip the spell menus completely when switching between your four most important spells.

By assigning and using these shortcuts, you can greatly increase the combat effectiveness of a character. This may not seem like an important point against Devil Kin and Burning Devil, but wait until you face some of the creatures in the lower levels. When faced with four or five Obsidian Liches and a handful of Lava Maws thrown in for good measure, you'll either have your spells and potions ready at a moments notice or you'll have a whole new career as a corpse.

Beat Each Quest

As a beginning adventurer in the dungeons below Tristram, before you even discover the true nature of Diablo's influence, you'll encounter the simplest of quests. The first three you could possibly be assigned are The Butcher, The Poisoned Water Supply and The

Curse of King Leoric. This month, we have the solutions to these three quests. Next month, revisit these pages and we'll show you how to recover Ogden's Sign, find the Magic Rock for Griswold, and get past the Chamber of Bane.

Quest: The Butcher

Who Do I Talk To? Wounded Townsman
What Is The Object? Your goal is to



THE MEAT LOCKER This is the Butcher's chamber littered with dead bodies. The Butcher is a powerful foe compared to your low level character, so make sure you stock your belt with lots of healing potions.

avert the death of the wounded townsman and slay The Butcher.

Where Do I Find Him? The Butcher is located on the second level in a large square room. You'll recognize it as a room covered in blood, with many humans impaled on stakes cluttering the room.

What Level Should I Be To Defeat Him? Warriors should be at least fourth level, Rogues should be at least fifth level and Sorcerers should be at least sixth level.

What Vital Information Is There?

The Butcher is immune to Fireballs, Firebolts, Holy Bolts, Charged Bolts and Lightning. The only early offensive spell that harms him is the Flash spell. He has close to 70 hit points, and



The Butcher

averages 8-12 points of damage per hit.

How Do I Beat The Butcher? Unless you have the Flash spell, you can only defeat The Butcher in hand-to-hand combat. That's why Warriors can tackle him before Sorcerers fill your belt with healing potions before you face the Butcher, and equip yourself with an axe (if you are a Warrior), or a one-handed weapon and shield (if you are a Rogue or Sorcerer). Bows or magic won't cut it against this fiend. Be careful. Once you open the door, he will come straight at you. Stand your ground and just start hacking.

When your health dips low, immediately hit the appropriate number key and quaff a healing potion. Repeat the hacking, always remembering to heal yourself, and you should have The Butcher beat in a number of strokes.

What Do I Get?

If you defeat The Butcher, you get his Cleaver, which does 4-24 points of damage and adds +10 strength to your character. However, it only has 10 durability. You also avenge the deaths of those slain by The Butcher's hand.

Quest: Poisoned Water Supply

Who Do I Talk To? Peppin the Healer

What Is The Object?

Your goal is to stop the poisoning of the town's water supply.

Where Do I Find It?

Talk to Deekard Cain and he will tell you that the entrance to the water supply is through a dark passage. Go down to level 2, and there you will find a rectangular structure with a shadowy cavern in it that reads "A Dark Passageway" when you move your cursor over it. Enter and you will descend to the Poisoned Water Supply.



What Level Should I Be To Complete This Quest?

Warriors should be at least fourth level, Rogues and Sorcerers should be at least fifth level.

What Vital Information Is There?

In the Poisoned Water Supply, you will find many Devil Kin, Carvers and Goat Demons. Carvers have 4-8 hit points, do roughly 1-5 points of damage, and have no magic resistance or immunities. Devil Kin have 16-24 hit points, do roughly 5-9 points of damage and have the same immunities. This will be your first encounter with the Goat Demons, who

are stronger than the Devil Kin. There are different "Clans" of Goat Demons, and these are Flesh Clans. They have from 30-45 hit points each, do 5-10 points of damage, and have no resistances. There are six or seven here, all but one of them armed with maces. The last one stands at the end of the Poisoned Water Supply cavern, and will fire at you with a

Monstrous Statistics



Skeleton

Hit Points: 2-4

Resistances: None

Immunities:

Magic (means nothing)

Vulnerabilities: Holy Bolt



Skeleton Captain

Hit Points: 3-5

Resistances: None

Immunities:

Magic (means nothing)

Vulnerabilities: Holy Bolt



Zombie

Hit Points: 4-7

Resistances: None

Immunities:

Magic (means nothing)

Vulnerabilities: Holy Bolt



Fallen Ones

Hit Points: 2-5

Resistances: None

Immunities: Holy Bolt

Vulnerabilities: None



Scavengers

Hit Points: 3-6

Resistances: None

Immunities: Holy Bolt

Vulnerabilities: None

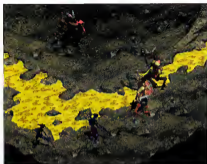


CLEAN WATER ACES Here is the entrance to the Poisoned Water Supply, marked "A Dark Passage."

bow. There is no central boss at work.

How Do I Reverse The Poisoning of The Water Supply?

All you need to do to clean up the water is eliminate every single creature in the Poisoned Water Supply cavern. When you first enter the cavern, several Carvers will attack. As you move forward, Devil Kin will attack. The caverns fork left and right. Left is a dead end with a Goat Demon and more mace traps, while right takes you towards the water supply, which is guarded by traps and several Goat Demons. One Goat Demon will stand on the far opposite side of the water supply (it's a maze cutting through parts of the cavern). Leave the other Goat Demons away



from this one's range, kill them and then return to take out the bow-wielding Coat Demon. Slay him with a bow or Firebolt. (Except for this last Coat Demon, defeat them with all melee weapons or magic (bows do too little damage).) Once you've killed all the Dead Rat, Gargoyles and Coat Demons, the water, thus cleaned, will turn from red to blue.

What Do I Get?

Pegyn will thank you and give you the Ring of Truth. It gives you a +10 hit point bonus, resists all at +10%, and allows you to take -1 damage from enemy attacks. You can sell the Ring if you like for 2,275 gold.

BOE, GREAT BOY This is the water supply, which has been poisoned by the very presence of the demons here. Eliminate them and you'll clean up the pollution.

Quest: The Curse Of King Leoric

Who Do I Talk To?

Ogden the Tavern Owner

What Is The Object?

King Leoric, the former ruler driven mad by Diablo, was killed in a tragic battle against his own priests and knights. Now he has risen from the dead via an ancient curse. You must free his soul and put it to rest by slaying his undead form.

Where Do I Find Leoric?

King Leoric's tomb is on the third level of the

What Level Should I Be To Defeat Him?

Warriors should be at least fifth level, Rogues should be at least sixth level and Sorcerers should be at least seventh level.

What Vital Information Is There?

The Skeleton King is not affected by fire-based spells, Holy Bolt, or Flash. He is damaged by lightning, but it takes a heavy dose to bring him down as he is resistant to it. Leoric

has about 120 hit points and does 10-15 points damage per hit. He also has a very fast attack rate, so those with a low armor class should be careful when going toe-to-toe with him.

How Do I Beat The Skeleton King?

Enter the tomb, kill the two Burning Dead in the first hallway and then move through the hall to a large chamber, where more await you with a few Corpse Bows. Behind a gate at the far end will be more Corpse Bows (beyond the gate lies the King's tomb). To open the gate, go to the rooms on the left where there is a lever (watch out for several Burning Dead inside). Pull this lever to open the grating and allow access to the King's tomb. The door on the right contains several skeletons, skeleton archers and small chests,

but nothing needed to defeat the King. As you enter the main

tomb beyond the now-narrowed gateway, arrows will come at you from all directions and about a dozen Burning Dead and Burning Dead Captains will try to surround you. In each of the four corners there are two Corpse Bows firing arrows at you. They don't pose much of a threat, so ignore them initially. Do not march boldly into this room and go after the king unless you are a fairly high level character with a high armor class. There are more skeletons toward the back—don't add

them to your problems. Lure Leoric back into the passage you entered through, kill the skeletons that follow, and then concentrate on Leoric. Keep your eye on your health, hocky some healing potions when it starts to get low and keep pounding away at him.

What Do I Get?

The Skeleton King leaves behind his Undead Crown. It adds 8 to armor class, and has life stealing qualities. It steals life from your foe every time you strike him, using that life to restore lost hit points. It doesn't increase your maximum hit points, but in a pitched battle you'll notice your health decreasing at a slower rate as you feed from the escaping life of your foes. ☞



HAIL TO THE KING You need to take the King out with high-level lightning or powerful sword/sax strikes. Lure him away from his minions, though, or you'll be surrounded and killed.

dragon, in a square structure with a darkened passage on one side. When the cursor is placed over the passage, it reads, "to King Leoric's Tomb."

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STRATEGY

Red Alert

Alternate History 101

by Martin E. Cirulis

Okay class, takes up: You want to get out of GDI Academy, then you've got to know your history. Military history, that is. Today we're going to take a look at the birth of the Global Defense Initiative in the fires of World War II—not the weird, alternate war where that creepy geek who wrote *Mitt Romney* managed to take control of our German allies and threaten the entire world. No, today we're going to stick to real life and study the Allied response to Josef Stalin's aggression. The monster may be dead, but there are still many lessons to be learned from his corpse. First, let's look at the weapon systems your brave predecessors had to work with and how they used them to push back the nefarious Russian Bear.

GENERAL TACTICS

Compared to the uphill fight the Allies had in terms of firepower and technology, the GDI's war against NOD is a cakewalk. Let's imagine for a moment that you were an Allied commander. The Allied powers suffered most

from a lack of sheer destructive capability compared to their Soviet counterparts. With no real answer in mobile lifting power to either the Soviet heavy or mammoth tanks, except for rural bombardment, and with very low unit-survivability when assaulting bases protected by Tesla coils, your Allied commander had to rely on numbers and precise, coordinated attacks to carry the battle, while layered defenses kept the Russians at bay and bought you the time to build up your forces.

When battles occurred near bodies of water, you had to use your naval superiority to conduct ground battles while under the destructive umbrella of shore bombardments. During



STRAIGHT AS AN ARROW Longbows, working with medium tanks, are the key to cracking the Russian Bear's back.

naval combat you had to keep your ships moving and present the narrowest possible target to enemy impedes. Often one ship could attract and dodge some of the slow-moving torps while others finished off the subs.

Because of the need for larger numbers of inferior armor, money was of supreme importance to any base commander, and you had not only a steady supply of minerals, but also a fast turn-around time for your mining trucks. While the automatic response was to simply buy one or two new mining trucks, congestion at the despatch station itself could severely impair efficiency. The smart commander would establish at least two ore refineries, situated close to different ore patches if possible.

As far as defending your base until you were ready to strike, you had to think layered. Between Soviet armor and aircraft, odds were that one line of defense would be ineffective. Against ground forces, a primary line consisting of a pair of turrets

Destroyer Flotillas

The best bang for your naval buck, and excellent all-around attack/defense units, destroyers survive more than the very expensive cruisers. Though not heavily gunned, their missile racks can bring down air units and also harass enemy ground forces. Destroyers should be employed carefully in flotillas of at least three, especially when hunting subs. Where possible, use them to interdict ore sites well behind enemy lines.



protected by a pair of camo-pillboxes was a start. Behind them would go at least two medium tanks, an artillery piece and a ranger. If there was a known bottleneck that you didn't need to cross until your assault force was ready, you had to seal it at least three deep with your anti-tank minelayer.

Air defenses took a little more study but tended to be absolutely effective if arranged properly. First, while you were building up and before you spotted your first Russian aircraft, you'd produce a fair number of rocket troops and scatter them around your base; this would give you a fair chance of busting up enemy aircraft that jumped you. The real vulnerability of Soviet aircraft was that they almost always followed the same direct flight path from their airfield to your base. Once you spotted which path aircraft were following in, you could line up some rocket troops as far out along the path as possible and then, at the edge of your base, plunk down two or three anti-aircraft guns without stepping fields of fire, but far enough apart not to go down under the same parachute bomb attack. Finally, you scattered a handful of missiles along the flight path to take care of any of those pesky pilots who might parachute out of their burning aircraft.



WOOLY MAMMOTH Even Mammoth tanks are in trouble against well-placed Tesla coils, unless they have Allied infantry and air support.

UNIT BRIEFING

In many ways, the Allied forces that opposed Stalin's mad plans had more in common with today's NOD forces than with the CDI, and hence, the same high-speed, hit-and-run tactics by multiple vehicles were necessary, at least for the majority of your production units.

Medics: Useful only while you are in defense mode; you need only one of these expensive squads at a time. Keep them safe at the core of your base during attacks and then use them quickly between enemy harassment attacks to heal as many of your soldiers, especially rocketeers, as possible before the next Soviet attack occurs.

Spies: Patently useless unless required for a victory condition, as any enemy base worth scoring is going to have guard dogs aplenty, and those sub pens are definitely going to have a couple of pooches at the door. Most of their worth is negated by the GPS satellite launched by your tech facility.

AT Minelayer. Again, another unit that you only need one of—two at the most, if you are under assault from either side of a large base. Use them to stuff bottlenecks you do not need and if you have an opportunity to study the paths taken by unguarded enemy ore trucks, lay a string of mines along the route and then bustle back to base before enemy patrols can pick you up. When fortifying defenses, always beware of Soviet troops who love to trigger your mines underneath you with grenades.

Ranger: These machine-gun jeeps should mainly be deployed with an assault group to chew up warts of enemy infantry before they can seriously harm attacking

armor. In hunter-killer groups of three or more, they make an effective counter to the Soviet V2 launcher, destroying them or forcing them to pull back to safety before the heavy tanks can come to their defense. Ranger groups manned by volunteers are also very effective at clearing the way for spies when victory conditions demand successful penetra-

Rocket Troops



Apart from their obvious uses, line some up along your shores to surprise enemy subs like this one that make the mistake of surfacing for combat.

tion of the Soviet base or when you feel you really have to know where enemy subs are. Send three or four rangers at full speed through enemy defenses (they are fast enough that the dreaded Tesla coils should get only one of them) and quickly gun down every guard dog that can be seen before your jeeps die gloriously. The next few dog-free minutes should be used to get your spies in. Costly, but it works every time.

Light Tanks: Too lightly armored to be much use cracking enemy defenses, the light tanks are ideal V2 filters when employed in pens or traps, because of their relatively high speed. A more rare use for these fast tanks is to flatten those huge groups of enemy troops that litter in front of barracks and in key terrain positions. Merely place three light tanks in line-abreast formation, and use the "B" command (see sidebar) to encourage them to hold that formation while on the move. After that, it's just a matter of diving at high speed past enemy armor and the storm of grenades to steamroll all that infantry, with three tanks' worth worth of destruction being enough to catch most of them before they can scatter.

Medium Tanks: These are the true workhorses of the Allied military. While completely overpowered by Soviet armor in terms of firepower, the medium tank has enough resilience on the battlefield to endure a fire-fight long enough to make superior numbers count. Defensively, any Allied base needs at least four medium tanks on site to be used as a reserve force to patch up any sudden holes or to crush Soviet naval landings. Any assault on serious Soviet bases requires at least six to eight of these tanks, and if naval gunfire or helicopter support is unavailable, groups this large are capable of taking down Tesla coils, albeit with horrendous losses. Medium tanks

are very vulnerable to enemy infantry and should never be deployed in the field without at least one ranger as support.

APC: An overrated vehicle that is more dangerous to the troops within than it is to enemy units, it should be employed only to insert engineer groups deep into a Soviet base once Tesla coils, flame towers and dogs have been cleared.

Artillery: Very vulnerable in the field, these mobile guns are most useful in supporting defensive emplacements or grinding out fields in conjunction with armor and rangers. When on the assault, make sure enemy units are engaged with your armor before you commit your artillery assets and pull them back fast if things start to go bad. They also make excellent shore batteries and can rain a salvo down if surfaces to attack. When enemy V2s are about, run away. Use caution in their employment, as artillery has an annoying tendency to interpret firing commands as movement orders, and you may find your guns rushing into the open arms of enemy troops if you don't watch them carefully



STEALTHY COMBINED ARMS Keep the guard dogs off Tanya's back long enough for her to blow up the SAM sites, then move in with your air units.

Mobile Gap Generator: This is most useful when you are engaging another student in the simulator, as the AI opponent is less perturbed by lack of recon data. These trucks make excellent decoy sights when preparing assaults just pull them out quickly when the enemy comes looking to see what you're hiding.

Gunboats: These attack boats are useful stopgaps until more effective naval units are available, or as scouting screens for destroyer forces. Raining a gunboat ahead of a sub-hunter group to attract the initial volley of

traps allows you to effectively allocate the more valuable destroyers.

Cruisers: These expensive gun platforms can readily support most ground actions within a screen-width of the water. Just do not employ them without destroyer screens, and pull them back for repair as soon as they pass the half-damage mark. In groups of three they are capable of removing any Tesla coil in range

before taking significant damage.

Longbows: These slow-moving, expensive air units have eccentric attack patterns that make them nearly useless on the battlefield unless employed in very large numbers. In numbers less than three they can function as expensive harassment weapons for Soviet ore trucks and V2 launchers, but if you can afford to construct five to seven Helghans, you have an assault force capable of cracking any Soviet base with near impunity. Once your chopper force reaches critical mass, longbows are capable of taking down even clustered Russian SAMs with minimal losses and then going on to ravage entire bases, starting with the construction yard and moving on to the Tesla coils. For the commander with a large supply of ore at his command, longbows are the key to any assault. They are also very effective at sinking subs but must be hovering nearby to get in on the action before targets submerge. Use them in conjunction with a sacrificial gunboat.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Though any military historian can tell you the Allies were the underdogs in The Big One, the battles recorded here in the simulator are perfect for teaching you CJD recruits the skills of building combined-arms assault, the discipline to hold troops until the moment is perfect, and the smarts you need to survive until that moment arrives. Anything else will leave you speaking Russian, at least virtually. **S**

Staying With The Group

Major improvements in Red Alert over C&C are the special formations and movement hollers. Now when you click-and-drag over a group and use the control **K** command to reference it, you can use the **F** command to keep it in shape. This is crucial when moving an assault group into position or establishing a defensive group to guard an ore field from heavy assault. A nice trick is to use the group command to nest smaller attack squads inside larger groups. For instance, it is useful to have all your choppers under one formation to get to the target, but once you arrive it can be a waste for them to all attack the same target. Creating smaller groups from the main allows you to allocate two or three choppers to a specific target with a few quick keystrokes and then

get them all out of there in a hurry with another. This works very well with large flotillas of destroyers as well. The Escort command is also extremely useful for keeping your ore trucks alive. Now you can assign a ranger or light tank to dutifully follow your cash cows around and draw fire, while you are freed to scheme and plan.



HACKS

Quake

*Is There Multiplay Beyond DeathMatch?
But Of Course!*

by V. Long

Even when CCW and I visited id Software for a sneak peek, we wondered if **QUAKE** would have more multiplayer modes. There's no doubt that **QUAKE** DeathMatch is great fun and highly addictive. Given the capability to throw up to 16 players into a session, wouldn't it be great to be able to team up in pursuit of specific objectives?

Intrepid **QUAKE** aficionados haven't sat still waiting for id Software to remedy this situation: combinations of **QUAKE** C hacking (see CCW Nov '96), skins/model customization (Dec. '96), and level editing (Feb. '97) have yielded exciting teamplay variations, mostly based on the popular Capture the Flag. One that's a big hit on the Internet is called *Capture the Flag* by Dave "Zoid" Kirsch (quake.threewave.com).

The goal in Zoid's CTF is simple: attack the enemy base, grab that flag, take it to your base, and touch your flag. You also score points for "assists" and "saves." Players can bring back weapons and ammo to those guarding the base. CTF has magical "nines" that boost the fun factor even more, and it includes one of my favorite **QUAKE** C goodies, the Morning Star, aka Crappling Hook. Why defend one if it's dumb to defend vantage points.

STORM MY FORTRESS

Another great teamplay variant is **QUAKE** by Cary Griggs (cgriggs@igsl.net). It offers a host of new tweaks to the standard teamplay modes—dynamic team switching, capture-the-flag-and-tag teamplay, friendly fire penalties,

restricted team colors, and "Ghost Minors" for controlled player entry into the game.

The third compelling teamplay variant is **TEAMFORTRESS** by Robin Walker, John Cook, and Ian Coughlin (<http://min.uscis.mit.edu/~cook/index.htm>).

TEAMFORTRESS provides a panoply of goodies, such as sniper rifles, assault cannons, biological weapons, grenades of all types, motion detectors, med-kits, and clo-packs. I find **TEAMFORTRESS** particularly interest-



CAPTURE THE FLAG The red flag appears undefended in this game of Capture the Flag, better grab it. Check for guards lurking in the rafters with grappling hooks.

ing for its different character classes—Secret, Sniper, Soldier, Demolition Man, Combat Medic, Heavy Weapons Guy, and Pyro—each with special attributes and weapons specialties. The designers will add Spy and Engineer classes. They also plan to incorporate bots (see CCW Jan '97 for more on bots) to help out players who don't have teammates handy.

MECH IT MESSY

Although not technically a teamplay variant, **MechWars** (by Lando at www.rain.net.net,



MECH MY DAY Grab the appropriate power-up for the **MechWars Quake** conversion to become a full-blown Mech with kick-ass rockets and cannons.

rain-hacks/quake.html) inevitably forces all of the humans to land together against the Mech-ruled player. Grab the Quad Damage or Pentagon of Invincibility power-ups, and you're transformed into a fearsome Mech complete with the LB-X Assault Cannon, a light PPC plasma cannon, twin SRM-2 rocket launchers, and the mighty ER Pulse Laser. The laser-guided HUD makes it easy to reduce pony humans into puddles.

SEE YOU IN HELL!

If you're hungry to keep up with the sky-rocketing **QUAKE** scene, check out my budding web sites and tell them I sent you.

Redwood's **QUAKE** page: agglequake.tamnet.edu.

Scary's **Quake** info: quakehole.com, and Blue's **QUAKE** News: www.blueview.com

I hope you've had as much fun with this column as I have. This is the last **QUAKE** Page (for now) but not the last you'll see of me. Next time you witness a firestorm of destruction on the Internet **QUAKE**, you'll know I'm still on the loose. ☺

V. Long poses as a mild-mannered senior editor for *Computer Shopper* magazine, but he has a taste for giblets.

STRATEGY

War Wind

Destroy Your Enemies And Rule Yavaun As Tha'Roon Or Obblinox

by Martin E. Cirulis

In **WAR WIND**, SSI brings us a real-time wargame set on Yavaun, a world in political turmoil, where four distinct alien races struggle against each other for dominance of the planet. Unlike the **WARCRAFT** series, where Orc and human units are virtually identical, the four races of Yavaun have analogues but distinct unit types and specific racial advantages. This means there are important strategic and tactical strengths and weaknesses for each race that will affect your style of play. In this part of the strategy guide, we'll be looking at two of the stronger races in **WAR WIND**, namely the physically weak but technologically superior Tha'Roon, and the walking tanks, the Obblinox.

The Tha'Roon

The former masters of Yavaun are quick in the lab but less adept at managing construction tasks and open warfare, jobs previously handled by their former slaves, the Eagga and the Obblinox, respectively. In general, Tha'Roon should research their technologies as early and as quickly as possible. Since cybernetic

upgrades cost less for the Tha'Roon than any of the other races, players should outfit their warriors and scouts with new parts, specifically strength and resilience packages, to compensate for the Tha'Roon's inferior melee skills. As far as combat tactics themselves, the Tha'Roon are very powerful in ranged combat and should avoid melee with opponents as much as possible, especially the Shama'Li. In large bat-

tles, sacrifice one or two hardy units by placing them further ahead to pin large groups of enemy units in melee while the rest of your force blitzes away from a distance.

Units



The Rover These touring knights are the most expensive mercenary unit in the game, yet they don't deliver much damage for your dollar. They are best used as an early boost to your defenses or as fast scouts for scanning the countryside and harassing enemy workers. Unless you are incredibly rich or desperate, avoid the rover.



The Executioner This is your basic military unit. Outfit with the strength and resilience upgrades and try to have your units either firing at range or screening even more valuable ranged units.



The Destroyer These command units should be outfitted with a full array of upgrades (though they can probably do without the stealth module unless you have a specific subtle plan in mind). Use them in conjunction with three executioners to maximize their effect. Group these four in a truck or a cruiser for a fine assault group. Pull these units back for repair



The strategies in this article are intended for **The Roon Ministers** and **Obblinox War Generals**. Eagga and Shama'Li commanders can turn their Web browsers to www.zdnet.com/paging for strategies for their own forces.



FIRE AWAY The Tha'Roon have, by far, the best ranged units in the game. Attack from afar as often as possible, because they will lose in hand-to-hand combat. This close-up shows how the Tha'Roon can chew up an Obblinox before it even reaches them.

before they are destroyed, as they are too valuable to waste on a failed attack.



The Rogue Give these units the stealth and speed upgrades and use them in groups to get close to an enemy base. Once there, launch surprise attacks against specific targets simultaneously with your main assault elsewhere. If it looks like a superior number of enemy units is about to engage them, pull back quickly and hide, as rogues are very poor hand-to-hand combatants. Produce large numbers of them if you have the money, so that you can build the very valuable assassins and pump troop units.

LEAPIN' LIZARDS The Tha'Roon are physically weak but technologically superior. Upgrade your Tha'Roon troops early and often.



The Assassin This is the most powerful ranged unit in the game and should be outfitted accordingly. With a stealth modification, it can lead a group of rogues deep into enemy territory and terminate specific, powerful enemy units before the enemy can react. With full upgrades, players can make the decision to use them as ivor upgrade them to jump troops, which offer less ranged firepower in return for a massive mobility advantage, a decision which should be based upon the tactical needs of the moment.



Jump Troops These ultimate fast-attack units are rare, and most times you will be lucky if you can get three of them into the arena at once (a task that would require you to have 12 active regents at the same time), but if you can do that, then no enemy unit or building is safe. Use their limited flight capability to bypass walls and enemy front-line defenses to wreak havoc in your opponent's backfield. In combat, keep a close eye on them, and when they are in danger, pull



TOWN THA'ROON Here is a typical The'Roan settlement. If you want to keep it alive, upgrade your troops immediately. The'Roan start out weak, but with technological upgrades, they approach physical parity with other races.



ROCKET RANGING Upgrading to the jump troop means you lose the assassin's superior ranged capabilities, but you gain mobility and limited flight. These capabilities are useful for dropping behind enemy lines or picking up hard-to-reach special items.

them out quickly so they can auto-heal. A good trick to use on many maps is to use a jump trooper to collect goodies that are set aside on islands or guarded by hostile animals.



Psychics and Psionics The'Roan magic users are the weakest of all the four races and aren't really worth the cost of creating them. If you have

the time and money, it may be worth it to produce the four psychics and the psionic just to get your hands on the Command Voice spell. Once researched by a psionic, it can be learned by your lesser mages without trouble, and costing five of these spells can turn a massed enemy assault into a rout. You could end up with a whole new army at your disposal.

The Oblinox

These proud warriors of Yivann are the masters of the battlefield, but they also have the most demanding infrastructure needs of



all the races. Since an Oblinox mead hall supports only three units, you will need lots of space to support your forces, so keep this in mind when choosing village sites and placing buildings. In general, your units are most powerful in close melee, so when combat occurs, make sure you force your units to engage the enemy in melee instead of letting them fire from afar, as they will tend to do. Most Oblinox units pack armor, so never be afraid to go in and slug it out with a slightly superior force; unless you are outnumbered badly, you will probably give far more than you get. Though your tech research costs are almost double that of the The'Roan, equipping your units with speed, strength and resilience can make your forces truly frightening.

Units



Bikers While Oblinox mercenaries can hit a little harder and cost a little less than their The'Roan counterparts, they aren't much more useful and should be employed seriously only during the early stages of a game. They can also be used to pursue fleeing units or keep tabs on enemy positions. Later on they can make a useful screen for a larger attack, as they will attract most of the enemy units' attention while you move in for the kill with more expensive and useful soldiers.



Agents and Spies The Oblinox are not a subtle race, and this shows in their clandestine units. While spies have hitting power equal to that of the soldiers of other races, and can be effective sneak attackers when coupled with stealth cybernetics, they are not durable enough to justify the cost of their production. When you take into account that you must create four of the tumble inside-

OBSTINATE OBLINOX The elephantine Oblinox were once the soldiers of the The'Roan but are now applying their military might to rebellion. They are the strongest troops and are best used in straight-up melee combat.

quite agents to produce one spy, a wise Obblinox commander will leave skill/leggery and sneak attacks to less noble races and spend his money more efficiently elsewhere.

Veterans These hardy warriors are the backbone of any Obblinox campaign and should be produced in large numbers. They are fairly cost-effective, and wise commanders will resist the temptation to outfit them with anything more than the resilience and strength/cybernetic improvements. Instead, save some of that money for more meat hulk and walker recruitment. Veterans are most effective when

can get in close to key targets and eliminate them in the first few seconds of any larger assault. When deploying in a straight-up attack, hundreds of veterans should be accompanied by a cruiser filled to bursting with captains, who should then strike as a group into the strongest of the enemy's maged units.

The Colossus Second only to the Shama'Li elemental in raw hitting power, the colossus is a mountain of battlefield mayhem. But more important than its terrible strength is its durability. With heavy armor and a huge number of hit-points,



OBBLINOX OUTPOST The Obblinox have the largest infrastructure requirements, so leave lots of space for road hills when you pick a spot to settle.



MAND-A-MAND Obblinox troops have the best strength and armor and are best when going toe-to-toe against the other troops. In this outfit, Obblinox warriors make short work of a wandering beast.

deployed inside two or three expendable trucks. Let the vehicles take the brunt of the enemy's defenses and then come piling out of the wreckage with a full squad of veterans already positioned for close combat.

The Captain Produce one of these for every three veterans in your army, but resist the urge to make these excellent fighters into the mightiest colossus unit. While the colossus has its uses, a captain with a host of implants is a truly frightening unit, especially considering that they can be employed in significant numbers. Coupled with the stealth implant, they

this advanced unit should be used sparingly, in conjunction with other, more versatile units. The optimal assault strategy is to lead with a single colossus plugging into the thick of the

enemy, and then, as they concentrate on the newly invulnerable juggernaut, the bulk of your attack wave (consisting of captains and veterans) should hit them from the sides and envelope them. Unless the enemy commander is fast or you're fighting against the Shama'Li, victory is almost a certainty.



Sorcerers and Wartocks

While one would think using magic was less than honorable, a wise Obblinox commander with some money to spare will take advantage of the melee strength of these magical units, as well as the great power of their spells. The bottom line is these are the only mages in the game capable of protecting themselves somewhat, especially if enhanced cybernetically, and this gives them the opportunity to not only deliver spells, but also to survive and retreat until their spell points recharge. Phantom is largely ineffective, but Blood Bolt should be researched so the lower sorcerers can use it. Sneak a mage into an enemy compound and cast it on a large reserve force to watch them burn out and die before they reach your lines. Crumbling is also useful for destroying fences and infrastructure.

Wars Without End

With the full, albeit quirky, network suite present in War Wind, there is no doubt that a new trick or tactic will be discovered for each of the four races every day for the next few months. Some will work better on the computer (such as sneaking in disguised troops—humans tend to notice when a group of their own workers stand around doing nothing, not responding to commands), while others will reap the best rewards when employed against human limitations. In sure, more exhaustive works will appear eventually, but in the meantime, those basic tips and tactics should give you a leg up on dealing with the computer opponents, and perhaps give you an edge when fighting over exotic Yovam with a few friends. ☞

STRATEGY

Syndicate Wars

Memo To All Syndicate Executives On Hostile Takeovers And Tactical Strategies

by Thierry Nguyen

Welcome Executive, and congratulations on your new promotion. What follows is one of your basic primers on executive management and research. This primer focuses on the equipment available to your agents, including its proper use. Also, note that the Church Of The New Epoch probably has stolen this primer from defecting agents and may use the same types of strategy as well.

Kinetic Weapons

The first set of weapons includes kinetic weapons, ones that fire bullets rather than concentrated energy. These remain your staple weapons for a long time and will serve you well if used properly.

The **uzi** will be your first kinetic weapon. Uzis have a short range and do a small amount of damage. Having four agents concentrate uzi fire on one target early on is sub-



DO NOT BE FOOLED The electron mace is woefully inadequate, with pathetic firepower, a weapon the Syndicate executive would do well to avoid.

factory, but this weapon's poor firepower will soon become a liability. Rid yourself of the Uzi at the first opportunity.

The minigun, on the other hand, should be your early weapon of choice. It has a decent range and delivers decent damage. When four agents begin to spray minigun fire around, they quickly become a force to contend with. The Church needs to research miniguns as its first weapon, but we here at Eurocorp already have the minigun. I advise you, as a Eurocorp executive, to sell all of your Uzis and buy miniguns before your first mission.

Long-range rifles are powerful weapons when used properly and should be a top research priority. As the name suggests, they have great range (longer than all weapons except launchers

and plasma launchers), and their bullets are powerful enough to terminate most soldiers in one hit. The main hindrance to its continued use, however, is its re-fire rate. To balance this inequity, equip two agents with the long-range rifle, and equip the remaining two agents with miniguns. The result

while the two LR rifle-equipped agents reload, the two with miniguns can continue their blanket of fire. The only time to arm all four agents with LR rifles is when you can retreat freely and hence control the number of encroaching enemies. Against vehicles, the LR rifle's massive range and firepower are perfect, as concentrated shots from four agents can destroy nearly any vehicle quickly. Should you find yourself on the opposite end of an LR rifle, the way to counter it is to immediately concentrate several agents on its owner.

Explosives

The explosive weapons come in two types: the timed explosive and the launched explosive. Follow common sense—while they all do a great deal of damage, the explosions can affect you as well.

High explosives (HE), like the minigun, are another staple weapon. They should be researched after the LR rifle. Each agent can carry up to four high explosives. To use HE,

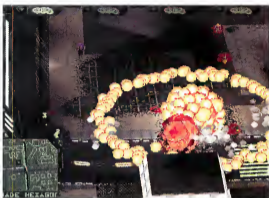
The Art Of Persuasion

The persuader is perhaps Eurocorp's most useful device. It brainwashes those near it to follow your orders, thus creating an expendable civilian army. Your persuaded civilians will pick up any weapons lying on the ground, so activate this device after a firefight to have your new recruits pick up the weapons of the fallen. Different people, though, need different "points" of persuasion. Citizens are worth one point, while a law enforcer needs at least four. Syndicate agents need around thirty-two, as do Church members. Also, a higher brain level reduces the number of persuasion points needed to persuade certain types of people.

move your agent to the targeted area, release the bomb and vacate the premises. It is effective for taking down gates and banks, as well as cars, given the proper timing. With two HE, you can destroy a bank, which results in the massive release of liquid assets for immediate acquisition. The HE is also good for eliminating buildings full of enemies, provided you can get close enough without being detected.

The **ion mine** is barely adequate. Rather than destroy an enemy, it incapacitates. It drains energy from whatever enemy unit triggers it. Against computer opponents, it is of no great importance, so research priority is low. It is, however, more useful against other human-held Syndicates, as your foe cannot use any weapons after triggering it.

The **launcher** is a good, all-purpose weapon. Research this as soon as you find it, and try to equip everyone with it. Its range is nearly that of the LR rifle and its firepower the near equivalent of an HPL launchers are



EXPLOSIVE EFFECTS High explosives, which are ideal for destroying banks and vehicles, emit a ring of fire and smoke to burn all enemy units within their radius.

this as soon as you can. Though it is expensive, the return on your investment is astounding. One NG can bring down any single sky-scraper-sized building. Simply throw the grenade at the target and immediately evacuate the area. Its main disadvantages are its cost (100k a pop) and, in multiplayer games, its telltale white flash, which marked human opponents to flee before the blast.

Energy Weapons

The following are the energy-based weapons. When these weapons come into play, it is time to phase out the kinetic weapons.

Despite its menacing appearance, the **electron mace** is a poor weapon. Good for disorienting citizens, it still lacks ample firepower. It remains a mystery as to why the Church chooses to make this its standard weapon.

The **pulse laser** should be a top-priority research project. Once researched, it will become your new standard firearm. Arm all four agents with this weapon, and no one will be able to resist the Syndicate. The concentration of pure red laser power will disintegrate anyone within moments. However, even as you arm all your agents with this weapon, always keep LR rifles in reserve. Despite the PLA superiority against flesh-based targets, the LR rifle is still better suited for vehicles.

The best all-around energy weapon is the **plasma lance**. Four agents armed with these proficient tools can dispense with an entire mob of Unglided or destroy a Church siege tank in a few shots, all with the same deadly efficiency. As soon as it appears, research it. This weapon becomes available only near the end of your tenure, and you will need it.

The **gastrol gun** is the most powerful energy weapon. Unfortunately, it appears only at the very end. You will need to salvage it from the Church, as it acquired this weapon first.

Miscellaneous Equipment

The **disrupter** un-persuades people and is useful only in multiplayer warfare.

Flamers are flame-throwers. They have a short range and low damage potential. This weapon is purely an indulgence for your agents when they wish to set off the Unglided.

The low-priority **razor wire** is more of an annoyance than a weapon to your enemies. You will gain the most success with this weapon against human-held Syndicates.

Trigger wire is an improvement over Razor Wire and, unlike its predecessor, will actually explode when tripped. In the heat of battle,



PLASMA PRIMER The best all-purpose energy weapon in the game, the plasma lance destroys man and machine with equal efficiency.

excelled against vehicles and large crowds due to their high damage. A volley of four rockets will scatter heat and flame over a small area, making it perfect for clearing patches of Church holdings. If you hold down the right button before firing, you can "lock" the weapon and achieve more accurate fire. However, be especially careful when using this weapon, as accidental fire in a corner will result in damage to your agent.

The **nuclear grenade**, referred to colloquially as the "Cataclysm," is the most powerful hand-held explosive in the game. Research

however, it is difficult to lay this trap. Again, it is best used in matches versus other Human Corporations.

Psychogas is a confusion agent. With no real value in single-player play, it is irritating at best in multiplayer. Use of this gas will cause your opponent to lose control of his exposed agent temporarily.

On the other hand, **knockout gas** can be very useful if used correctly. Always have at least one agent carry four canisters of KO gas. When you run into a large group of enemies, order that agent to toss a can outward and fall back. The KO gas should render most of your enemies unconscious, giving you the opportunity to annihilate them; KO gas is key in the armored car heist missions. Research it at your earliest convenience.

The **auto-medikit** will automatically heal your agent as she gets injured. Its effects never expire, so you can place one in each agent's slot, and always be assured of the kit's healing effects. However, you must give the kit enough time to heal your agent by falling back.

A good defense weapon is the **Cerebus IFF**. Simply lay it down, and it becomes a turret that fires a probe laser at any enemy that approaches. It fires until it is destroyed or until the power runs out. This is useful if you are being assaulted on two sides, as you can line one side up with Cerebus IFFs and manually defend the other

side. It's especially useful for the Finacorp mission of protecting Dr. Dreeman and his aide.

The **clone shield** is a tool of stealth. The clone shield is designed to give the outfitted agent the appearance of an executive. This deceptive appearance allows one to mingle among the police and possibly enemy agents, without drawing attention or fire.

An odd item is the **chronotap**, which allows you to recharge energy from corpses. Though it is useful in principle, this interesting item is largely useless by the time you acquire it; you will have progressed so far that very few bodies will remain. Still, carrying one with you will ensure an accelerated recharge rate when you do encounter, or create, bodies.

The **displacement** is useful for defense. It works by creating a field that causes all caught within to disappear from view for a short period. Hence, it is useful in large fights by allowing you to hide and regain needed health and energy.

The **stasis field** is perhaps the most useful item, slowing down



A HARD RAIN'S GONNA FALL Satellite rain is a mass drop of nuclear grenades. Nothing in its path is spared, including any of your agents who struggle behind.

time for your enemies. Simply lay it stasis field down amongst a group of enemies, and your opponents will move in slow motion, allowing you to dispatch them at your leisure.

The most destructive weapon is the **satellite nuke**—in essence, several nuclear grenades falling upon your target. Merely position an agent near your target area and activate the launch code. Soon the general area surround-



SUCCESS THROUGH STASIS Place the stasis field in a huddle of foes and you will reap immediate rewards as your enemies suffer a slowed movement and fire rate.

ing your agent will erupt in fire and smoke as buildings after buildings utter their destruction. Absolutely nothing can survive a direct hit from a satellite.

Executive, your promotion should indicate that the Syndicate places much trust in you to fulfill your duties. Our holdings cannot now be compromised by the Church, and we look to you to maintain our silence and market dominance. Do not fail us. ☞

Body Language

The basics of body modification are as follows: body modifications improve your agent's health, arm modifications improve your aim and weapon efficiency, leg modifications improve your speed and stamina, and brain modifications improve your agent's AI.

There are three levels of modification per part, and you can modify an agent only once. Once a modification is attached, it cannot be reversed, so choose your upgrades wisely.

An example of a good research path follows: body,



arms, brain, legs. The body and arms control your accuracy and endurance, so they should have priority. The legs and brain are less important.

Finally, some Syndicate employees (those who failed to win promotion) do not realize that weapon and modification research can occur simultaneously. When researching a weapon, just click on the modifiers button to study both a weapon and a modification at once.

WALKTHROUGH

SkyNET

Blow The Terminators Away With This SkyNET Mission Walkthrough

by Peter Olafson

Bethesda's SkyNET has fewer than half the missions in FUTURE SHOCK, but the good ones are about twice as clever. Here's a run-down on the human resistance's no-nukes campaign.

mission one: Trojan Horse

The hot base that holds your objective—the Hades city-busting missile—is fairly small, but it's tough getting in and back out again. Climb inside the in-board container, which the bots will then obligingly bring within the walls. The base has two discrete sections. The one you want is to the rear and is reached by a descending ramp. Throw the switch atop the nearby tower to open the door at the bottom. Once inside, you'll find that most switches have an effect close by. (However, don't overlook the express exit.) Use the switch atop the tower near the gate to make your exit.

mission two: Drive, John Connor Said

The long drive home is very simple. All you need to do is head mostly west and south (and, briefly, north). Don't shy away from the drop-off you'll encounter on the way.

mission three: Core Wars

The infiltration of the Cyberdyne Systems HQ is a long and rigorous mission. Avoid the north-west, where a thricket of bots hangs out. Instead, go north, then west and up the elevated highway here.

Actually, you're not looking for the Cyberdyne building—which can't be entered

mission five: Waiting to Inhale

In this level, the bots have sunk the sub with you on board. Backtracking isn't an option. (The top hatch is inaccessible, and, with the waiped underwater physics, your character swims like a stone.) Make your way to the



WATERLOGGED Mission 5 is a sub mission, which you'll have to escape from the sub that the bots just sank. Use the torpedo tube to fire yourself out, and then find your way through the maze back to the surface.

bow. Use the panel at the end of the left fork to open the door at the end of the right.

Open the door to a torpedo tube, and you'll be fired directly into a nearby sewer outlet.

Here, it's more or less a conventional sewer maze, with a few turn-the-wheel-to-open-the-door bits and a good deal of walking underwater. Eventually, you'll open a door that lets in a torrent of water. Blow open the odd-looking section of the right-hand wall around the curve and you'll let it right out again.

Stick to the main hall, which leads you to a room with four gated tunnels. Turn the wheel on the west wall and then the one in the north wall to clear a path to the east. Once back in the open air, hoof it back to the jeep. (It's between a blue and a yellow van in the northeast corner of the level.)

by conventional means—but an adjacent structure with a tall mast on its roof. Knock down the mast with a blast to its base, and you'll have a launch pad for the long leap to the top of Cyberdyne.

You'll have to fight your way down through the structure to reach the auxiliary power switch (in a storage room down a short flight of stairs off the lobby). The stairs only take you so far, though. When you see an air-hockey table, blow it up and then blow a hole in the floor beneath it to proceed.

The power switch opens the elevator doors on the ground level. The elevator, though,

remains at the top of the shaft, so you'll need to make your way back to the top. Hiding back down, watch for an otherwise inaccessible area off the shaft. The two terminals here will open the way to the cellar command center. Access all the terminals there, and then make your way to the roof, where a Hunter/Killer craft will come to pick you up. Don't go back via the elevator; it's now flooded with bots.

mission four: Sub Sandwich

In the first part of this level you'll see some horrible slopes and barricades that seem to

mission six:

Going Along For The Ride

This mission is really an extended driving lesson, as you saddle up a jeep in an attempt to intercept the missile en route to its launch site. Unfortunately, you can't actually stop the missile. Your real job is just to survive to see the bots destroy the bridge and out of your pursuit.

To get that fat, you'll need to blow off the door of the drive-through car wash. Just after the fast-food restaurant (Big Sune), you'll see two roads heading north. Take the second and higher one. Then floor it. Just be sure not to get hung up on the guard rail.



DRIVE ON BY Mission 6 is a no-win situation; just drive as far as you can and stay alive... to see your path being cut off by more enemy bots.

point to an exit via a drainage tunnel across a pool on the north side of the level. You might think this is where you begin, but it isn't. This is actually the end you'll use in the next mission. But you're getting warm. Search the slopes south of the pool for a section with a slightly less steep incline. At the top, make a jump and you'll find yourself looking down into a metal base.

Use one dock crane to reach the ramp to the top of the walkway tower. The other crane will net you a very nice weapon.

Your work here is cut and dried: Get the combination to the sub-mini terminal from the terminal on the catwalk in the engine room and use it to open the safe in the conference room.

mission seven:
Doing What We Do Best

The only Hunter/Killer mission in the new collection finds you bound for the desert base where the bots are planning to

launch the missile.

The base isn't a straight shot to the east. The highway eventually peters out in a blackened cul-de-sac within a circle of impassable hills. Just before this dead-end you'll find a canyon. Dive in, and follow it north to a huge access tunnel.

This takes you into a substation guarded by Terminators. You'll find the exit, almost out of sight, high in the far wall. This second section of tunnel can't be navigated conventionally. Your angle of approach won't permit it. You'll need to move as far forward as you can, rotate the car on its axis, move forward again, and in this way zigzag your way up the tube. You're especially vulnerable to sniping from Terminators at this awkward position, so move quickly and shoot 'em when you see 'em.

Once in the open again, just make your way north across the lake and out to the base. Set down on the green landing grid on the base's north side.

mission eight:
Send the Hades
Up the Styx

Your first task—setting a new target and launching the missile—isn't as complicated as it looks. You'll lay the groundwork for this level's solution in structures east, south and west of the launch pad. But the one that appears to hold the least—to the north—is the most essential.

The lower section of the eastern structure has two central control arrays with five interactive panels. On the northern array, enable the easternmost of the two panels with the red and green bars. This activates a sensor in the southwest corner of the room's second level, which you'll

need later to open an elevator door. (The other panels enable booby traps.)

The southern and western structures are effectively gauntlets laden with hard-to-see guns and rocket launchers. You'll need to methodically fence these out—drawing their fire and identifying the source, if need be—and put them out of commission.

Despite appearances, the northern structure isn't an abandoned waste dump. On the upper level, look for a room with a cluster of radiation barrels. Blow them up, and they'll take a section of floor with them. Drop through the hole, and you're on the fast track to the elevator in the eastern structure (watch for Terminators).

Ride that lift to the upper level and shoot the sensor you enabled earlier to open the elevator door onto the catwalk. Climb the ramps and enable the six panels you'll find in the two control rooms. This gives you access to the inner ring of the catwalk around the mode. Enable the panel here to extend a catwalk from the western structure. Make use of it quickly (more enemies are coming) and enter the western structure.

Activate the pods atop the entrance to plug in the new target, and climb the ramps to the first room, where you'll find the launch button protected by an eight-segment force-field. To kill all eight segments, activate the two easternmost panels on the southern wall. Then hit the button and watch the missile fly. Mission accomplished. ☺



ON TOP OF THE WORLD Mission 7 is a hunter/killer mission. This is the view from the hunter/killer aircraft, which you can use to clear yourself a path, thanks to its heavier armor and armament.

Strategy/Wargames

War Wind

Here are some cheats for those times when you don't feel like doing the dirty work of reaping in your Ragnarok skies.

!Golden boy = Gain 5,000 resources

!Pump an ahrn = Gain full prestige

!The Great Pumpkin = Win the campaign



!The Sun also rises = Restores flag of war

!Oh come all ye faithful = Faster air recruitment

!On a mission from gawd = Accelerates building and harvesting

!I am the bishop of halite = Win current scenario

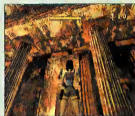
Action

Tomb Raider

Here's a trick to skip levels in *Tomb Raider*: make Lara step forward once, step backward once, turn full circle three times and then jump forward. The key presses are:

Shift Up, Shift Down, Turn around 3 times, Alt-Forward.

Complete this sequence and she'll literally jump ahead.



Master of Orion II

Here are some cheats that will make MOO2 exciting, and sometimes a little too easy. But you asked for it. Hold down the [Alt] key when you type in these cheats. For all codes except "crunch," type them at the galaxy screen.

canonly1 = Turns all the AI empires against you

crunch = Completes your current construction task (type at colony screen)

einstein = Gives you all techs

iseall = Bestows omniscience

menlo = Completes current research project

moala = Gives you 1000 credits

Lords of the Realm II

Left to their own devices, your bowmen and crossbowmen will frequently make bad decisions or focus too much on only a small portion of the enemy army. This is particularly true in siege encounters, where your



defending archers must be instructed to direct some of their fire toward the enemy bowmen outside the walls. Remember, until the wall is breached, only enemy archers can hurt you. If you direct, say, half of your defenders to fire back at those archers, you may be able to wipe them out, thus leaving the rest of the besieging army at your mercy.

Adventure/Role-Playing

Titanic: Adventure Out Of Time

Titanic is a pretty easy adventure game, but you can get tripped up and end on an undesirable path. Rule one, of course, is to save often. Now here are some tips to keep you on course.

Finding the Rubaiyat in boiler room 3, coal chute 4 is easy enough. Holding on to it, and not getting killed by Vlad, is another matter. Here's the deal: do not take the book with you after finding it. Instead, simply hide it behind any other control box doors before going back up. After you retrieve the package from Barblcon, you can then go back down and give it to Vlad, and he'll go on his merry way. You can now leave safely with the Rubaiyat.

If you fail to get the painting out of the cargo hold early on, fear not. You have another chance. Go see Beatrix, and trade the letter incriminating her husband for Shaillagh Hacker's baby. You can then go to Jack Hacker



and trade the baby for the painting. If you want to make sure World War II never takes place, don't leave the ship without the painting.

Simulation/Space

F-22 Lightning II

Having troubles getting through the seemingly impossible Mission 8 in Campaign 4, where you're trying to protect Air Force 1? Even if you take out all the enemies, sometimes AF1 wanders into a SAM area. Here's our winning technique.

First, keep your radar turned off unless

damaging him slightly. He'll veer off the flight path and away from the major danger. (Realism sticklers can just target him, but then the allied escorts target you.)

Now, take out any enemy planes remaining; try to avoid attacking aircraft also being attacked by the allied escorts. Even when all the enemies are shot down, though, you're not out of the



you're firing a missile. Unrealistically, your radar makes all allied planes more detectable, not just yours. Launch all your AMRAAMs at enemy planes from maximum range, then quickly land and reload.

Next (Republicans will love this one), fire a couple of bullets at Air Force 1,

water. Air Force 1 is still in danger from SAMs. You have two options here: Either take out the offending SAM sites (difficult to do when you're not armed with any JDAMs), or simply distract the SAM sites so they fire at you instead of the president.

Classics & Puzzles

Risk

In games of *Ultimate Risk*, a simple but effective tactic is to exchange prisoners of war with the same nation that you ally with, especially if that nation is slightly weaker than yours. This allows you to concentrate on eliminating very weak players, or to cut into the lead of any nation significantly ahead of you. Consider a 4-nation alliance to cover your flank, especially if you are using the

fog of war rules; this helps you set up ambushes when the alliance is over.



Sports

Triple Play '97

EA Sports hit a hard line-drive this year with its latest arcade-style baseball game, and they speeded up the game with some built-in cheat codes.

▶ These are two secret stadiums in the game from the Stadium setup screen.

Hit the **Up arrow**, **Down**, **Right**, **Up**, **Down**, **Left**, **Up** to play in the com field.

Hit **Right**, **Left**, **Up**, **Left**, **Down**, **Right**, **Left** to play in the "mystery stadium."

▶ To turn yourself into the "Iron Cuz" you know you are deep down inside, try the following cheat codes while at the plate to increase your batting prowess. While holding the **F1** key down,

Press **2** for a long fly ball.

Press **3** for a line drive.

Press **4** for a grounder.

Press **5** for a pop up.

Press **6** for a bunt.

Press **7** with any of the above to get a full power hit.

IndyCar II

When taking laps under a yellow caution flag, you can avoid being penalized if you pass other cars during the last quarter of the caution lap.

Front Page Sports Football Pro 97

Despite on-line rumors to the contrary, you can use your old custom leagues from FPS '96. Just make sure to copy all your former league's



files into your new FPS Pro 97 directory (usually CASIERRA\FBPRO97). This works best at the end of a season, and doesn't work well if you had unfinished (saved) games in your former league.

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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 untold hours.

HIGHLIGHTS

Front Page Sports Football Pro Sierra/Dynamix, 1993

Most pigskin games are either realistic stat-based sims dryer than our favorite martini, or so reflex-dependent that your gridiron savvy is rendered totally irrelevant. **FRONT PAGE FOOTBALL** changed all that, somehow combining the best of both worlds, and improving up through **FPS FOOTBALL '96**, winning an unprecedented three CGW Premier awards in the process.

From the early 3D perspectives of **FPS FOOTBALL Pro**, to the rotoscoped player animations of **FPS FOOTBALL Pro '95**, to the rich SVGA Windows 95 color palette of **FPS FOOTBALL Pro '97**, the series has offered the best game graphics possible—a lesson designer Patrick Cook learned from his involvement with **TV Sports Football** back in the heyday of Cinemaware on the Amiga. In addition to the appeal of great graphics and flashy replay features, **FPS FOOTBALL Pro** models the physics of the game on the field: the precise pass patterns run by receivers; the quick release of a Dan Marino pass; the blocking power of a 300-pound offensive lineman. From the play editor to the updated rosters of NFL players (who actually play like their real-life counterparts) and the career league options, no other game brings its sport to life quite like this one. Some computer football games offer better stat models and some console football games offer better action, but when most gamers think of computer football, they automatically think of **FRONT PAGE SPORTS FOOTBALL Pro**.



Gettysburg: The Turning Point SSI, 1986

The American Civil War is suddenly a hot topic again, with games such as Robert E. Lee and TaroniSoft's **BattleGround** series combining exquisite graphics and plenty of historical flavor. Still, it took eight long years for **GETTYSBURG: THE TURNING POINT** to be toppled from its perch as the top Civil War game. And despite the acclaim and strong sales of its descendants, **GETTYSBURG** still has value as a seminal design that effectively captures the feel of the Civil War's most famous battle.

GETTYSBURG was one of the first computer games that seriously challenged board wargames in terms of realism. Cluick Krogel and David Landrey's design placed an emphasis on leadership and the difficulties of command control on the 19th-century battlefield. The rules for melee, double-time marches, and limited visibility added to the fun and showed a good understanding of Civil War tactics. Replayability was helped by random "what if" set-ups and a reasonably challenging AI that would vary tactics from one game to the next—something that many high-powered games today still have trouble achieving. The later games in the series, notably **SHILOH**, are still worth a look, provided you can get past the dated CGA graphics. But of all the early SSI games, **GETTYSBURG** has aged the most gracefully. Marso Robert himself would be proud.



Modern Inductees

Inductees Prior To 1989

BATTLE CRESS (Interplay Productions, 1988)
CHESSMASTER (The Software Toolworks, 1985)
DUNGEON MASTER (FTL Software, 1987)
EARL WEAVER BASEBALL (Electronic Arts, 1986)
EMPIRE (Interstel, 1978)
F-19 STEALTH FIGHTER (MicroProse, 1988)
GETTYSBURG: THE TURNING POINT (SSI, 1986)
KAMPGRAFFE (Strategic Simulations, 1985)
MUCH BRAGGAD (Strategic Simulations, 1985)
WHEAT & MAZE (New World Computing, 1986)
M.U.L.E. (Electronic Arts, 1983)
PHANTAS (MicroProse, 1987)
SIMCITY (Maxis, 1987)
STARBUCKET (Electronic Arts, 1986)
THE BARR'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)
ZORK (Infocom, 1981)

ALONE IN THE DARK
(Mobot, 1992)

BETWEEN A KNIFE AND A FORK
(Dynamix, 1993)

DAY OF THE TURTLE
(LucasArts, 1993)

DEEM
(id Software, 1993)

FALCON 3.0
(Spectrum HoloByte, 1991)

FRONT PAGE SPORTS FOOTBALL PRO
(Dynamix, 1993)

GUNSHIP
(MicroProse, 1986)

HARPOON
(Three-Sixty Pacific, 1986)

KING'S QUEST V
(Sierra On-Line, 1990)

LEMMINGS
(Psychonics, 1991)

LINKS 386 PRO
(Access Software, 1992)

M-1 TANK PLATOON
(MicroProse, 1988)

MASTER OF DECK
(MicroProse, 1993)

RAILROAD TYCOON
(MicroProse, 1990)

RED BASH
(LucasArts, 1990)

SIX MEN'S CAZUZZANO
(MicroProse, 1981)

TWIN FINEST HOUR
(LucasArts, 1988)

THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND
(LucasArts, 1990)

TIE FIGHTER
(LucasArts, 1994)

ULTIMA VI
(Origin Systems, 1990)

ULTIMA UNDERWORLD
(Origin Systems, 1992)

WAS COMMANDER I & II
(Origin Systems, 1990-91)

WOLFENSTEIN 3-D
(id Software, 1992)

X-COM
(MicroProse, 1994)

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. New patches are in red.

American Civil War V1.21: Many of the speed problems with the game on 8 MB machines and/or Windows 3.1 are fixed, and the AI is improved as well.

Battlecruiser 3000AD Release 3C: The latest patch—release 3C—in this ongoing saga fixes a host of bugs, but don't go in with lofty expectations.

Civilization II V2.42 Update: This prevents crashes with auto settlers, help and Civlopedia screens, in addition to many other tweaks. If you have V2.41, the only addition is that heralds will now animate if you are using 32-bit video for windows.

Cyberstorm: The harder missions are more difficult, while the difficulty of the first "Elite" Mission is reduced. This patch also adds headset play, play by e-mail and opportunity fire.

Deadlock V1.2: If you barely meet the system requirements, this simplifies your path to planetary conquest. Do not use this file for any demo version.

F-22 Lightning Upgrade 1.01.00.18: This strangely-numbered file adds chat mode, additional "look" views and more native joystick support to NovaLogic's sim. Also, "secret" missions have been unlocked, and VESA compatibility issues, static sounds, and high IRQ's for modems are properly enabled as well.

Gabriel Knight 2 Mac V1.1: This Mac-only patch includes an interpreter update which fixes "Unimplemented trap" error messages, random lockups and all other known issues.

Jagged Alliance Deadly Games Patch: Clears up your missionary mayhem no more "No Tim Limit" problems, or rare speech crashes. It also includes a fix for the final mission of the main campaign and mission 34 of minicampaigns, plus all the new turn limit options.

Lighthouse Patch: The light does shine more brightly, palette thresholding is fixed, lockups in dark domain are banished, the error opening resource

86635A58 in submarine cavern is corrected. The dark side is that you have to start the game over.

Links LS V 1.30: Tie off without worry concerning the ball flight bug, sound script bug, or match play bug. Use only if you have V 1.0—not for the European version!

Lords of the Realm II Patch: Would-be kings need worry no longer about battles crashing when music is turned off, arrow buttons not accelerating as they should when selling/buying items, or the map of Europe crashing from the custom game screen.

MechWarrior Mercenaries V1.05 Patch: All clans will benefit from this latest upgrade from Activision, which repairs a number of mech deficiencies.

NASCAR Racing Mac V1.01: Don't lose Mac mileage worrying about car sets—just download this patch!

Leisure Suit Larry 7 Patch: Don't put up with frustration lockup! This patch will also eliminate saved game problems, along with miscellaneous general protection faults and illegal operations messages. Be warned: it will invalidate existing saved games.

M00 II V 1.2: Just when you thought Antares was safe to conquer, intelligent aliens arrive bearing this patch, which prohibits many fires.

NHL Hockey Win 95 V1.1: Only for Win 95 versions, this has a number of fixes and enhancements. Don't try modems play unless both you and your opponent are patched, or you may suffer a lockup penalty.

Shattered Steel V1.03 Upgrade: More "mech mania" can be had with this latest patch from Inteplay.

Third Reich V1.21 Update: Mein Herr, we need concern ourselves with neither the Russian "deseled unit" bug, nor the freeze-up in Win95, any longer. Awwwer "je" to any prompts to overwrite.

WarCraft II: Beyond the Dark Portal V1.33 Patch: Orcs and Humans alike will appreciate the fixes for incompatibility problems with old saved games. Expansion Heroes and the Draenor/Blas are now available in the Map Editor. This self-installing archive is only for American versions of the game.

Wing Commander IV Win 95 Update: Of Bluebird might rest an eyebrow, but this still might an existing MSDOS installation of Wing IV to the Windows 95 version. Confederation commanders are encouraged to check the read me file—also requires Microsoft's DirectX!

X-Wing Update: Owners of the floppy disk version can now fight the Empire in digital sound, without the Dark Side of the Force locking the game up.



► Check for new patches on the demo disc.

ZDNet

These patches can usually be downloaded from on-line networks such as CompuServe and ZDNet, from Computer Gaming World's Web site (<http://www.zdnet.com/gaming/>), or from individual software publishers' Web sites.

Publisher Web Sites

Many 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>
- Atomic Games:** <http://atomic.com>
- Bethesda:** <http://www.bethsoft.com>
- Bizzard:** <http://www.bizzard.com>
- Bullfrog:** <http://www.bullfrog.com>
- Domark:** <http://www.domark.com>
- EA:** <http://www.ea.com>
- EA Sports:** <http://www.easports.com>
- Epic MegaGames:** <http://www.epicgames.com>
- Id Software:** <http://www.idsoftware.com>
- Interactive Magic:** <http://www.imagicgames.com>
- Interplay:** <http://www.interplay.com>
- LucasArts:** <http://www.lucasarts.com>
- MicroProse/Spectrum HaloByte:** <http://www.microprose.com>
- Microsoft:** <http://www.microsoft.com>
- Mindscape:** <http://www.mindscape.com>
- New World Computing:** <http://www.newworldcomputing.com>
- Ocean:** <http://www.ocean.com>
- Origin:** <http://www.origin.com>
- Papyrus:** <http://www.papyrus.com>
- Philips:** <http://www.philips.com/games>
- Sierra On-Line:** <http://www.sierra.com>
- Spectrum HaloByte:** <http://www.halo-byte.com>
- SSI:** <http://www.ssi.com>
- Take 2:** <http://www.take2games.com/main.html>
- Virgin:** <http://www.virgin.com>

THE COMPUTER GAMING POLL • A MONTHLY SURVEY OF CGW SUBSCRIBERS

Each month, 2,000 CGW subscribers are selected at random to rate 100 computer games. The results of that poll are combined with the results of previous months to yield a cumulative average for the best plays in gaming. If you receive a ballot, please return it with your ratings so that other gamers and game publishers can benefit from your experience.

TOP ACTION GAMES

RANK	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Duke Nukem 3D	3D Realms	8.60
2	Crusader: No Remorse	EA/Origin	8.26
3	The Need For Speed SE	EA	8.18
4	Crusader: No Regret	EA/Origin	8.08
5	Quake	id Software	8.04
6	Dark Forces	LucasArts	7.75
7	Doom II	id Software	7.75
8	Syndicate Wars	EA/Bullfrog	7.72
9	The Need For Speed	EA	7.63
10	Road Rash	EA	7.47

TOP ADVENTURE GAMES

RANK	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Predator: Dinosaur	Access	8.37
2	Bribe! Knight 2	Sierra	8.34
3	Spycraft	Activision	7.77
4	Full Throttle	LucasArts	7.57
5	Star Control 3	Accolade	7.53
6	Under A Killing Moon	Access	7.34
7	Zark Nemesis	Activision	7.33
8	Phantasmagoria	Sierra	7.23
9	Star Trek: TNG, Final Unity	Spectrum Holobyte	7.12
10	Relentless	EA	7.08

TOP CLASSIC/PUZZLE GAMES

RANK	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	You Don't Know Jack	Stratagy Systems	8.15
2	Incredible Toys	Sierra	7.26
3	Incredible Machine 2	Sierra	7.12
4	Scrabble	Hasbro	6.89
5	Manopoly	Westwood/Virgin	6.86
6	Lemmings Paintball	Pygnosis	5.98
7	Geobooks	Philips	5.72
8	—	—	—
9	—	—	—
10	—	—	—

TOP SIMULATION/SPACE COMBAT GAMES

RANK	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Wing Commander IV	EA/Origin	8.55
2	Wing Commander 2	Activision	8.35
3	Wing Commander 3	EA/Origin	8.24
4	AN-84 Longbow	EA/Origin	8.19
5	EP2000	Ocean	7.99
6	U.S. Marine Fighters	EA	7.96
7	Silent Hunter	SSI	7.91
8	Navalagic Lightning F-22	Navalagic	7.86
9	Advanced Tactical Fighters	EA	7.74
10	U.S. Navy Fighters	EA	7.63

TOP SPORTS GAMES

RANK	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Links LS	Access	8.70
2	Grand Prix 2	MicroProse	8.41
3	NHL Hockey '97	EA Sports	8.28
4	NASCAR Racing	Sierra	7.75
5	FPS Football Pro '96	Sierra	7.72
6	NHL Hockey '96	EA Sports	7.70
7	Tripleplay '97	EA Sports	7.69
8	Madden '97	EA Sports	7.63
9	NBA Live '96	EA Sports	7.60
10	NBA Live '95	EA Sports	7.56

TOP STRATEGY GAMES

RANK	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	WarCraft II Expansion	Bizzard	8.08
2	WarCraft II	Bizzard	8.06
3	Civilization II	MicroProse	8.04
4	C&C: Covert Operations	Westwood/Virgin	8.05
5	Command & Conquer	Westwood/Virgin	8.05
6	Master Of Magic	MicroProse	8.03
7	Heroes Of Might & Magic	New World Computing	8.02
8	Jagged Alliance: Deadly Games	Str-Tech	7.78
9	Jagged Alliance	Str-Tech	7.77
10	Warlords II Deluxe	SSI	7.76

TOP ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

RANK	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Daggerfall	Bethesda	7.76
2	Night & Magic: Clouds Of Xeen	New World Computing	7.70
3	Avail Of Dawn	New World Computing	7.33
4	Stonekeep	Interplay	7.01
5	Raveknaf: Stone Prophet	SSI	6.77
6	Albion	Blue Byte	6.23
7	Wolf	Sanctuary Woods	6.21
8	—	—	—
9	—	—	—
10	—	—	—

TOP WARGAMES

RANK	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Steel Panthers Campaign Disk	SSI	8.61
2	Steel Panthers	SSI	8.50
3	Panzer General	SSI	8.37
4	Battleground: Shiloh	TakeSoft	8.25
5	Battleground: Waterloo	TakeSoft	7.93
6	Robert E. Lee Civil War General	Sierra	7.89
7	Battleground: Gettysburg	TakeSoft	7.53
8	Perfect General II	GOP	7.10
9	Flight Commander 2	Avolon Hill	7.06
10	Allied General	SSI	6.91

	GAME	COMPANY	TYPE	SCORE
★	1	WarCraft II Expansion Disk	Bizzard	ST 9.08
	2	WarCraft II	Bizzard	ST 8.95
	3	Civilization II	MicroProse	ST 8.84
★	4	Links LS	Access	SP 8.70
★	5	Steel Panthers Campaign Disk	SSI	WG 8.61
★	6	Duke Nukem 3D	3D Realms	AC 8.60
★	7	Wing Commander IV	EA/Origin	SI 8.55
	C&C: Covert Operations	Westwood/Virgin	ST 8.55	
	8	Steel Panthers	SSI	WG 8.50
	10	Command & Conquer	Westwood/Virgin	ST 8.45
	11	Grand Prix 2	MicroProse	SP 8.41
★	12	Panzer Directive	Access	AD 8.37
	Panzer General	SSI	WG 8.37	
	14	NecroWarrior 2	Activision	SI 8.35
	15	Gabriel Knight 2	Sierra	AD 8.34
	16	NHL Hockey '97	EA Sports	SP 8.28
	17	Crusader: No Remorse	EA/Origin	AC 8.26
	Battleground: Shiloh	IdonSoft	WG 8.25	
	19	Wing Commander 3	EA/Origin	SI 8.24
	20	AN-64 Longbow	Origin	SI 8.19
	21	The Need For Speed SE	EA	AC 8.18
★	22	You Don't Know Jack	Bantley Systems	CP 8.15
	23	Crusader: No Regret	EA/Origin	AC 8.08
	24	Master Of Magic	MicroProse	ST 8.06
	25	Quake	id Software	AC 8.04
	26	Nerves Of Steel & Magic	New World Computing	ST 8.02
	27	EF2000	Ocean	SI 7.99
	28	U.S. Marine Fighters	EA	SI 7.96
	29	Battleground: Waterloo	TalonSoft	WG 7.93
	30	Silent Master	SSI	SI 7.91
	31	Robert E. Lee Civil War General	Sierra	WG 7.89
	32	Navalagic Lightning F-22	NowLogic	SI 7.86
	33	Jagged Alliance: Deadly Games	Str-Tech	ST 7.78
	34	Jagged Alliance	Str-Tech	ST 7.77
	Spycraft	Activision	AD 7.77	
★	36	Daggerfall	Bethesda	RP 7.76
	Warlords II Deluxe	SSG	ST 7.76	
	38	NASCAR Racing	Sierra	SP 7.75
	Dark Forces	LucasArts	AC 7.75	
	Daem II	id Software	AC 7.75	
	41	Advanced Tactical Fighters	EA	SI 7.74
	42	WarCraft	Bizzard	ST 7.73
	43	Syndicate Wars	EA/Bullfrog	AC 7.72
	FPS Football Pro '98	Sierra	SP 7.72	
	45	Might & Magic: Clouds Of Magic	New World Computing	RP 7.70
	NHL Hockey '96	EA Sports	SP 7.70	
	47	TriplePlay '97	EA Sports	SP 7.69
	48	The Need For Speed	EA	AC 7.63
	Madden '97	EA Sports	SP 7.63	
	U.S. Navy Fighters	EA	SI 7.63	

	GAME	COMPANY	TYPE	SCORE
	51	Fantasy General	SSI	ST 7.62
	52	NSA Live '96	EA Sports	SP 7.60
	53	Fall Throttle	LucasArts	AD 7.57
	54	NBA Live '95	EA Sports	SP 7.56
	55	CivNet	MicroProse	ST 7.54
	56	Star Control 2	Accolade	AD 7.53
	Battleground: Gettysburg	TalonSoft	WG 7.53	
	56	PGA Tour Golf 485	EA Sports	SP 7.49
	59	Road Rash	EA	AC 7.47
	60	Missileforce Cyberstorm	Sierra	ST 7.46
	61	Tony LaRussa 3 '96	Stormfront Studios	SP 7.45
	Descent II	Interplay	AC 7.45	
	63	FPS Football '95	Sierra	SP 7.43
	64	X-Cart: Terror From The Deep	MicroProse	ST 7.39
	65	Under A Killing Moon	Access	AD 7.34
	66	Zark Nemesis	Activision	AD 7.33
	68	Amid Et Dawn	New World Computing	RP 7.33
	68	San City CD-Rom	Manix	ST 7.32
	69	NHL Powerplay	Virgin	SP 7.27
	Hexen	id/Radius	AC 7.27	
	71	Incredible Toys	Sierra	CP 7.26
	72	Magic Carpet 2	EA/Bullfrog	AC 7.25
	Wings Of Glory	EA/Origin	SI 7.25	
	74	Phantasmagoria	Sierra	AD 7.23
	EWJ 1&2: Whole C&D Worms	Playmates	AC 7.21	
	76	Terra Nova: Strike Force Centauri	Looking Glass	AC 7.19
	Flight Unlimited	Looking Glass	SI 7.19	
	78	Virtual Pool	Interplay	SP 7.18
	79	Shattered Steel	Interplay	SI 7.14
	80	Star Trek: TNG, Final Unity	Spectrum Holographics	AD 7.12
	Virtual Fighter PC	Sega	AC 7.12	
	Incredible Machine 2	Sierra	CP 7.12	
	83	Perfect General II	DDP	WG 7.10
	84	Hardball 5	Accolade	SP 7.09
	Caesar II	Sierra	ST 7.09	
	Hyper 3D Pinball	Virgin	AC 7.09	
	87	Relentless	EA	AD 7.08
	88	System Shock	EA/Origin	AC 7.07
	88	Flight Commander 2	Avolon Hill	WG 7.06
	90	The Big	LucasArts	AD 7.05
	91	Stonekeep	Interplay	RP 7.01
	92	1942 Pacific Air War Gold	MicroProse	SI 6.96
	3D Ultra Pinball: Cheetah	Sierra	AC 6.96	
	94	Nerflic	id/Radius	AC 6.97
	95	Legends Of Hyndania 3	Westwood/Virgin	AD 6.96
	96	Acas Of The Deep	Sierra	SI 6.95
	97	Time Command	Activision	AC 6.92
	98	Z	Virgin	ST 6.91
	Allied General	SSI	WG 6.91	
100	Scrabble	Hastro	CP 6.89	

Games on unnumbered lines are tied with game on line above. ★ = Top game of type. Red = New Game. AD = Adventure, RP = Role-Playing, SI = Simulation/Space Combat, ST = Strategy, WG = Wargame, AC = Action, SP = Sports, CP = Casual/Puzzle. Games are retired after two years and become eligible for the Hall of Fame.



What's The Deal With... Video Games?

It seems every time I make some backhanded grumpy comment about Super Mario and his ilk in this column, CGW is bombarded by, oh, a handful of letters from loyal readers who feel personally affronted by my casual disregard of their beloved Console Game Machines. The bruised responses usually run along the lines of: how could I ever dismiss such a great boon to gamers as [fill in the name of their console], and obviously I have never played the games because if I had, I would know better, not everybody can afford to buy a high-end PC and I should thank the gods that affordable game technology exists; not just kids play them, and so on and so forth...yakety-shmacky... blah, blah, blah.

First of all, I have no dislike of the technology itself. Console machines have been bringing cheap gaming thrills to the masses since before there really were home computer games, and I have some very fond memories of these. Hell, I still have my Vectrex somewhere. (Well, okay, it really do despise the GameBoy) If all you really want is a game machine, then certainly it would not be clever to shell out the two GS for a basic Pentium rig. You would be much better off spending \$200 on a 64-bit console

I am mildly annoyed at some of the

ads for these new 64-bit machines, but only in the sense that they are eagerly taking credit for "inventing" a few things that computer games have been working out the bugs on for years. "Full 360 degree movement!" they squeal. 'Yeah, I got that in Ultima 8—tell me something else.

Despite this, my only real reservation about console technology is the same I have about any limited (i.e.,

“Is it just me, or is it goofy to make a big deal out of DONKEY KONG COUNTRY?”

isolated) technology: the fact that at the end of the day, your game machine is just that, a game machine. I have the same problem with these new Web boxes they are hawked now. Sure, it's \$200 for a self-contained Web browser. Great! It gets me on the net cheap, but I sure hope I don't ever develop the urge to type. Now I am sure some of you out there are just dying to tell me all the wonderful gadgets you are going to

be able to add onto your Nintendo 64, which will make it as versatile as a PC, and that may well be true. On the other hand, it's been tried before. Anybody remember ColecoVision? The Adam?

No, the thing that really feeds my disdain for the console scene are the games themselves. Those endless, huge selling, name games that nobody seems to notice are exactly the same game with different sprites. Again, save the list of very cool cartridge games you have played. I have probably played most of them. There must be nearly a dozen cartridge games that are equivalent to PC titles in complexity, gameplay and novelty. Hell, until the '97 edition, the cartridge versions of EA's hockey games actually had better gameplay than the PC versions. But c'mon, we are talking a handful of games amongst hundreds, and most quality cartridges get a minuscule amount of coverage compared to the endless clones.

Is it just me, or is it goofy to make a big deal out of Donkey Kong Country? Do you dedicated cartridge fans notice that for all intents and purposes, it is the same bloody game as the first Mario? You stroll around jumping over and onto things while finding secrets and power-ups. Is swinging instead of jumping really that thrilling of a diff? The first Donkey Kong that started it all 17 years ago was more original than what is leap

ing off the shelves now.

If Nintendo wants to slouch their For Rabbit Icons Only image, then perhaps they should have showcased the Swallow or Enme game instead of dumb ol' Mario jumping for coins. "Oh sure, it's the same damn game... but now you can jump in ANY direction!" or "...but now you can kick off your opponent's head in 3DM!" What a bloody waste of the tech. I'll stop considering the cartridge market mainly for kids when side scrollers and fighting games (even in 3D) die on the racks instead of selling millions.

And if I ever need to find a paranoid rationale for my dislikes, I can always look to companies like Sega, Virgin and Sierra, which seem to believe that Auto-Play CD-ROMs = Cartridge Games. I have no problem with PC games leaking over and making cartridge games cooler. I have extreme problems with execs who think the two markets are interchangeable and all we need are a few more Virtua Source, Geo Runners, or Trihexors to get the PC market going.

So if you are an adult gamer who is using a game console to supplement your aging PC, using it to gain access to interesting games with cutting edge graphics, then relax. When I slouch up Mario, I don't mean you.

On the other hand, if you can't wait for Sonic 3D, go right ahead and get offended. ☹

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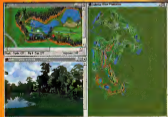
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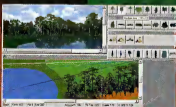
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This image is of the 3rd Green at Country Club of the South. The left half of the image is from the Course Designer; the right half of the image is an actual photo.



The Hole View of the new bunker.

From Tee to Green

The Approach Shot

The Tee Shot



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