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The #1 Computer Game Magazine

February 1994
Number 115

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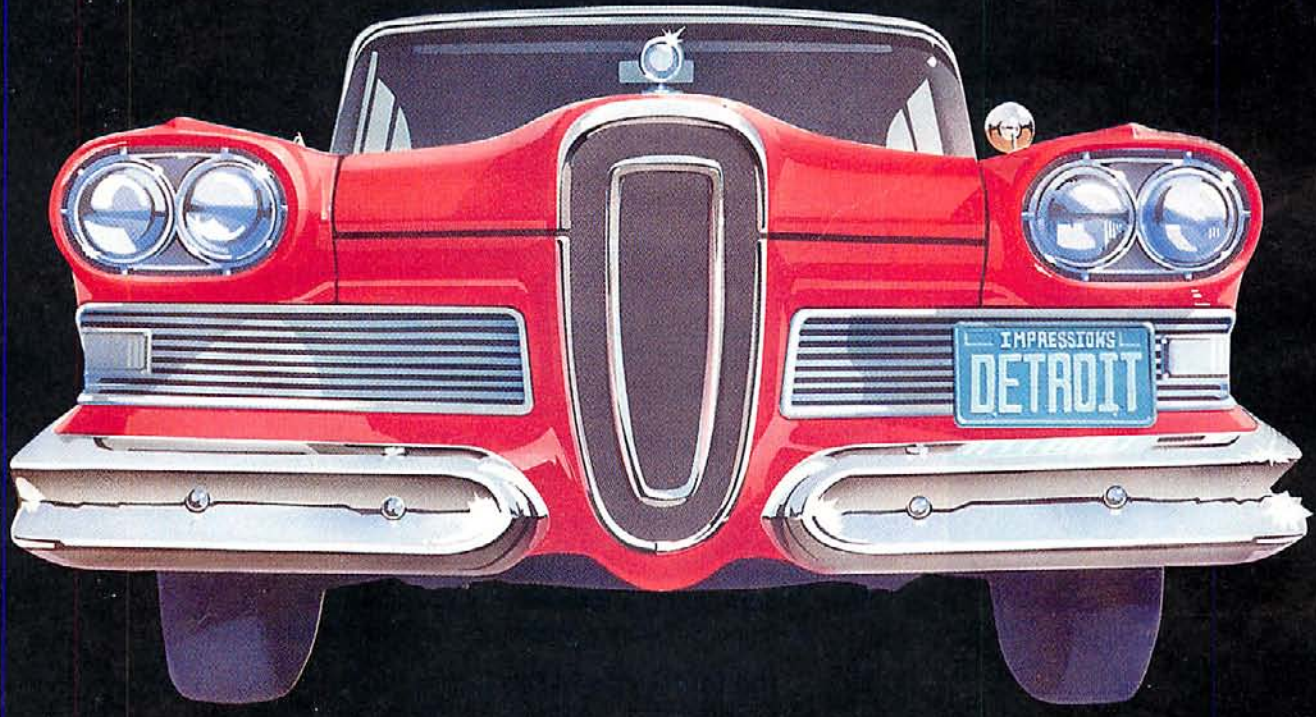

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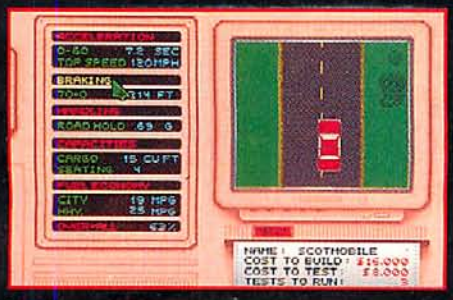

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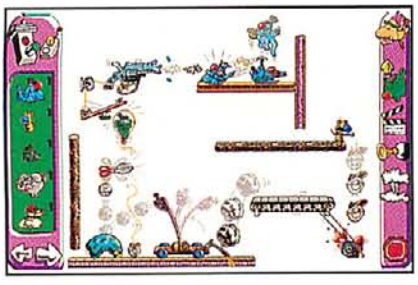

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About The Cover—Bay Area freelance artist Ocean Quigley conspired with art director Terry Soohoo to blow up this X-wing for LucasArts. Quigley airbrushed stars, nebulae and the explosion on a stock star background. Darth's image came from a photo promoting the original *Star Wars* motion picture. LucasArts artists supplied wire-frame objects for the ships, which Quigley then light-sourced and rendered in *3D Studio* on his 486-66. He then composed all the elements using Adobe *Photoshop*.

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Mea Culpas And Culpability

by Johnny L. Wilson

State of the Industry: As we go to press, Senators Lieberman and Kohl have held hearings on Capitol Hall and warned the video game industry to create a viable and consistent ratings system or be ready to have the government intervene. The issue was even hot enough to interest "Good Morning America" to host yours truly as an in-studio guest to discuss the issue. For the record, *CGW* called for voluntary ratings on video and computer games in 1990. Our position was that games with profane language, excessive violence, sexual situations (or nudity, near-nudity) and possibly, occult practices be marked with an L, V, S (or N) and O. We have since modified that system to state that there could be age gradings and combination ratings, so that the equivalent of an R rated movie might be rated LVS-17.

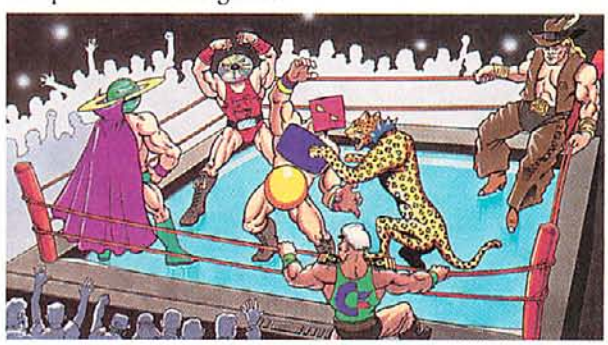
Once such a rating system becomes standard, it will allow purchasers and parents alike to decide for themselves if there was a potential problem with a given game. How is this different (and hopefully, preferable) to the existing rating scheme introduced by Sega or suggestions that the industry create a ratings system similar to the film industry? First of all, it is different from both existing systems in that it provides actual information at a glance rather than a generic warning. An R rating for a film doesn't tell one if it earned said rating because of offensive language or frontal female nudity. The same is true of ratings that simply state that a product is for "Mature Audiences Only."

Further, we do not mean to advocate the establishment of an independent panel to review every game product according to an inflexible set of guidelines. We would propose that software publishers (on whatever platform) adopt an informative labeling system (with labels to be printed on the packaging and displayed on the game's title screen) and that each publisher decide on the appropriate rating. Knowing full well that there could be abuses to the "honor system" of labeling, we suggest that an independent panel be named by the Software Publishers Association that could review the ratings for games that receive complaints from consumers or protests from competitors. In this way, marketing decisions would not have the final influence on all titles.

Finally, I would like to draw an analogy between the entertainment software industry and that of the comic book industry in the early 1950s. The comic book industry of the past was considered "primarily for kids"—just as the video and computer game industry of the present is perceived. Both the ghost of comics past and the spirit of industry present have resorted to violence and gore as a gimmick to sell product. Both the former and the latter have been accused of contributing to violence in our youth. Both the former and the latter have been the subject of U.S. Senate hearings.

In the case of the comic book industry, they were able to survive somewhat by appointing an independent commission to consider each comic against a common code of behavior. Artistic and narrative considerations no longer held relevance. Indeed, many comics publishers opted to get out of the business entirely, rather than be perceived as part of a negative influence upon society. As a result, the comic industry became somewhat stultified in its treatment of the human condition.

We do not want to see a repeat of the "Comics Code" solution in computer and video games. We believe that the voluntary ratings system we have proposed would allow for continued artistic freedom in the world of computer and video games.



State of the Magazine: Remember this beautiful illustration from our console game article in *CGW #114*? The credit for the illustration was deleted at our printer. This was particularly disconcerting to me as editor because it was painted at Continuity Studios, the current home of legendary comic illustrator Neal Adams. Adams has always been one of my favorite artists in the comic book genre and it was with particular pride that we published this illustration.

CGW #114 seemed to be our prime issue for growing pains. A problem with an electronically transmitted file caused one page out of an article on **Domark**'s *SVGA Harrier* to be printed in black and white. Most embarassing, however, was the inadvertent publishing of a rumor based on confidential information. Industry insiders are very much aware of how *CGW*'s staff prides itself upon the discretion with which we handle "off the record" and "deep background" information. Unfortunately, a staff member tumbled to the knowledge of the formation of **Excalibur Games** and passed it along to the Rumor Guy without letting old baghead know that one of the principals in the new company had not yet given notice to his former employer. Rumor Guy had heard from a different source that the move was taking place and printed it without realizing that he was printing confidential material. He sincerely apologizes for embarassment and inconvenience caused by his overzealous publication of the news.

On another note, I wish to offer a public apology to Ed Fletcher and Doug Whatley of **MicroProse**. In a recent review of *Coaches Club Football*, I allowed Wallace Poulter's assertion that the AI cheats to go unchallenged. It is a well-known fact that many AIs "cheat" (or, at least, "fudge") in order to be able to keep up with human players. For example, Dani Bunten was once asked how to play-balance a game. Her one word answer was "Cheat." Asked what to do if the gamers complained, she said, "Lie!" The answer elucidated considerable laughter, since such a tactic is a more common way to beef up an AI than most designers admit. So, when I saw that Poulter accused Coaches Club of "cheat"ing, it provoked a "So what's new?" reaction in my mind.

Whatley and Fletcher were horrified at this allegation, however, rightly asserting that a computer football game is *not* a real game if the artificial opponent doesn't have to "guess" what the human opponent is calling. Doug and Ed care far too much about computer games in general and football in specific to settle for such an easy (and in their view, irresponsible) approach to the AI. CGW

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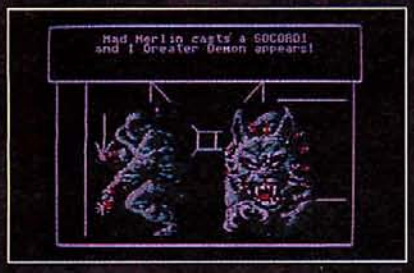

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THE LATEST NEWS FROM THE GAMING WORLD

Sim Fans—Welcome To The Next Level
ARTIST Graphics' *3GA* Chip Feeds The Need For 3D Speed

ARTIST Graphics, a Minneapolis-based hardware manufacturer, has announced a new graphics chip that may transform your work-a-day PC into a high-performance graphics workstation.

Consider the current state of the art: *IndyCar Racing*, Papyrus' hot new game creates a very intense environment for simulated racing action. To do so, it pushes current technology to produce 12,000 flat shaded or 2,000 texture-mapped polygons per second. But imagine how much richer, how much more intense, a simulation could be if it could process 12 *million* flat-shaded, or 30,000 texture-mapped polygons per second at a higher screen resolution than standard VGA. While this might sound as far off as Gibsonian cyberspace, ARTIST Graphics and their *3GA* video processing chips may well make such simulations a very real possibility in '94.

ARTIST Graphics has been a manufacturer of graphics hardware used primarily for Computer Aided Design since 1982. Their chips and video boards are used widely by CAD professionals for applications that need heavy graphics horsepower. Adapting ARTIST Graphics' latest high-end graphics technology to the PC games market is largely the result of a conversation that took place in 1992 between Chris Taylor, senior software engineer at Electronic Arts, and Theodore Beale, "trans-dimensional evangelist" at ARTIST Graphics.

"Chris had called to find out about VESA support on some of our cards," said Beale. "We got to talking games, and I swapped him a graphics board in return for a couple of EA games. After playing with it for a few weeks, he suggested that we add a few features to our next generation chip that would make it a really killer device for 3D simulators and action games. I went back to our engineers and asked them about adding the features, and lo and behold, the 3GA."

According to ARTIST, the chip is capable of displaying up to 12 million flat-shaded, two-hundred thousand Gouraud-shaded, or thirty-thousand texture-mapped polygons per second in a game. These numbers approach RISC-based graphic workstation performance. Simulated benchmark tests have yielded 90 million WinMarks on the WinBench 3.11 test at 1280 x 1024 x 8 resolution on a 486/66 PCI bus machine (an average local-bus VGA video card at 640x480 yields 6 million WinMarks). Games could be written to run with the *3GA* from within Windows, with the game's code written to effectively bypass the Windows' graphics routines. This would allow 3D intensive games to run under Windows without degradation of performance.

The *3GA* chip's 64-bit wide local memory bus supports up to 4 megabytes of VRAM and up to 8 megabytes of DRAM. The memory allows a game to load a huge portion of a game's graphic data directly onto the card, thereby relieving the computer of a huge burden. Additionally, the *3GA* chip has an on-chip VGA architecture which supports standard VGA text and graphics modes, and VESA SVGA modes up to 1024 x 768 resolution at 8 bits per pixel.

"With this kind of technology," says Fred Savage, director at Origin Systems, "the limitations of the VGA architecture are removed. Anything that allows us to reduce the load on the CPU is going to let us have a much larger scope for our PC-based games."

ARTIST Graphics is currently working on an OEM deal with a major video card manufacturer. For more information, contact ARTIST Graphics at (612) 631-7800.

Three-Sixty Pacific To Ink Pact With Broderbund

Tom Frisina, CEO of Three-Sixty Pacific, is relieved to report that rumors of the software company's demise are gravely exaggerated. "Everyone knows," the executive told *CGW*, "that we've been through some tough times. Many know that [the possibility of closing down the company] has been a very near thing." As of press time, Three-Sixty Pacific and Broderbund had reached an agreement in principle where the latter would provide a traditional distribution advance to the former in order to become the official distributor of Three-Sixty products.

The traditional distribution advance was proffered in order to assure the completion of Three-Sixty's *Harpoon II* (MS-DOS) and *Victory at Sea* (Macintosh). Both products have aroused great expectations among computer gamers in the wargaming niche, but wargame sales are not normally sufficient to excite distributors. Broderbund's commitment to the Macintosh and MS-DOS platforms, however, make it possible for the company to have assurance that they can reach the optimal market for such niche products.

The distribution deal should bode well for Three-Sixty in the near future and Frisina indicated to CGW that the tentative distribution deal would make it possible to complete other computer wargame projects that have been hanging in the balance since the Fall of '93. According to the tentative agreement, Electronic Arts (Three-Sixty's former distributor) will retain its circa 20% interest in Three-Sixty and Broderbund will not claim any ownership percentage.

Crystal Dynamix Loves The Feel Of "Growing Pains" Kirk Cameron Stars In *The Horde*

Kirk Cameron, teen star of ABC's "Growing Pains," joins the growing number of TV and film actors with computer game credits. Cameron will play Chauncey, a young servant boy turned knight, in a wonderfully bizarre action/strategy game for 3DO, IBM DOS and IBM CD-ROM systems.

Cameron, along with Michael Gregory (*Total Recall, ROBOCOP,* and *The Lawnmower Man*) and Michael McCarty ("Sisters" and "Quantum Leap"), will be featured in live-action video footage interspersed between the game levels of *The Horde* from **Crystal Dynamix.**

The game play portions of *The Horde* are being developed by **Games For Bob** (Paul Reiche, Fred Ford and Ken Ford), a group known for high-intensity action/strategy hybrids. *The Horde* is an odd mix of *SimCity, Populous,* and an action game. The player, as Chauncey, is challenged to raise up a thriving farming community in harsh condition, battling both the elements and The Horde. The Horde is a race of ravenous creatures that will scarf anything and everything in their path. Chauncey will have to terraform land for farming, and protect the land from waves of Hordlings by building defenses with moats, walls, archers, and several ingenious Hordling traps. Chauncey will also take sword in hand to hack at the Hordlings in fast action sequences. The animation is superb and the humor twisted—not to mention the decent acting and quality set design.

Look for Cameron and *The Horde* in late February of 1994.

Gone, But Not Forgotten

Twin Dolphin Flounders, But *Forgotten Castle* May Resurface

In early December, **Twin Dolphin Games** officially ceased operation as an entertainment software publisher. The dream company, founded by former **Atari** controller Stephen Ruszak and an anonymous investor, had intended to build upon the expertise of its product-oriented veterans (particularly Jim Jennings and Ken Humphries, successful producers at Strategic Simulations, Inc.) and its experienced management team (largely composed of former video game executives) in order to target the *Windows* game market and to capture the technological edge in high-end DOS games.

The release of its first two Windows products, *Nanotank* and *Smokin' Guns,* failed to meet sufficient revenue expectations for continued funding of its very expensive, and much delayed, *Forgotten Castle* game engine. The engine is a 3-D first person perspective toolkit that offers several technological advancements in aliasing, texture-mapping and special effects. *Forgotten Castle* itself was designed to be a centerpiece CRPG using the engine. According to Ruszak, the code and rights to *Forgotten Castle* are currently for sale on an "as is" basis. *CGW* has received several reports of companies looking at the product, but no word on an official purchase has been released. **CGW**

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"WolfPack can only be classified as a genre buster, one of those rare games that sets a new standard for other releases in the same field to live or die by."
Video Games & Computer Entertainment

"The graphics for WolfPack are stunning."
Wargamer

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From NovaLogic™, the creators of Comanche™ Maximum Overkill™ and Ultrabots™.

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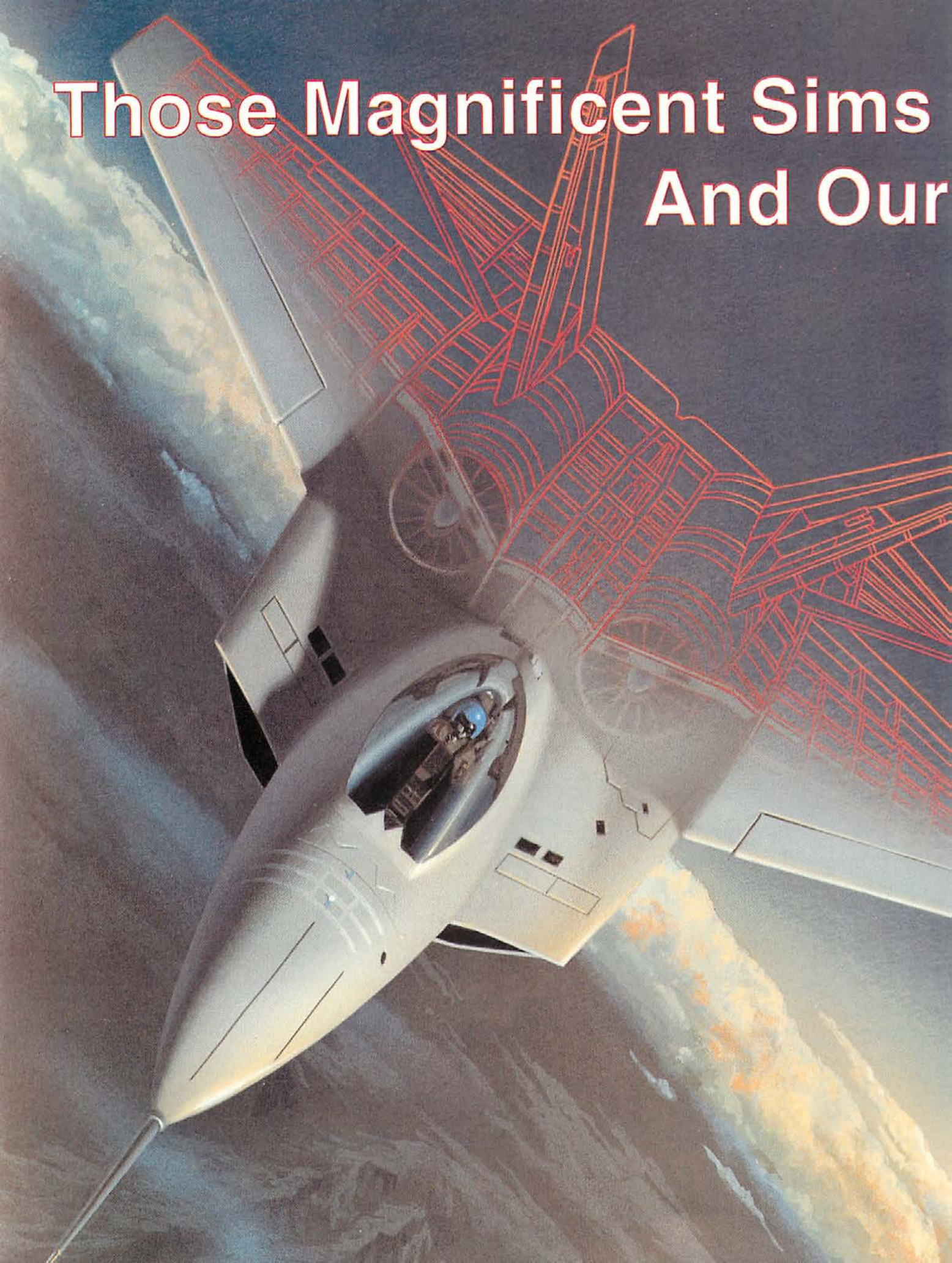
Those Magnificent Sims And Our



Computing Machines

From the earliest days of computer gaming, designers have done their best to create gaming experiences beyond what could be accomplished with game boards, dice, spinners, cards and booklets. Wargame designers tried various ways of providing limited intelligence, and role-playing designers gravitated toward graphic portrayals of encounters that had previously been limited to lead miniatures and cardboard counters on the tabletop. Yet, the true breakthrough for gamers came when computer games could put them in the seat of a vehicle and allow them to fly or drive from a first-person three-dimensional perspective.

The first flight simulators used wire-frame graphics to depict their worlds. These awkward and empty shapes were all that the limited 8-bit machines were capable of. Veteran designer Damon Slye remembers showing the 8-bit version of *Stellar 7* to his family and discovering that they couldn't figure out what those shapes were that he kept calling tanks. Here he thought he had performed a programming coup, and he discovered that people didn't get it. Apparently, best-selling author Tom Clancy got it. He reminded *CGW* of the glories of the wire-framed *Stellar 7* in a 1988 interview.

Then, someone decided to create images out of polygons. The same basic calculations required to draw lines on the screen could be used to draw shapes which, with a little extra computing power, could be filled with colors. Now, the vehicles were blocky shapes with unrealistic colors, but would-be pilots and drivers could tell what kinds of vehicles were being simulated. By the late 1980s, MicroProse, Dynamix and Spectrum HoloByte were pushing the edge of the envelope for polygon-based technology.

Of course, the state-of-the-art cannot remain the state-of-the-art for very long in a fast-moving technological world, so along came a hybrid piece of software that lurked in limbo somewhere between a pure action game and a simulation. That mighty mutant was *Wing Commander*, and it raised the ante for polygon-filled graphics again. Although the ships that were flown were basically polygon-filled vehicles with bit-mapped overlays, the graphic result was spectacular. Unfortunately for gamers with older machines (of 286 vintage), this necessitated more processing power than ever before.

Successive releases like *Strike Commander* and *Aces Over Europe* have expanded the detail on the texture maps that cover the blocky polygon shapes and, once again, the technological ante has been upped. Now, gamers need 486s to drive the latest and greatest simulators, whether the vehicles are on land, sea or air.

Will the drive toward more and more processing power ever stop? Not likely. As long as gamers demand more realism of their simulations, designers will be trying to fill that demand, pushing the envelope of technology, our hobby, and computing in general.

This issue, we cover a revolutionary product that allows you to design your own commercial level flight simulations, *Domark's Flight Sim Toolkit*. We also sneak a peek at *Tie Fighter*. We review *Aces Over Europe*, *Fighter Duel Pro*, *F/A-18 Hornet*, the *Comanche: Maximum Overkill* CD, *Combat Air Patrol* and *X-Wing* expansion disks. For those looking for something different, we offer a review of the hot new racing simulation, *IndyCar Racing*, and a look at a familiar systems simulation in a new guise, *SimCity 2000*.

Illustration by John Ball for *F22 Interceptor* (Sega), courtesy of Electronic Arts

LET THERE BE FLIGHT!

Flight Sim Toolkit Gives Pilots The Power Of Creation

by Bryan Walker

"Now for some REAL user power..."
— Jeff Bridges as hacker Kevin Flynn, from the movie TRON

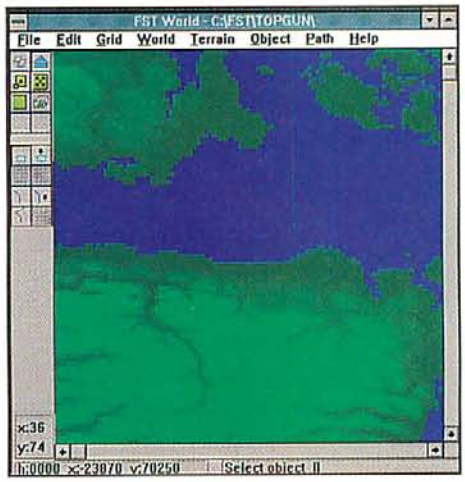
As long as flight simulators have taxed the power of CPUs, gamers have asked for more. No matter what the state of the art is, the insatiable flight simulator community has always whipped up wish lists that sent designers' heads spinning back to the drawing board. Now, **Domark Software** has turned the tables in dramatic fashion by offering *Flight Sim Toolkit (FST)*. With *FST*, the *players* have the power to create their own unlimited aerial adventures. Sporting the core program of Domark's full-screen *SVGA Harrier*, *FST*'s intent is to launch a surgical strike on the current state of the art, while appealing to the considerable creative urges of flight sim fans.

Power To The People

FST is one muscular program. Fortunately, all of this muscle power is easy to harness, thanks to an array of user-friendly tools that work within the Windows 3.1 environment. The World, Color, Shape, Model, and Cockpit editors of *FST* provide flight sim enthusiasts with far more creative power than any game construction set ever seen on a PC. It comes with two scenarios, Private Pilot and Top Gun, already built in. New players will find these adventures helpful in getting to know the *FST* world quickly, and these prefab scenarios are also excellent templates for early experiments in customizing.

Neato Neo Geos

The World Editor allows you to quickly construct a surprisingly realistic and detailed terrain model. Nearly any geographical feature can be produced and refined with the box of powerful tools that this Editor provides. Using a variety of unique fractal generation processes, the landscape can be manipulated to achieve very impressive visuals. Elevations can be raised or lowered with a sweep of the mouse, forming lakes and mountains with a single pass. Zooming in or out gives the meticulous designer easy access to the smallest details. With enough attention, *FST* can build attractive terrain models of up to 245 MILLION square kilometers. With a little time, the realism of *FST*'s terrain can rival or even surpass most flight sims on the market. Working in conjunction with the World Editor, the Color Editor allows you to select the color palette of the terrain being detailed, making it possible to simulate missions in many different geographical areas. Even the wind and time of day can be altered to put the last finishing touch on a scenario.



With FST, you don't need faith to move mountains.

Shaping Up

The Shape Editor is easily the most powerful tool in the program. Working much like a full-blown computer-aided design (CAD) program, the Shape Editor allows the development of three-dimensional polygon objects, ranging from a human being to the Nimitz nuclear aircraft carrier. You can choose from *FST*'s superb library of 3-D shapes for quick use or modification. You can also go hog-wild and produce nearly any shape imaginable from scratch. While new users might be a little intimidated at first glance, the graphic interface and skillful integration of the professional-quality utilities make working with complex 3-D polygons a simple point-and-click affair. The shapes can be viewed and rotated on any axis, scaled, filled, flipped, mirrored, extruded, colored, and edited in ways nature never intended. Cut and Paste, along with hierarchical Grouping functions make handling several polygons at once a breeze. Even some high-dollar CAD programs don't handle 3-D shapes with *FST*'s panache!

A very useful feature is the Parent/Child utility that enables you to develop a variety of shapes representing a single object at various distances. At closer range, a highly detailed

Flight Sim Toolkit

TITLE:	Flight Sim Toolkit
PRICE:	$89.95
SYSTEM:	IBM
REQUIREMENTS:	386SX or better, 2MB RAM, VGA graphics, 8MB hard drive space, Windows 3.1 or higher, mouse; supports Sound Blaster sound cards, and VESA-compliant graphics accelerators
PROTECTION:	None
DESIGNERS:	Jonathan Newth and David Payne of SIMIS Software
PUBLISHER:	Domark Software, Inc. San Mateo, CA (415) 513-8929

YOU'RE IN L.A.
SHE'S IN CINCINNATI.
AND WITHIN THE FIRST HOUR OF MEETING HER, SHE'S STRAFED YOU, YOU'VE SPLATTERED HER, SHE'S SMEARED YOU WITH BOOGERS AND YOU'VE KISSED HER PASSIONATELY.

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shape is the obvious choice. However, the Parent/Child utility can assign simpler shapes to be displayed at longer ranges, reducing the number of polygons that would otherwise be processed, and improving the frame rate of the simulation. Designers with lower-speed CPUs will find this feature makes a tremendous difference when multiple objects are displayed in the simulation.

Objectionable Conduct

At the heart of any *FST* scenario are the world's Objects. The World Editor integrates the placement, movement, Properties, and Classes of the numerous Objects *FST* can use. An Object can be anything represented by a 3-D or 2-D shape, and each Object has a Class, or function, in the *FST* world. Classes include Cultural window-dressing items, along with navigational aids such as NDBs, VORs and ILSs. You can define an aircraft Class as an indestructible brick for high-speed exploration and testing, or as a military plane capable of carrying a variety of ordnance.

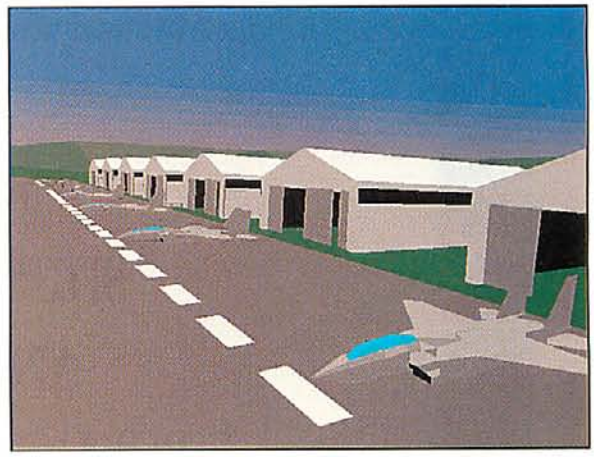
Air defense comes in two Classes, represented by SAMs (Surface-to-Air Missiles) or AAA (Anti-Aircraft Artillery) guns. Any Object can also be designated as a Runway, an aircraft-producing Hangar, or a Depot responsible for dispatching resupply vehicles to damaged or depleted Objects. Many of the properties an Object may possess depends on the Class you choose for it. For instance, SAMs can have their Detect Floor, Range, and KP (Damage) ratings adjusted, with AAA guns having variable Burst Rate, Burst Time and Reload Time values. All aircraft Objects can have their flight routes and flight performance models selected by the user. Any Object can also be designated as a Target, allowing you to determine how much damage that Object can absorb before being destroyed. The Path menu allows you to define a route for moving Objects, as well as the altitude and speed the Objects on that route maintain.

Flight simulators have always given players tremendous powers of destruction. Now, Domark and SIMIS have given players the ultimate power—Creation!

Using these functions, creating a complex Object like a functional aircraft carrier is simple. Using the mouse, an Object can be placed in the water. You can then select that Object's Class to be a Hangar, and its Shape to be the "Nimitz.fsd" file from *FST*'s 3-D shape library. Clicking the Target and Runway boxes gives that Object a finite amount of damage points and the ability to launch aircraft. In the following Properties menu, the "F-14.fsd" file could be selected to be the Nimitz's Aircraft Shape to produce. The choice of Flight Models can range from user-designed to one of several already provided in *FST*. If you desire, a couple of Object Paths and their attributes can be defined, allowing the Nimitz to slowly steam along one route while her F-14 fighter cover takes off and begins patrolling another route. With only a little experience, an *FST* user can easily perform this operation in 60 seconds. How's that for power and flexibility?

Model Citizens

The Flight Model Editor is the utility that flight sim veterans will enjoy most. Using this Editor, *FST* players have the ability to quickly draw a silhouette of the aircraft they envision. (Note that this has nothing to do with the 3-D Shape you can select to depict this aircraft.) This silhouette is then used as a computational model by *FST* to determine some basic performance characteristics such as top and stall speeds. This model can be further refined by using the Aircraft Properties menu, allowing variables such as weight, wing efficiency, dihedral, control power, and inertia to be easily modified to suit your tastes. Retractable landing gear, flaps, and airbrakes are also some of the options that you can choose from. The accompanying Engine menu may lend itself to certain abuses when you discover the extra performance "more power" can really provide! Plain and simple, the Model Editor is remarkable, allowing you to quickly design flight models ranging from the Wright Flyer to 21st-century jets. It's that versatile! Interesting possibilities also come to light when one discovers that any 3-D shape can be assigned any flight model. In other words, a Sopwith Camel can have a high-performance jet flight model. Things can get truly bizarre when 3-D shapes such as the Bismarck battleship are given the power of flight and armed with heat-seeking missiles! As a beer commercial asks, "Wouldn't that be great?"

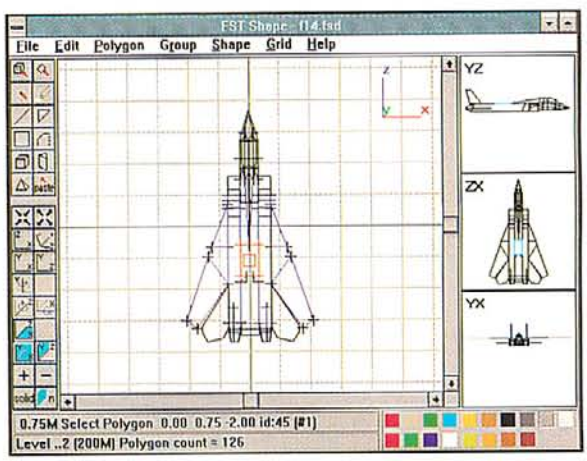


Ducks in a row—set up for a clean strafing run.

Office Decor

Most players will find the cockpit graphics included in *FST* to be more than satisfactory. Even so, *FST* has a dedicated editor that allows you to design and configure your own cockpit. Functional gauges, lights, and indicators can be placed on any bit-mapped background. A heads-up display and "Marconi" type instruments can be easily integrated to simulate a modern cockpit. The useful ILS, ADF, and VOR navigation instruments are also easy to place with this accommodating Editor. Digitized cockpit photos from real aircraft or hand-designed graphics can be touched up with any .BMP file editor and imported into *FST*. As with nearly everything else in this game, the possibilities are limited only by your imagination.

Owners of a Sound Blaster or 100% compatible sound card can take advantage of a subtle feature that allows you to replace the game's digitized sound effects with any .WAV file. Some may overlook this ability, but it became one of my favorite touches for a custom



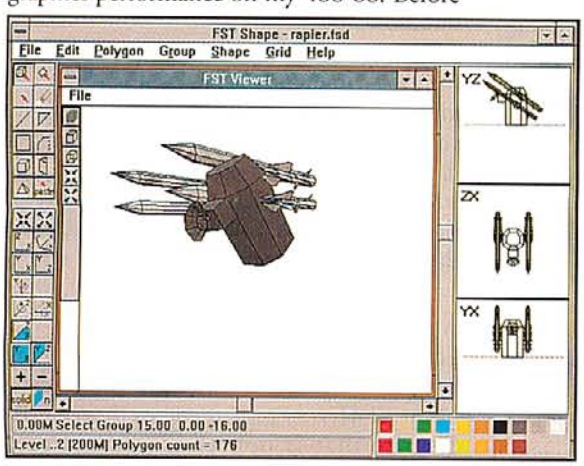
Remember when you made these out of paper?

An impressive example of what can be accomplished by scanning a photograph of a real fighter cockpit and then adding instruments using Flight Sim Toolkit's Cockpit Editor.

scenario. There's a certain appeal to having Homer Simpson announce a missile launch with a panicked scream that just can't be found in other flight sims. A .WAV file editor isn't required to accomplish this, but might help an ambitious designer really flesh out a pet project with wildly original sound effects.

The Price Of Power

While the process of creating can be at least half of the fun, *FST* couldn't be judged a success if the actual flight simulator portion of the program didn't perform. The "Fly" program in FST comes loaded for bear with excellent full-screen SVGA visuals. Unfortunately, the SVGA capability demands big-league power: a fast PC *and* an accelerated video card are absolute musts to enjoy the simulator in 640x480 resolution. Regardless of the PC's CPU speed, non-accelerated or 8-bit SVGA-capable video cards are too slow, with personal experimentation confirming this in no uncertain terms. Domark recommends the ATI or S3 video cards, but a Diamond Viper VLB card delivered effortless graphics performance on my 486-66. Before owners of less robust systems begin to dial the Suicide Hotline, they should know that the normal 320x200 VGA graphics are very smooth and realistic without bogging down a lower-end machine. Testing the VGA mode on a 386SX-20 delivered a brisk frame rate that will certainly please most players. The shading, haze, and tracer effects are particularly nice in either resolution, and definitely add to the suspension of disbelief that all flight sims strive for.



An Anti-Aircraft missile launcher takes shape in the Shape Editor.

In-Flight Services

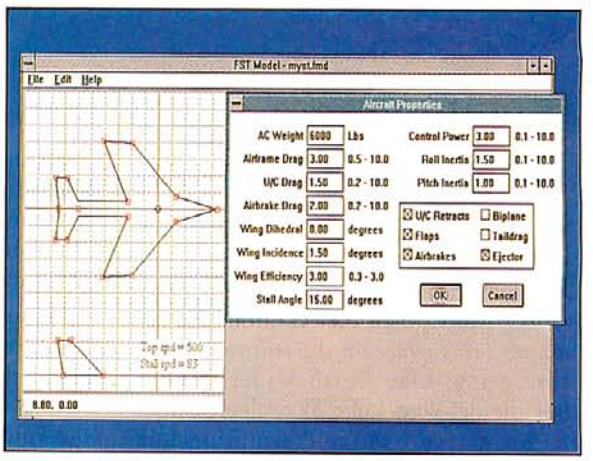
Actually flying in an *FST* scenario is fairly simple. The streamlined control layout covers most of the industry-standard commands and views, but is a far cry from the complexity of *Falcon 3.0*. More akin to a less "serious" flight simulator like *Chuck Yeager's Air Combat*, flying experiences in *FST* can range from leisurely jaunts to real hair-raisers, depending entirely on the scenario and flight models involved. While I found putting around in a civilian aircraft to be pretty uninspiring, a military mission could usually get my blood flowing.

Perhaps the greatest appeal of *FST* will lie in the ability to trade 3-D shapes, Flight Models, Terrain Models, and even entire scenarios with other *FST* fans. It's a sure bet that the major BBS networks will start seeing *FST* paraphernalia within days after the game hits the shelves. The ability for you to show off your creativity and technical artistry will certainly add to the ranks of the flight-simulator community and *FST* fans alike.

With so many strong points and ingenious features, *FST* deserves to attract some serious attention. However, there are legitimate weaknesses that potential buyers should know about before menacing their piggy banks.

Bolting The Trap

Though the ability to build elaborate Military missions may be *FST*'s greatest strength, a number of limitations may dilute the overall game-play value of these scenarios. First, you will always fly solo missions. There can be no wingmen or additional support in accomplishing the objectives. Second, the enemy planes and combat vehicles will attack only your aircraft, regardless of the proximity of friendly buildings and vehicles. (Although it's not uncommon for the enemy AAA guns to inadvertently level nearby objects while engaging your aircraft.) Third, the combat AI of the enemy planes is very weak. Using horizontal maneuvers almost exclusively, they offer little challenge in a dogfight. Without a large numerical or performance advantage, the enemy aircraft are barely more than nuisances. Fourth, the weapons and avionics available to users are rather generic in their use and effects. For most players, this will be fine. For *Falcon 3.0* fans, it will be a definite step backwards. Finally, the Flight Models are entirely unaffected by weapons loads, detracting from the sense of realism. John Kavanagh of Domark acknowledged most of these weaknesses while providing some technical insight on them. Fortunately, he emphasized that work on at least four upgrade disks for *FST* is already under way. These disks will expand the capabilities of *FST* to include a realistic helicoprer simulation, a CD-based terrain model of the entire U.S., modem play, and space exploration. These disks will also have patches aimed at improving the overall play of FST itself. So, while the air combat portion of *FST* initially won't challenge dedicated fighter sims such as *Falcon 3.0* and *F-15 SE III*, the future is certainly promising.



You don't need an engineering degree to tinker with a jet and its flight characteristics.

Final Approach

While a few titles might outshine *FST* in specific areas, no flight simulator on the shelves can boast the overall ease of use, power, and potential of this superb effort. Though *FST*'s hardware requirements and hefty price tag may cause some to shy away, this game is *definitely* worth a close look. CGW

Uncle Vader Wants...YOU!

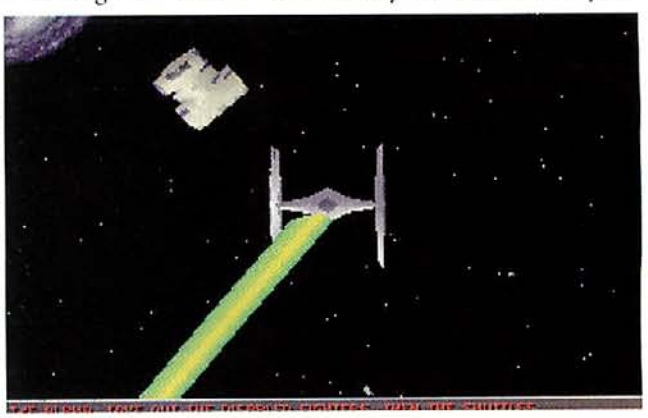
SNEAK PREVIEW
Game Still In Development

Join The Ranks Of *TIE Fighter* And Take A Walk On The Dark Side

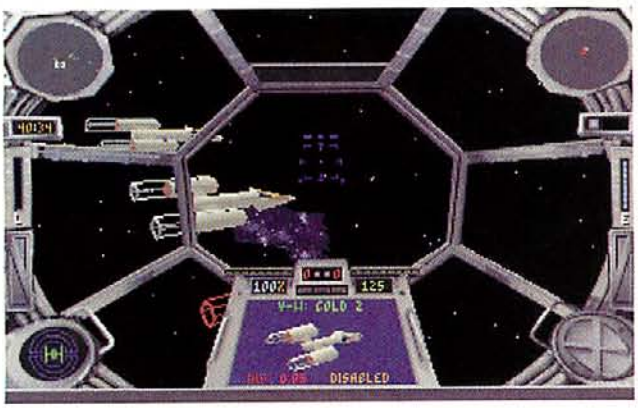
By Chris Lombardi

"Luke, I am your father. Join me and we'll rule the galaxy as father and son!"

Fans of George Lucas' *Star Wars* films and LucasArts' *X-Wing* simulation may hear a faint echoing of Darth Vader's words when they confront the dark box of *TIE Fighter* on the software shelves this Spring. Like Darth Vader standing over the defeated Luke Skywalker, extending his gloved hand and tempting Luke with the promise of tremendous power, the second major title in the Star Wars simulation line reaches out a black, gloved hand to players and offers them a career opportunity in the ranks of the Empire and the Dark Side of the Force. With its alluring screen shots, lists of new features, and tantalizing promises of more hot space combat in 35 to 40 new missions, the box will attempt to seduce Star Wars fans to betray everything they've come to value in the Star Wars universe, to betray the many Rebels who've given their lives to secure peace and freedom in the galaxy, and to betray the *X-Wing* player's own efforts in the original game and expansion disks.



Most *X-Wing* fans won't think twice. They'll plunge as eagerly into *TIE Fighter* as young Luke plunged into the void of the Cloud City to escape the same fate. After all, *X-Wing* is a well-loved game, and offering its players more opportunities to romp in its universe is to invite a starving man to feast. What about the fact that they will be playing on the Bad Guys' side? Well, not only does *TIE Fighter* afford a unique opportunity for Star Wars fans to see another side of the universe, but it might also be a refreshing change of pace for the typically do-gooding computer gamer.



Even if you have no qualms with joining the Emperor and his band of merry fascists, you'll still feel odd the first time you peer through the multifaceted eyeball of the TIE fighter. When you roll to the right on your first mission, you'll see TIE fighters flying in formation on your flanks. It's almost a reflex for an *X-Wing* player to pop off a laser volley and cleave the Imperial bastards in two. Of course, you'd best retrain your trigger finger: those bastards are now your buddies, and you'll need all the buddies you can get in the missions to come. Yes, the first time your wing of TIE Fighters moves in on an X-Wing and you line up your crosshairs on some young Rebel on "a damn fool idealistic crusade," you'll get the strong sensation—perhaps of a huge shift in the Force?—that you have ducked under the curtain and emerged on the other side.

What does the other side have to offer? A completely different perspective on the Star Wars saga. So far, we Star Wars fans have only heard the tale from the Rebel's point of view. From them we hear of an Empire that is oppressive, intolerant, power-mad, and of a Rebellion that is fight-

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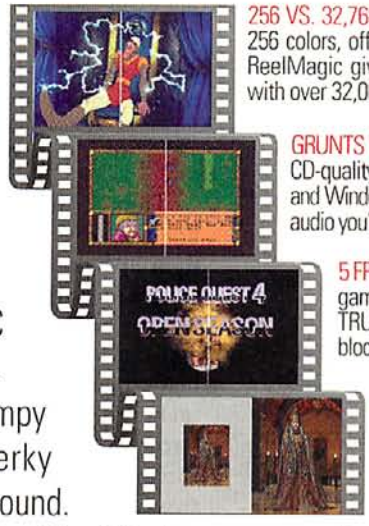

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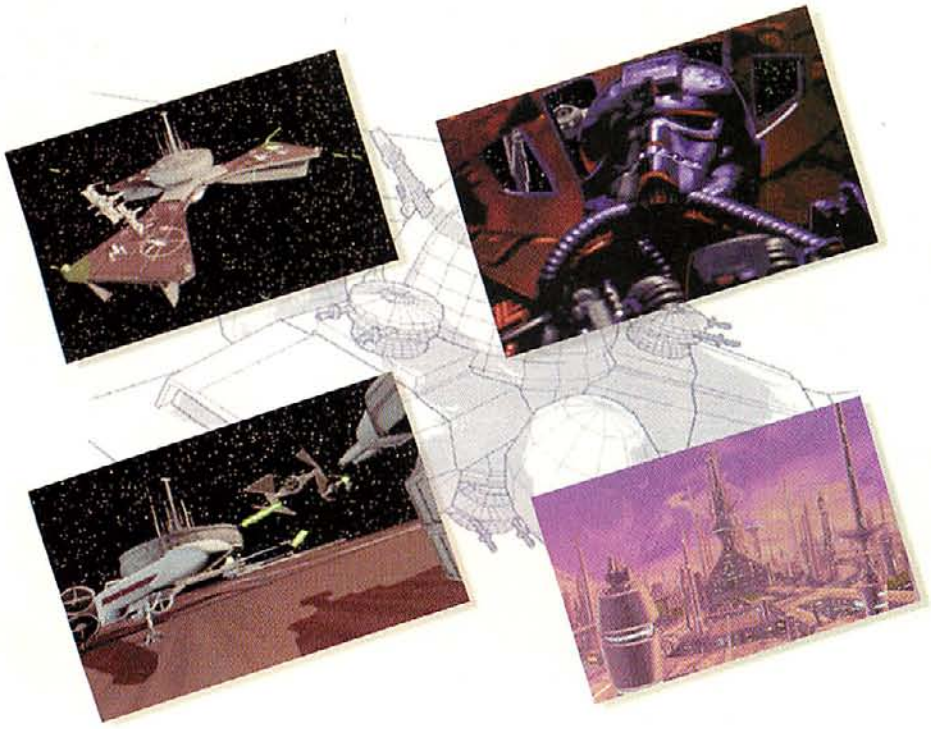


ing for freedom, justice, and democratic rule. But are we getting the clearest of pictures here? Might there be a bit of propaganda in this pot? *TIE Fighter* explores these questions by turning over the Star Wars coin, exposing for the first time the side with the image of the Emperor, and rendering unto Palpatine what is Palpatine's.

The Empire's story is not a completely sanitized version of the tale, though it's not quite as black and white as the Rebels make it out to be. The Empire sees itself as restoring order to a region torn by wars since the breakdown of the Alliance. It is ensuring a peace—albeit a cold and cheerless one—to a region that would otherwise destroy itself in factious infighting. The Rebellion is seen as a band of outlaws who would subvert the system established by the Empire and allow such warfare to continue.

Sure, the Emperor has his own propagandists white-washing his blood-stained picket fence, but this is the world as the young recruit knows it when beginning *Tie Fighter*. As the story develops, and as you rise through the ranks of the Imperial Navy, a more accurate portrayal of the Empire and its problems will unfold, revealing tales of political intrigue, of defections and opportunistic traitors, and of ambitious officers making political power-plays. If you so choose, you might even find yourself involved in covert missions for secret organizations within the Empire, and perhaps even defending the Empire against corruption within.

You Say You Want An Evolution?

Though the story makes a 180 degree flop in perspective, *X-Wing* players will feel right at home with the *TIE Fighter* game system. Designers Larry Holland and Ed Kilham have taken both the basic program and the lessons learned from *X-Wing* and made many small but significant refinements to the design. The main interface screen, for instance, will feel very familiar. After checking in at a front desk flanked by two Storm Troopers, you'll enter the central corridor of an Imperial space station. The many sliding doors of the station offer well-known game options: the Pilot Proving Grounds will allow new players to practice their skills on a timed obstacle course, the Historical Combat missions offer combat scenarios in a virtual reality environment, the Blueprint Room displays models of the different ship types, and the Film Room enables pilots to view those special combat Kodak moments.

What's new on the scene? Well, the graphics of the simulation have improved somewhat; a layer of Garoud shading has been added to the ships, rounding out their bodies and giving them more subtle colorings. The targeting system has also been changed. Whereas in *X-Wing* the targeting display showed a static display of the targeted ship, it now shows a real-time image of the ship. There is also a new "Threat Display" that provides real-time information on a targeted ship's heading and its current objective, making it easier for you to keep tabs on that critical enemy craft.

Missions Impeccable

These new graphical improvements are nice, but the real strides have been made in the depth and structure of the missions. The most common complaint about *X-Wing* was the difficulty of its missions. Some of them were very tough and had to be played dozens of times. LucasArts' quick and dirty solution in the *X-Wing* expansion disks were quick and dirty on-line hints. These hints are gone in *TIE Fighter*, but so is the difficulty problem. Holland and Kilham have come up with several different ways to modulate mission difficulty while adding depth to the simulation world.

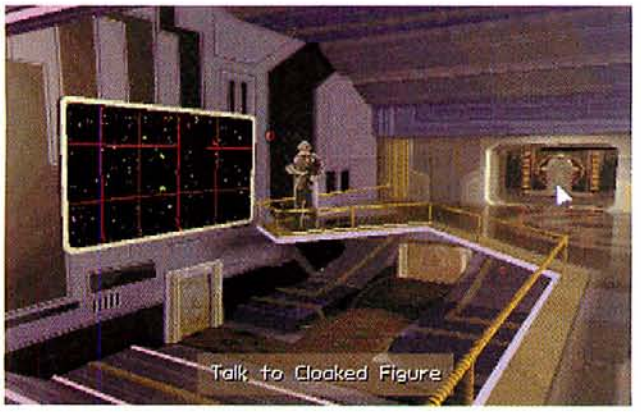
As a gross solution, there are now three general levels of difficulty: casual gamers can set the game to a casual pace, and masochists can torture themselves with glee. In the subtler vein, the mission objective screen has been remodeled to allow objectives and hints to be doled out at various levels. While the cool animated mission computer is still a part of the game, you will no longer page through the laborious text descriptions of a mission. Now, there is an officer in the mission room that you can question with an adventure-style interface. By selecting from a number of dialogue choices, you can get mission information in as much detail as you desire.

There are also multiple objectives for every mission. Along with the officer in the mission room, there is a mysterious cloaked figure as well. If you so choose, you can speak to him to find out about objectives that go above and beyond the basic military aims of the Empire. Through the cloaked figure, you can become involved in a secret society of elite pilots that moves behind the Empire, shaping the outcome of the war to its own mysterious ends. You can move through the storyline by accomplishing the basic mission objectives, but you can also take on more challenges and become more involved in the background story through the secondary objectives.

The designers have also taken small steps toward reducing the linearity of the plot. Rather than enrolling in Tours of Duty and completing each mission in sequence, you now choose one of four places to be stationed. Each station will have a series of connected battles linked to it. If you become stuck on a mission at one station,

you can relocate to another and try the missions there. There is still only one major plotline that runs throughout the game's planned 35-40 missions, but the ability to relocate your character ensures that you don't get stuck on one mission and find yourself unable to move any farther in the story.

The missions themselves have been given more complexity, and the simulator

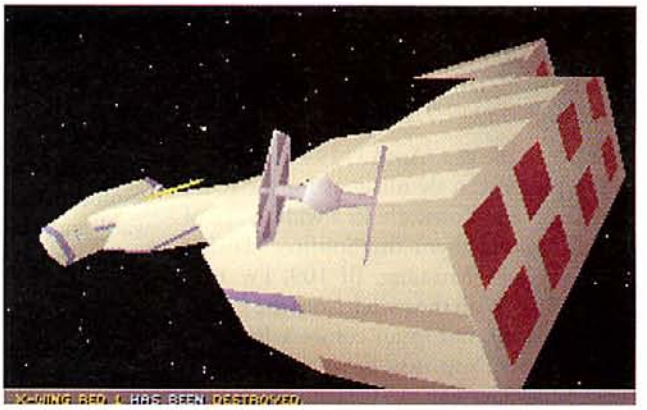


world more depth. The AI has been improved to give computer controlled flight groups more complex assignments, so there are lots of flight groups racing around accomplishing their multiple objectives. Missions can now be much longer, with multiple events, and can have more complex triggering conditions for their beginnings and endings. There are new wingman commands, and the wingmen will respond more readily and accurately to them. Fortunately, with all of this added complexity comes added ease-of-use. The designers have gone to great lengths to provide more combat information to the player and thereby improve his or her situational awareness. In addition to the new tracking systems already mentioned, each mission has unique radio messages (as opposed to the generic kind in *X-Wing*) to help you keep tabs on the events, and the game will no longer keep you guessing if your mission has been a failure and cannot be completed (an annoying problem in *X-Wing*). If you felt like you were playing more of an adventure game than a combat simulator in *X-Wing*, you'll feel it even more so in *TIE Fighter* as these complex missions and their multiple objectives unfold like self-contained combat stories within a larger plot.

Not only are the missions more involved, but the simulation universe has been fleshed out with greater detail. For instance, the missions are grouped together into Battles of three to five scenarios surrounding a single engagement or objective, and there is continuity between the missions. So, for instance, if you flame that Rebel hotshot, Keyan Farlander, in the first mission of a battle, he won't appear in the remainder. Likewise, if you lose your wingman in the first battle, you can't expect his help in the second. Then again, if you find yourself in deep wookie dung on a mission, you can call back to HQ to request additional support. If there are ships available (there may not be in some instances), a squad of ships will be dispatched. Using this support feature will not have any adverse effects on a mission's outcome, though your score and your rate of promotion may suffer.

Secret Weapons Of The Empire

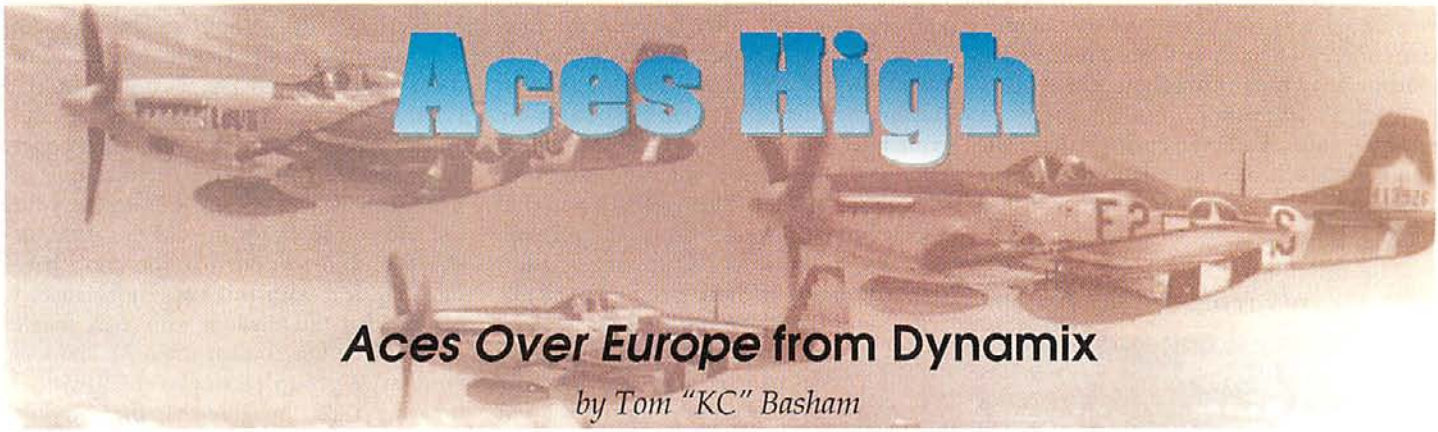
Some of the new ship types add depth to play as well. There are dozens of new support ships, like space platforms, various supply vehicles, and medium-sized ships (as opposed to *X-Wing*'s generic "containers" and space tugs). Also, in addition to the standard Imperial craft that *X-Wing* players know and love—the TIE Fighter, TIE Interceptor, TIE Bomber, TIE Advanced, and Assault Gunboat—you will also fly the TIE Deluxe. The TIE Deluxe is a new fighter that will be developed throughout the course of the game. It is a very powerful and flexible ship that can carry a shield system, standard laser weapons, a tractor beam, and missiles with a variety of warheads. Before flying a mission in a TIE Deluxe, you will be able to select its armament load, and if you run out of missiles during a mission, you can fly back to a base and reload!



While on the subject of ships, I'm sure there are many *X-Wing* players wondering how LucasArts is going to handle the balance of combat, as far as the match up of Rebel and Imperial ships is concerned. In *X-Wing* any Rebel starfighter could crack a standard TIE Fighter in half with two or three well-placed shots. I would have guessed that the designers would fudge the figures a bit and give the TIE Fighter a bit more strength. This doesn't seem to be the case. TIE Fighters are still without shields and still very much the flying confetti eggs we know them to be from *X-Wing*. Two shots from a rebel ship with cross-linked lasers and you've got a funeral with Storm Trooper color guard. You'll learn the meaning of fear when you've got an X-Wing on your tail and you reach for the old rear deflector shield button to find that you don't have one! To deal with this basic imbalance, I suspect that the missions with these fragile craft will be less combat intensive and will emphasize group tactics over individual bravado. I also imagine that the storyline will quickly move the player beyond the basic ships and onto those that have a little more heft and firepower.

One of the most exciting possible additions—and I must stress *possible*—is a custom mission builder. Hollins and Killiam have developed a very slick mission building tool for their own use, and they are considering cleaning it up and including it with *TIE Fighter*. This would allow creative players to develop their own devious missions for others to enjoy. Again, they aren't promising the custom mission builder, though they are considering it. We can only hope.

Even without the custom mission builder, *X-Wing* fans will have a lot to look forward to this Spring. In addition to more hot n' heavy space combat and more gorgeous animated cut-scenes to flesh out the story, there are new ships, more involved missions, more flexibility with the game difficulty, and a whole new slant on the Star Wars universe. The Dark Side beckons, young Jedi, and it's allure is stronger than ever. Indeed, at this point in *TIE Fighter*'s development it seems there will be few reasons to refuse. Even as you've read this, you may have felt your will weakening and your soul giving ear to that familiar, asthmatic baritone: "Join me..." **CGW**



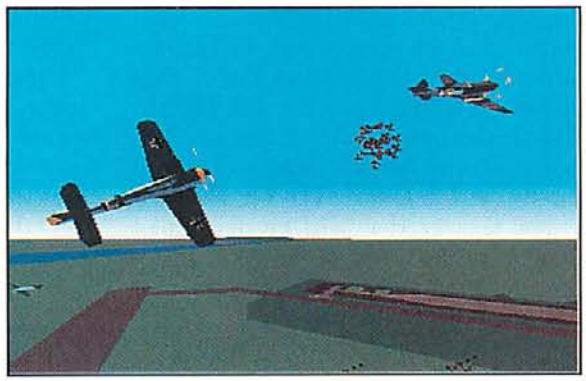
Aces High

Aces Over Europe from Dynamix

by Tom "KC" Basham

I was performing a "dirty dart," one of those nasty little maneuvers where you have superior altitude on the enemy, wait for him to reach the bottom of his dive, and then cut across and turn his six into metallic pasta. He must have spotted me, though, because he shot forward like his MW50 (methanol/water combination for an extra power boost) had kicked in. I grabbed the wire on my Spitfire's booster and screamed toward him again. He broke into a tight right turn and I managed to rock into a turn and fire a wing cannon. I was in a seesaw where the recoil of each shot would make my wing jerk back, but I kept rocking and kept firing. Suddenly, he explodes.

Such is a paraphrase of an actual encounter between Jerry Collingsworth of the USAAF 31st Fighter Group and an Fw 190. The complete story can be read in James R. Whelan's *Hunters in the Sky: Fighter Aces of WWII* (Washington: Regnery Gateway, 1991), but the *experience* can be encountered in *Aces Over Europe*, the long awaited sequel to *Aces Over The Pacific*.



Set late in the war (April 1, 1944 to May 7, 1945), players can fly missions for the RAF, USAAF, or the Luftwaffe in a wide range of aircraft, among them the Spitfire, Hawker Tempest, P-15 Mustang, Bf 109, Fw 190, and Me 262. With the switch from the Pacific Theatre to the European comes a few new mission types. You may be asked to attack radar sites, German V-1 facilities, supply trains and tank columns in addition to the standard assortment of tasks found in *AOTP*.

Depending on which air force you fly for, some missions become impossibly difficult. All missions in *AOE* take place after the D-Day invasion of Normandy, by which time the strength of the Luftwaffe was severely waning. When flying for the Luftwaffe, some "scramble" missions begin with Allied pilots strafing the very runway you must taxi down! A flight of four Fw 190s may be assigned to intercept a bombing raid consisting of eight B-25s escorted by four P-51s! Missions for the Allies are by no means simple, but surviving a tour of duty with the Luftwaffe is a respectable feat by any measurement.

Tally Ho, Bandits 3 O'clock High!

Aces Over Europe (AOE) uses the same basic game engine as *Aces Over The Pacific (AOTP)*, but has several enhancements in its graphics, flight modeling, and enemy artificial intelligence. The most noticeable advancement is the new "Tall Res," 320x400 pixel graphics mode. *AOE* supports the standard 320x200 resolution used in *AOTP*, but looks very awkward and "blocky" when compared to the Tall Res mode. The higher resolution of Tall Res makes both the static displays (the cockpit instrumentation) and the dynamic objects (other aircraft) look a lot better. Where bogeys previously were nothing more than a few colored pixels in the distance, the actual bank of the wings can be discerned using Tall Res. It's a welcome and much needed improvement over the original *AOTP* graphics.

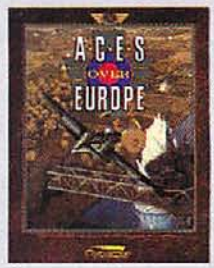
Don't let the higher resolution mislead you, though. There aren't many new *objects* to see in *AOE*, it's just that the objects previously used in *AOTP* look a lot better. The general landscape in *AOE* is the same as its predecessor, a flat world with few details. For the air-to-air combat segments of the game, the texture of the planet doesn't really matter that much, but the ground detail is sparse and uninspiring in ground attack missions. Like *AOTP*, it is difficult to determine how far away the ground is, forcing you to frequently look at your altimeter. In the middle of a dogfight at 300 feet, though, looking down at your instruments for even a second can get you a severe case of lead poisoning.

The higher resolution comes with a price tag: more computer horsepower is needed to update those extra pixels at a reasonable rate. The graphics look very smooth on the testbed 486DX-50, but 386 owners may find their machines just don't pack enough punch for Tall Res, especially if they can't tolerate low frame rates to begin with. If you've got the horses under your hood, you'll find the Tall Res mode is a welcome improvement.

Pushing It To The Tickle

The first question asked of a new flight simulator is almost always, "how is the flight model?" *AOE* has good news and bad news in this department. First, the good news: stall buffet and spins have been added. Buffeting occurs as a wing approaches a stall. As the

Aces Over Europe



TITLE:	Aces Over Europe
PRICE:	$69.95
SYSTEM:	IBM
REQUIREMENTS:	386DX or better, 4MB RAM, VGA graphics, 6MB hard drive space; supports AdLib, PAS, Roland MT-32, Sound Blaster and Thrustmaster sound cards and WCS, FCS, and RCS flight control peripherals
PROTECTION:	None
DESIGNER:	Damon Slye
PUBLISHER:	Sierra/Dynamix Coarsegold, CA (800) SIERRA1

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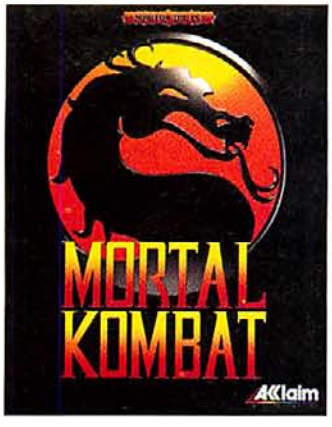

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angle of attack increases, the airflow over the wing is disrupted, causing the aircraft to bounce and vibrate. If the disruption is severe enough, the wing loses all lift and a stall occurs. The point where the first barely noticeable buffeting occurs is called "the tickle" and indicates the aircraft is flying at the edge of its performance envelope. Combat pilots attempt to fly to the tickle knowing this is the maximum they can demand from their aircraft. When the aircraft stalls in a turn, it stops turning and flies in a straight line tangent to the turn circle. When flying at the tickle, slight buffet can be felt, but the aircraft has not yet stalled and continues to turn. Pulling harder on the stick leads to severe buffet, the aircraft stalls, and stops turning. Demanding more from the aircraft usually results in a spin. Buffeting, therefore, is a valuable indicator to the pilot that the aircraft has reached the edge of its performance envelope. The logical progression here is: normal flight, then the tickle, buffet and stalling next, followed by a spin.

Now for the bad news. Stalls in *AOE* are not handled very well. Stalling during a turn can be seen in the original game, *Aces Over The Pacific*, by flying over a fixed object (such as a road). Reduce speed and make a hard turn over the object. Use the side view to look down your wing at the object and notice how it rotates as you turn. Increase your turn until you stall and notice what happens: the object appears to move in a straight line showing that your aircraft has stopped turning and is now moving in a straight line tangent to the original turn. Unfortunately *AOTP* didn't have buffet or spins, progressing from normal flight to a stall without warning, but never departing into a spin.

AOE has taken a step backwards here, despite the addition of buffet and spins. When you pull into a stall, the image on the screen bounces around simulating buffet like it should, but the aircraft continues to turn. Pulling further on the stick should lead to stronger buffet and a stall, but instead causes a spin. *AOE* basically progresses from normal flight to a severe tickle and into a spin without ever really stalling. At first glance, this may seem like a nit-pick; however, it leads to all stalls and spins having a generic, canned, on/off feel to them, taking away a lot of the uniqueness and individuality of each aircraft.

Aircraft in *AOE* also cannot descend unless pointed at the ground. In the real world, as airspeed decreases the wings generate less lift. If the amount of lift generated by the wings is less than the aircraft weight, you will descend, even if the nose is pointed up. Real aircraft land by keeping the nose level or above the horizon and decreasing speed until the aircraft descends. This cannot be done in either *AOTP* or *AOE*. Realistic landings are not possible.

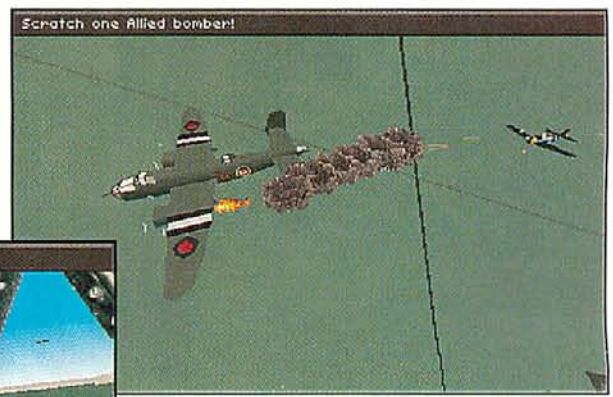
This isn't meant to imply that the flight models in *AOE* are garbage. *AOE* actually presents a very nice feeling of flight. Relative motion in three dimensional maneuvering is handled quite well. Energy management is very important in *AOE*, and the effects of maneuvering on your energy state is quite apparent during a dogfight. Although stalls may not be overly realistic, they are still quite dangerous and to be avoided by careful energy management. The point is, *AOE* has enough of the basics (stalls, buffet, spins, and energy management) to be challenging, although the hard-core flight simulation crowd will find the implementation of these items a little disappointing. Also, aircraft performance does vary with altitude, so it behooves you to know where your aircraft best performs, and fight on your own terms.

Perhaps the most annoying thing about *AOE* is the continued use of the "teleporter autopilot." Like *AOTP*, the autopilot in *AOE* magically transports you from waypoint to waypoint, dropping you into tactical situations with no warning or preparation. You may suddenly appear 20,000 feet directly above the shipyard you were assigned to bomb, or appear in the middle of a pack of enemy fighters. Rather than using a time-compression scheme (as in *Red Baron*), Dynamix severely handicaps players with the teleporter system. If the teleport disengages, you know *something* is about to happen, but no idea what. Many players have voiced discontent with this system, and hopefully Dynamix will no longer use it.

What About The Bugs?

AOE has proven to be very bug-free—quite a task in today's software market. No known crash bugs exist. The screen shaking used to show stall buffet and bullet impacts is caused by varying the video sync pulses. Some video cards have circuitry designed to prevent this, leading to blank screens during flight. *AOE* ships with two utilities designed to address this problem. One tries to make the shaking effect work with the video hardware, the other disables the shaking effect altogether to prevent annoying blank screens during flight.

Improvements in the artificial intelligence has led to a few annoyances as well. Originally, *AOTP* allowed computer-controlled pilots some "leeway" during flight to make up for lack of intelligence. This leeway allowed NPCs to bend the rules of flight slightly and gave them more ammo than human players to make up for their lack of skill. In an open letter from Dynamix posted on CompuServe, Dynamix admits that they improved the skill of the NPCs, but underestimated how much leeway the NPCs were still being allowed. The end result is that NPCs are generally difficult opponents with more ammunition than the human player.



Back At The Officer's Club

AOE is basically *AOTP* with a new suit. It retains the successful elements of its predecessor while making many subtle improvements. Its flight modeling is better than *AOTP*, but not perfect. It uses the same type of world as *AOTP*, but makes it look a lot better with the new Tall Res video mode. And it extends the aircraft and mission types to include new and interesting combat situations. On the whole, *Aces Over Europe* is a significant step in the Great Warplanes Series and a "must-have" product for WWII air combat fans. **CGW**

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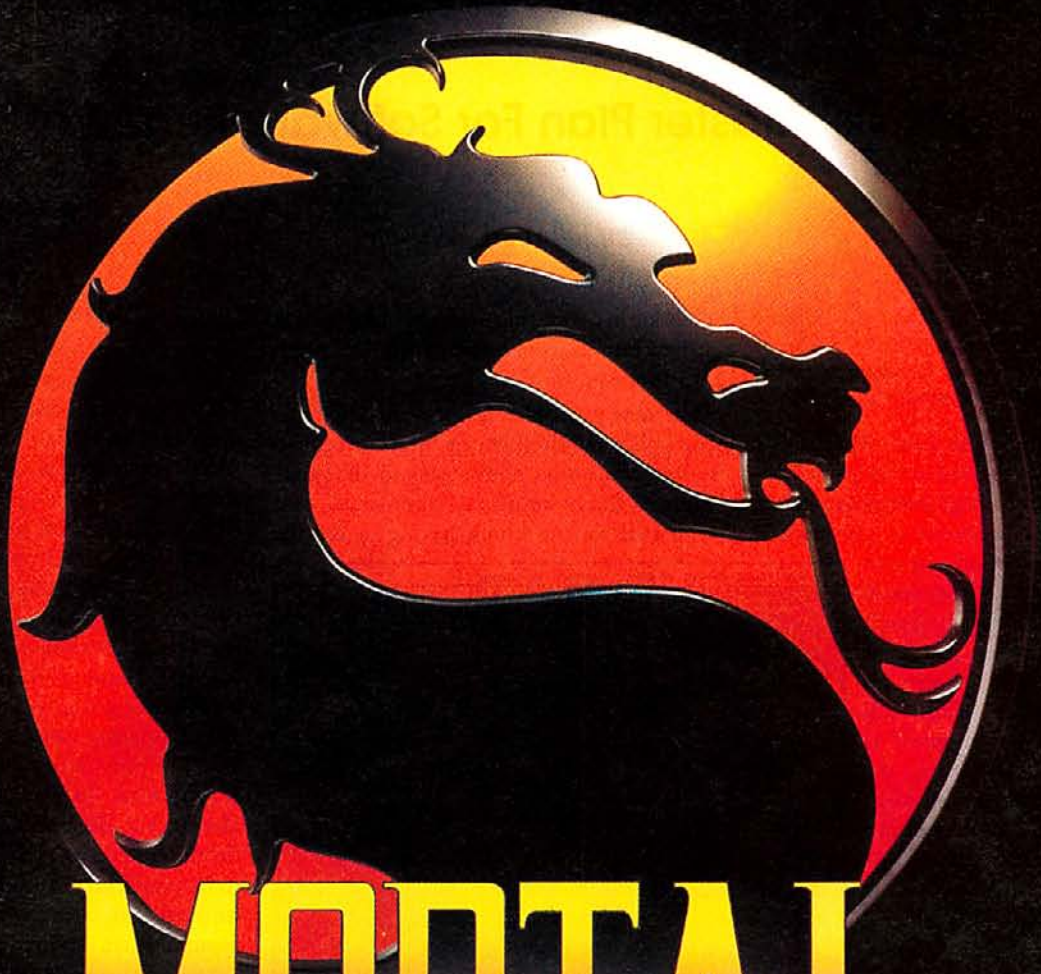

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Circle Reader Service #71

Sim-ply Irresistible: SimCity 2000

Maxis' Master Plan For Software Renewal

by Johnny L. Wilson

Johnny L. Wilson is the author of The SimCity Planning Commission Handbook and co-author of The SimCity 2000 Planning Commission Handbook, both published by Osborne-McGraw Hill.

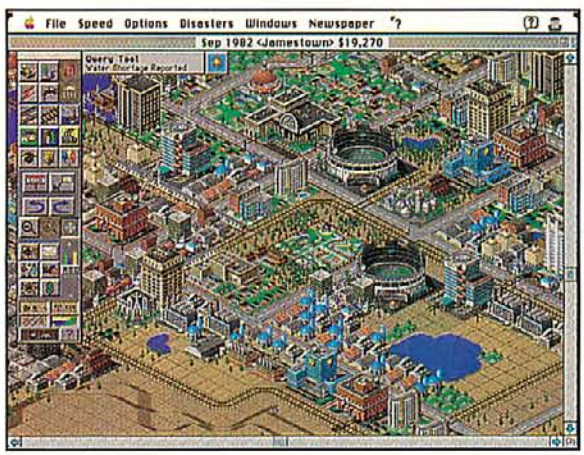
A city, according to Lewis Mumford's *The City In History*, serves as a structure for the storage and transmission of valued goods (an economic purpose), a repository of information and artifacts from its cumulative social heritage (a socializing purpose); and a stable human environment through police and fire protection, the modern equivalent of the walls and armies of the ancient world (a protective purpose). In short, the urban or suburban environment touches nearly every aspect of our lives.

This may well explain why the original *SimCity* touched a nerve and had such wide-range appeal. Nearly everyone could identify with it, because even those who do not live in cities have had to visit them for one reason or another, and nearly everyone thinks that they could do a better job of planning a city than their own local government officials.

Urban Renewal

SimCity 2000 (*SC2000*) offers the same fascination and potential satisfaction as the original *SimCity*, but it offers considerably more tools with which to create an urban utopia. Now, *SimCity 2000* contains built-in terrain editing functions to tweak the landscape without having to leave the City Window; subway and freeway options to help alleviate traffic congestion; and alternative power plants to help alleviate pollution. There are now schools to help shape the future of the city and help determine the types of industry that will dominate in that future city. There are hospitals to increase the life expectancy of your citizenry and pro-active government spending options to help you hone in on specific problems, like attracting new businesses or reducing crime through anti-drug education.

The new game also features the ability to send police and fire-fighting forces directly to trouble spots, and allows you to designate light and heavy industrial, commercial, and residential zones without having to use the bulldozing trick many of us used in the original. Roads in *SC2000* can be built diagonally, so you no longer have to zig-zag your way across the map in order to recreate Washington, D.C. or Paris. You can even connect your cities to neighboring cities by building roads to the edges of the map.



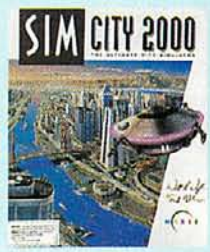
Stadiums (for baseball, football, soccer, or cricket), recreational areas, and tourist attractions can both customize a city's look and improve its population and economy. Also, the addition of a utility to allow mayors to create customized signposts for their cities is a very nice touch. The Oakland Hills Fire scenario makes excellent use of this tool by indicating Lake Temescal, as well as the former home of designer Will Wright that burned during the fire.

SimCity 2000 can also be more difficult than was the original *SimCity*. To be sure, the Easy mode (where the initial bankroll is $20,000) is still basically a software toy—accessible enough that almost anyone can feel successful from the beginning. At the Medium level (starting with the coffers at $10,000) and Hard level (where the city begins $10,000 in debt because of floating a municipal bond), things are tougher. Not only do you have to handle the specific budgetary issues, but you have to be able to handle NIMBY (Not In My BackYard) issues, as well. Putting that prison near certain high-priced housing can cause a backlash among your citizenry. Not only do you have to plan for the road, freeway, and subway grid, you also have to deal with the Mayor Koch Syndrome (the former NYC mayor says he used to have nightmares about the city's waterlines disintegrating) and deal with the underground water system.

The easier a difficulty level is set, the easier it is for cities to sell their industrial products to neighboring cities and expand the economic base. Further, the harder difficulty levels increase the probability of a city facing a disaster. Finally, some of the new scenarios, like the Oakland Hills Fire, are extremely difficult. There are feelings of déjà vu when playing *SC2000*, but this is not the same game. There are plenty of new challenges.

Finally, the new game also lets you decide on the start date for the game. In turn, the time period in which you begin has an effect on what power plants are

SimCity 2000

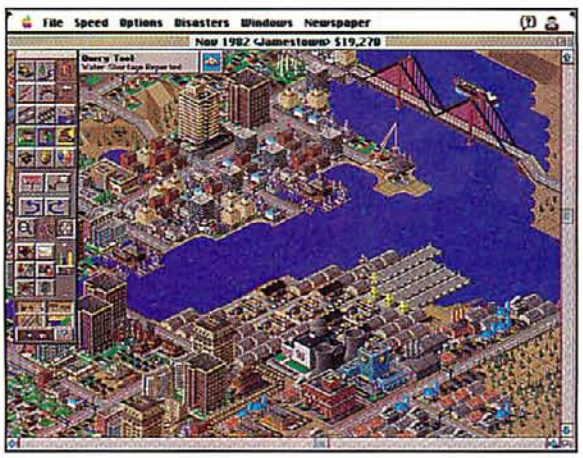


TITLE:	SimCity 2000
PRICE:	$69.95
SYSTEM:	Macintosh, IBM (early '94)
REQUIREMENTS:	LC, Performa, II, Centris, Quadra, Color Classic, and Powerbook; 4MB RAM (2.5MB free), 8-bit color monitor, 4MB hard drive space, System 7.0 or higher
DESIGNERS:	Fred Haslam and Will Wright
PUBLISHER:	Maxis Orinda, CA (510) 254-9700

immediately available and what inventions are already in existence. A 1900 start date allows you to choose between three types of power plants (Coal, Hydroelectric and Oil); allows no subways until 1910, buses until 1920 or highways until 1930; and allows no water treatment plants until 1935 or arcologies (self-sustaining cities in a single enveloping structure) until 2000. A 1950 start date adds gas-powered electric plants with nuclear power plants only five years away, and also allows all forms of transportation and water treatment plants. The year 2000 adds wind- and solar-powered plants, as well as desalinization plants and arcologies to the mix. The year 2050 adds microwave and fusion power plants to the energy pool.

Report From The City Manager

With so much going for it, many migh think that *SC2000* is perfect. It isn't quite there, yet. You would think that someone in



my position would be able to proclaim the new game to be everything *SimCity* fans could have desired, since virtually every criticism I leveled at the game in *The SimCity Planning Commission Handbook* was addressed in the design of *SC2000*. Yet, there are still awkward features.

For instance, I complained about the meager terrain features in *SimCity*. Now, there are multiple levels of terrain, complete with "reticulating splines." This means that the formula which generates maps for *SC2000* builds a series of curves and angles within the hillside terrain so that the map presents credible geological structures. It also means that there are lots of little triangular terrain tiles that cannot be improved by zoning or road, rail and/or on-ramp construction.

I also noted that the original game locked the player into a grid plan for city design. The large square commercial, industrial and residential zones virtually assured symmetrical grids where possible. *SC2000* made the basic zones smaller and, as a result, more realistic in terms of the way property is zoned in real life. This provides for additional flexibility in using terrain features effectively and creating realistic neighborhoods. Unfortunately, it has also meant that some *SimCity* fans do not feel like they can see what's happening in *SC2000* as readily as they could in the original game.

Again, I lamented the inability to build freeways. Now, you can build them, but you must be able to cross an ordinary road at a 90 degree angle in order to do so. Then, you can build on-ramps to the raised highway that will serve as your expressway or freeway. If you do not place the freeway sections at such a stern angle, you will not get viable on- and off-ramps. Also, many novice mayors find themselves frustrated because they cannot build on-ramps on triangular spline sections or at the end of one of the sections of freeways.

Another problem introduced by the additional terrain possibilities has to do with crossing water. Many mayors are frustrated with their inability to change directions with raised wires. You must be certain that you can get *straight* to where you're going *before* you start crossing water. The same holds true when building bridges. You cannot build circular, S-curve or T-intersection bridges.

Another awkward design feature has to do with the customized signposts. Many novice mayors want to customize as much of their city as possible, but end up unhappy with the results. They forget that the sign is about three tiles in height and a minimum of five tiles wide. In the more dense areas of the city, placing signs will obscure the topographical view of the city and actually reduce, rather than enhance, the enjoyment of the city's growth. Fortunately, the game allows you to toggle off these signposts when they are obtrusive and unsightly (unlike certain stretches of highway in real life).

Of course, once you have gotten used to the conventions used in *SC2000*, none of these are problems that should significantly diminish your enjoyment of the game. They are simply factors that should be considered by fans of the original game.

Tales of the City

The new scenarios are very similar to those in the original game. Charleston is essentially equivalent to Rio, since flooding is the problem whether caused by recurring high tides or recurring hurricanes; Hollywood is essentially equivalent to Tokyo, since a movie prop monster that rampages out of control through a metropolis is not much different than a Godzilla-type monster; and a depressed economy in Flint, MI is the same as a depressed economy in Detroit.

The main scenarios of distinction, with regard to play, are the Dullsville scenario where you must build a tourist attraction to build business and population, and the Oakland Hills Fire scenario where you must end the conflagration as swiftly as possible. The latter is not so different than the San Francisco Earthquake scenario in the original *SimCity*, but it plays differently because of the necessity of dispatching fire-fighters to the specific terrain squares where they must put out the fire.

Public Opinion Poll

Is *SimCity 2000* a better program than the original *SimCity*? It is without question a superior program. Will Wright and Fred Haslam have addressed the wish lists of nearly every *SimCity* player that has contacted them.

Is it more fun than the original *SimCity*? It is for me. With the additional depth in play and the proliferation of new options, *SC2000* feels more realistic and offers more challenges. It's Sim-ply irresistible. **CGW**

Backdraft

How to stop the Oakland Hills Fire seems to be the most commonly asked question from those who know me and my love for both *SimCity* and *SC2000*. The sneakiest way to get the fire out in a hurry is to use the "Raise Terrain" tool to build up the terrain around the affected fire tiles and, as a result, isolate the fire. To those who insist that this is cheating, I insist that real fire-fighters use bulldozers to create fire breaks. I'm just exaggerating that effort.

I also tried to isolate the fire by ringing it with water. The flames jumped the ring of water. Further, I tried to emulate those airplanes and helicopters bombing the fire with water drops by clicking the "Place Water" tool over the flames. This does not work, even though each click costs your city budget as much as if it did.

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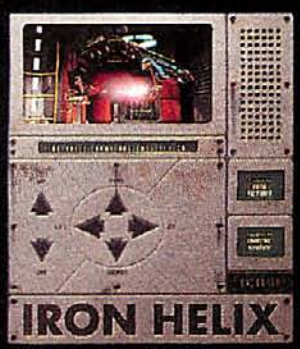
The critics think this futuristic nightmare is a dream come true.

New Media says it's "more than a great game--it's sci-fi space opera and film noir at its best." *Wired* raves that "Helix is a stunner." And that it has the "gun-to-your-head urgency of an arcade game." So you know it's not another CD-ROM game that crawls.

We like to think of Iron Helix as a futuristic hunting game. Only you're what's hunted.



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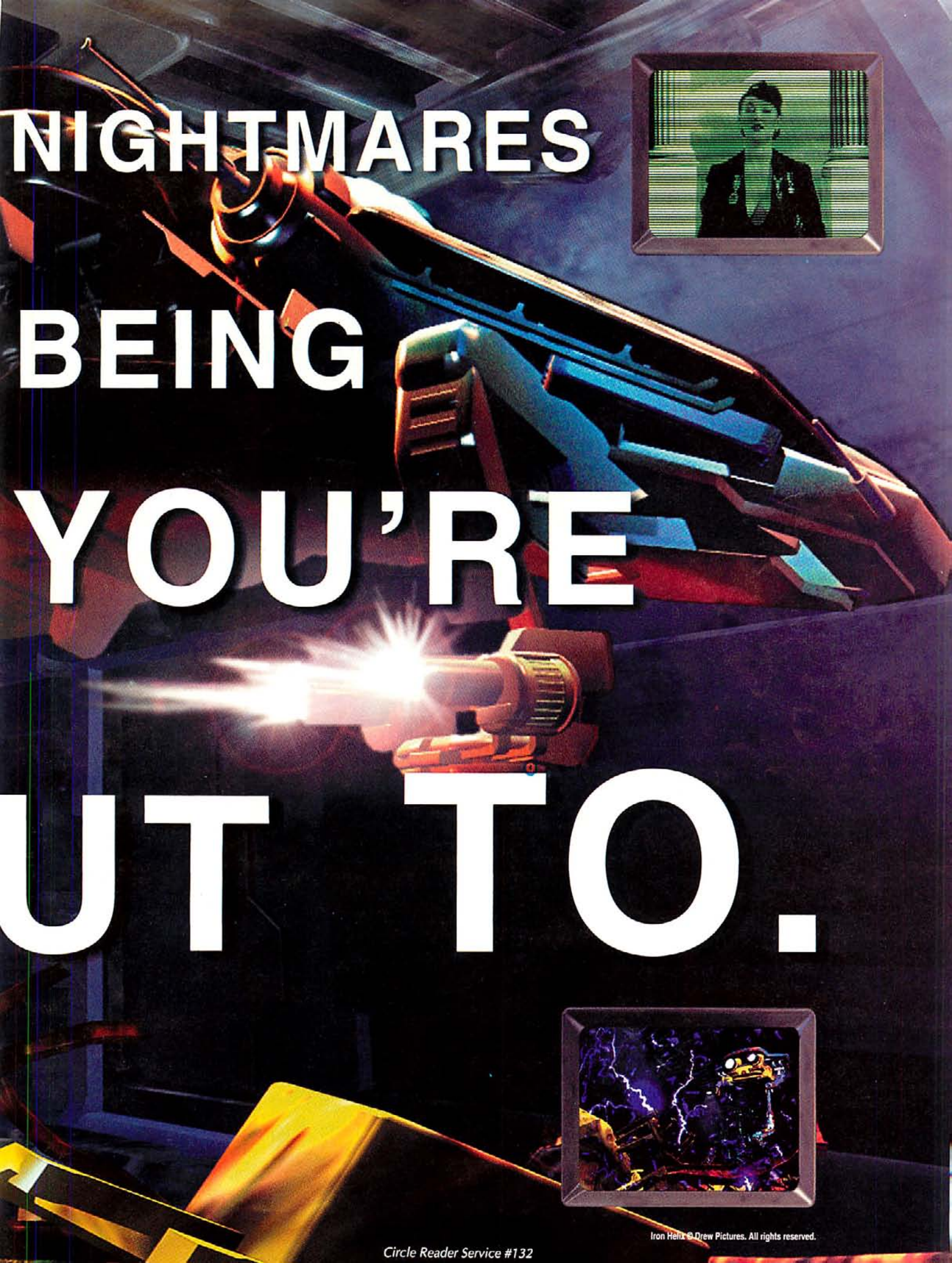

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Out Of The Pits

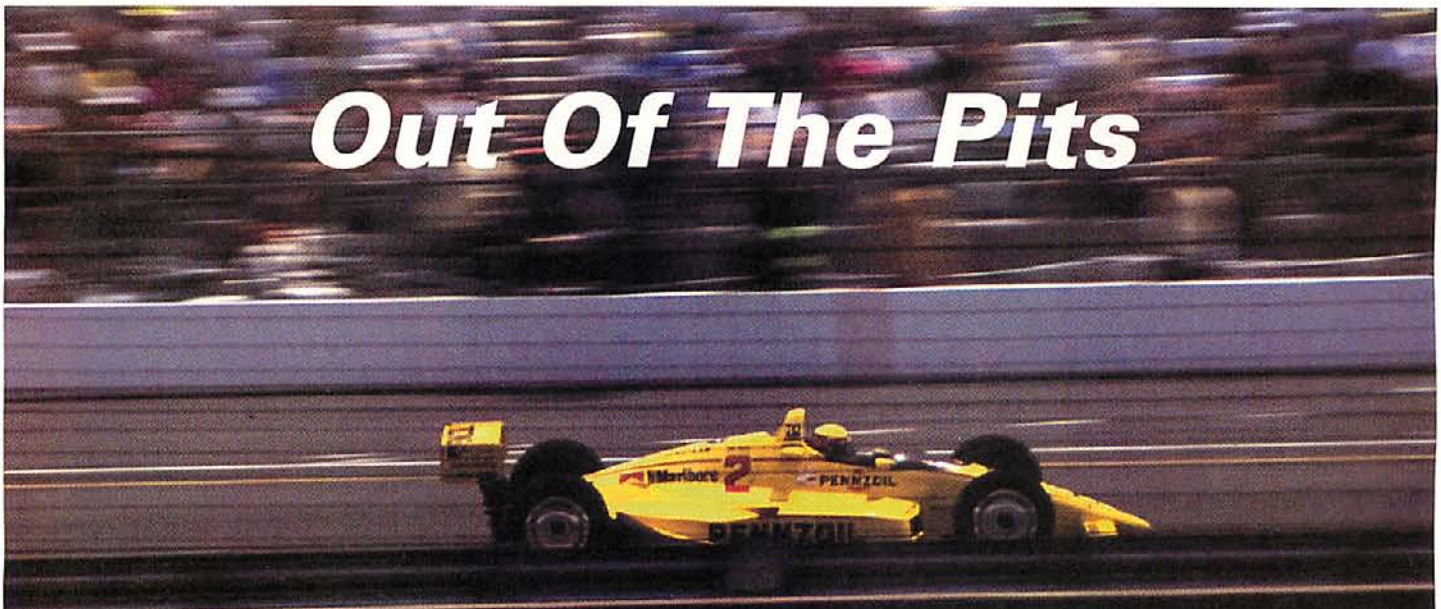


Photo by Larry Mahoney

A New Front Runner In Racing Simulations—*IndyCar Racing*

by Gordon Goble

Gordon Goble is a fanatical follower of both real and simulated racing. He has been a member of a racing team and is a frequent contributor to On Track and Formula magazines as a writer and photographer.

In 1989 many of us were still playing games off of diskettes—only a few games required installation—though we still had a hard drive, or rather, many hard drives in **Papyrus**' *Indianapolis 500 - The Simulation.* And drive we did, over and over and over again, simply because the car we piloted came closer to simulating the actual feel and responses of a real race car than anything we'd ever experienced. *Indy 500* featured no gravity-defying loops, no jumps, no ray guns, just one simple oval track. Boring? Only to the uninitiated. But to those patient folk that stuck with the simulation through its considerable learning curve, then realized the excitement that would stem from cutting just half a second off their best lap time, there was no equal.

To say that Papyrus' new *IndyCar Racing* successfully mimics its predecessor would be a gross understatement. The superb driving sensation of *Indy 500* has certainly not been misplaced, only expanded upon. Yet there is much more to this *IndyCar Racing* story—welcome innovations, questionable calls, and an advanced billing that the program has not quite lived up to.

Auto racing simulations can generally be broken down into five basic elements: The Driving Experience, Car Set-Up Options, Graphics, Audio, and something we'll call Options and Amenities. Like a pit mechanic with a checklist, we'll look through each and see how the *IndyCar* sizes up.

The Driving Experience

In a word, "Wow!" Computer racing design guru David Kaemmer has outdone himself with *IndyCar Racing*—the only current driving sim where 180 mph feels like 180 mph. An *IndyCar* machine screams down straights and may well drift through corners. Sudden bursts of acceleration (especially from a dead stop) or abrupt applications of the braking mechanism will make for some suicidal handling and possible spins, then torn rubber, as tires struggle to grip the pavement. Caution must also be exercised at reduced speeds (such as under a yellow flag) as in real life, because a car's high speed ground effects just won't work at such diminished velocity.

In *IndyCar Racing*, the art of "drafting" (following another car closely to use it as an energy-saving wind break) has been presented like never before. Although the application of this technique has been possible in other sims, never have I pulled out from behind the front-running vehicle and felt such wicked turbulence. Trying this sort of maneuver or involuntarily "losing the tow" through any fast corner such as those found on oval tracks will produce undesirable, if not disastrous results. The implementation of this drafting effect is a design masterstroke.

As can be expected from Papyrus, driving an IndyCar with a modicum of efficiency

IndyCar Racing

TITLE:	IndyCar Racing
PRICE:	$59.99
SYSTEM:	IBM
REQUIREMENTS:	386-25MHz or better, 4MB RAM, VGA graphics, 15MB hard drive space; supports AdLib, PAS, Roland and Sound Blaster sound cards
PROTECTION:	Documentation look up
DESIGNER:	David Kaemmer of Papyrus
DISTRIBUTOR:	Virgin Games Irvine, CA (800) 874-4607

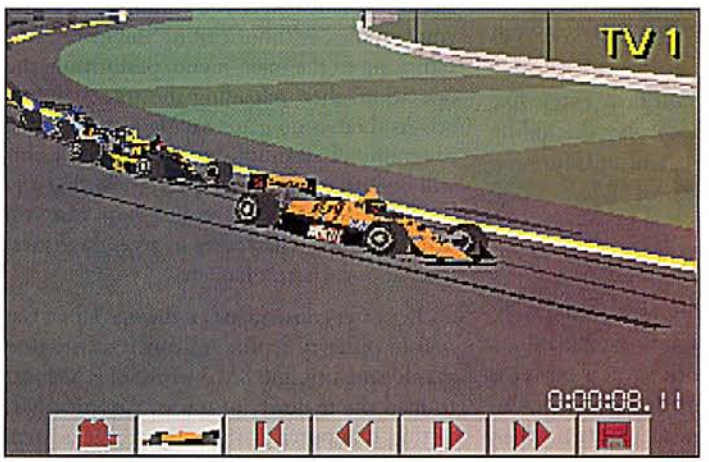
takes a great deal of experience and persistence. Yet, once the proper technique has been mastered, rewards are plentiful. You must remember that cars get lighter as fuel decreases, tires wear out, and car handling ebbs and flows. Finesse most often wins out over muscle on both this and the real-life IndyCar circuit, and it is genuinely surprising how such a powerful machine requires such a gentle touch. Surprising *and* brilliantly accurate.

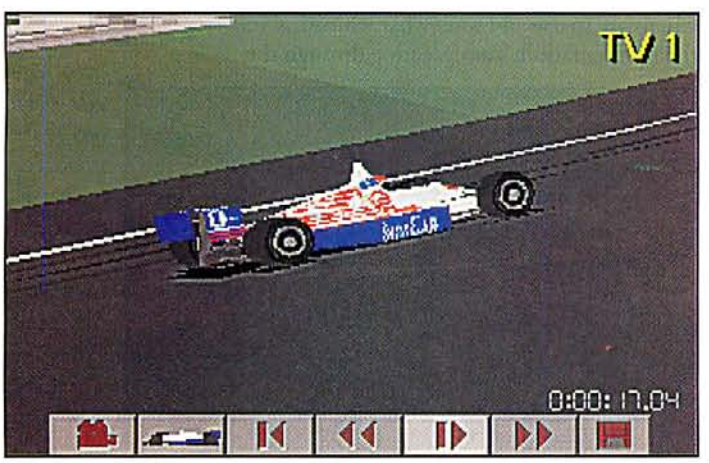
But getting fast on an open track is just part of the equation. Being good involves dealing with traffic, and while this too is difficult, it is a worthy challenge that offers a fairly accurate racing experience once mastered. Other drivers behave as they should, and slower vehicles will politely move out of the way of a fast approaching machine, while equally powered cars will, grudgingly, give ground. It also seems that certain drivers have been given some real life characteristics, and while no names shall be mentioned, one driver in particular appears to perform in a dependably erratic fashion. But at least he is consistently so.

And now he can be erratic on a number of tracks, as *IndyCar Racing* offers rubber-burning action at a full compliment of racing venues. From the claustrophobic temporary street circuits of Long Beach and Toronto, to the sweeping beauty of Portland and Laguna Seca, or the fire-breathing ovals of New Hampshire, Michigan, Milwaukee and Nazareth, *IndyCar Racing* exposes the vastly different driving styles it takes to compete in an IndyCar season. The player will soon find that while the Milwaukee Mile is one thing, snaking through the walled streets of Toronto is downright frightening.

Apart from the curious omission of curbing, tracks appear faithful to their real-life counterparts, including the extreme changes in elevation at Laguna Seca, where a car will seem quite a bit lighter at the crest of a hill than at its base. The rest of the IndyCar circuit (with the exception of Indianapolis itself) is promised as an add-on package within the next few months.

The inevitable meeting of mettle with mettle resulting in the meeting of metal with metal will indeed bring about interesting visual thrills, as smoke, departing tires, and the odd flash of flame are depicted on screen. Yet the Papyrus promise of superlative explosions, detached engines, and other assorted carnage is not part of the package. Sadly, too, the audio burst of tire brushing gently against wall is identical to that of car slamming into end of pit wall at 170 mph. One would think the latter should sound akin to a garbage truck being dropped off the Empire State Building, but such is not the case. That racing's intrinsic viciousness is not brought forth to the ear will bring a tear to the eye of those who enjoy a little mass destruction with their speed.





Overall, though, *IndyCar Racing* presents the closest imitation of the real life racing experience that has ever crossed a hard drive. On my personal scorecard, the graphics earn an "A".

Car Set-Up Options

Plentiful and effective choices are at the ready for anyone who fancies having some mechanical aptitude. Starting with one of three default set-ups (*Easy*, *Fast*, or *Ace*), you can then customize your machine. Variances in gear ratio, wing configuration, fuel load, brake bias, and tire pressure, compound and stagger are not uncommon in this quickly evolving class of computer product, yet *IndyCar* delves a little deeper into the world of modification possibilities. Steering radius alterations (affecting the sensitivity of steering), and chassis roll compensations (adjustable from within the cockpit) are some of the fresh looks, but fuel mixtures and spark advance are not yet tinkerable (although originally expected).

As in the real world, the driver/mechanic will never be fully satisfied with an *IndyCar Racing* vehicle set-up. Often, modifications to one aspect of a car may nullify the advancements made in other areas. Also, a vehicle's handling will change throughout a race, as will the unpredictable flow of events (high speed chases versus plodding, accident filled affairs). Educated guesswork before and during a race is a most valuable weapon, and nothing can replace a steady, opportunistic driver.

Though missing a few features, the set-up modifications earn an "A-".

Graphic Glory

Papyrus is proud of their new graphical technology, and *IndyCar Racing* is the first racing simulation to join the flight simulators on the 3D texture-mapping bandwagon. From first sight, all other racing simulations are put immediately to shame. Particularly

impressive are the cars themselves, riding for the most part with accurate colors (most cars are digital representatives of the real thing) and logos. On the sideline, towers, signboards, vegetation, and everything else is textured, creating an illusion of depth and realism.

Under actual driving conditions, though, this visual cornucopia does little to improve a driver's perception, and in certain instances, may detract from it. The "ghostly" presence that goes hand-in-hand with the current state of 3D texture mapping fails to draw clear lines between on-track steeds. I found myself asking, "Is Tracy's car just inches away, or feet?", or "It sure didn't seem like we touched " until I figured out from experience what kind of buffer was required around my car. The sensation of depth provided by the 3D graphics can be deceiving, but these perceptive difficulties will cease to become a problem once you learn to trust your experience, and not your eyes.

When taking into account little extras like the beauty of the *IndyCar* replay (including eight, count 'em, eight separate and stunning camera angles), graphics rate a "B".

An Earful Of Audio

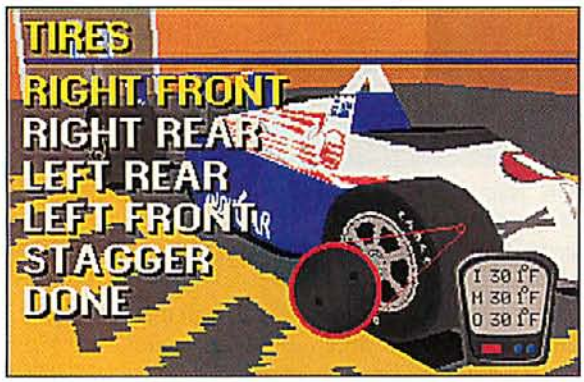
There's not much in the way of audio diversity expected from an auto racing sim. A clear engine note that varies when power is applied and when gears are changed, a graduated and precise tire squeal to warn when rubber has reached its adhesion limits, the roar of approaching and receding traffic, and an indication that your vehicle has met with something it shouldn't have are the necessary ingredients.

Arranging auto audio into a working arrangement is a Papyrus specialty. Like *Indy 500*, *IndyCar Racing* provides informative and precise engine buzzes and tire screeches, and the opposition is now heard in all its Dopplerized glory. So far so good, but as mentioned earlier, the sounds of contact are neither varying nor believable. As well, the digitized vocal strains of real-life IndyCar announcer Paul Page would have been a nice addition in spots other than the program introduction—perhaps announcing your hard-fought podium ascent and the like.

Giving full credit for accurate engine and tire sounds and that incredible Doppler effect, but subtracting points for contact sounds, the audio earns a "B".

Options And Amenities

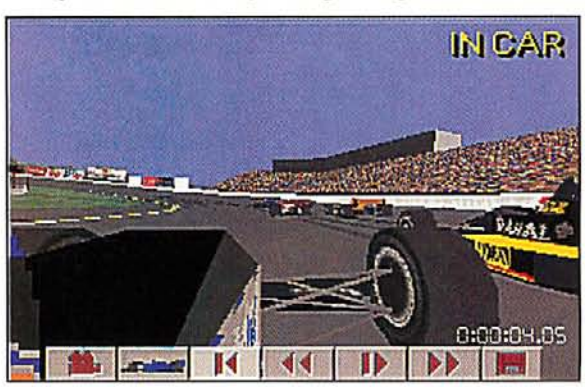
The no-nonsense *IndyCar* interfaces and menus belie the wealth of options presented within. Simple menus blossom into submenus and branch out from there. This lack of interface fluff is welcome, as hard core racers don't really want to see anything but garage, pavement, other cars, an instrument panel, and a checkered flag.



But a certain inflexibility exists in *IndyCar Racing*. For instance, you cannot recalibrate your joystick without exiting the race-track, returning to the main menu, performing the operation, then reloading the track, and so on. As there is no game saving feature in the program, all accomplishments to that point will be lost, except as a replay, including any spectacular qualifying results. Nor can you print anything whatsoever or access statistics, such as one's fastest lap, etc.

Of greater consequence is the need for a fast 486 in order to reproduce much of the new graphic quality, and 8MB worth of RAM just to load the majority of tracks. On my 4MB testing computer, a mere three tracks were playable, with a maximum allotment of 14 competitors in any given race.

As for written material and helpful instruction, *IndyCar Racing* has taken an odd approach. Although the game manual is steeped in information on the history of the Indy car and hints on ways to squeeze more speed from a car, actual game details (what keys to hit and when) are sparse and somewhat whimsical in their presentation. Vainly leafing through the *IndyCar* manual may become all too common for some.



The *IndyCar* control method options are very powerful. Almost any key, joystick button, or joystick axis can be configured to your input style. In addition, both linear or non-linear steering is at the ready, as are rookie aids such as automatic braking and shifting. Race realism is also variable, and elements like weather, race length, and opponent strength will serve to keep even the most jaded auto jockey enthralled over the long haul. Oh yes, modem play is indeed part of the package, but as of publication time it was not yet working properly for all systems, and Papyrus—like a frantic pit crew—was working feverishly to fix it.

In the cockpit, constantly updated race standings can be viewed at a glance with a mere flick of the F1 key, while tire temperatures and fuel projections are accessed via F2. Pitting is an art unto itself, but a four wheel tire change and fuel replenishment will be completed as quickly as you can tap either a forward cursor or "Enter" key. However, caution should be exercised to keep your joystick consistently calibrated as more than once the program has failed to recognize that the car has come to a complete stop while in the pit area. And, as we all know, a crew won't start working on a moving car.

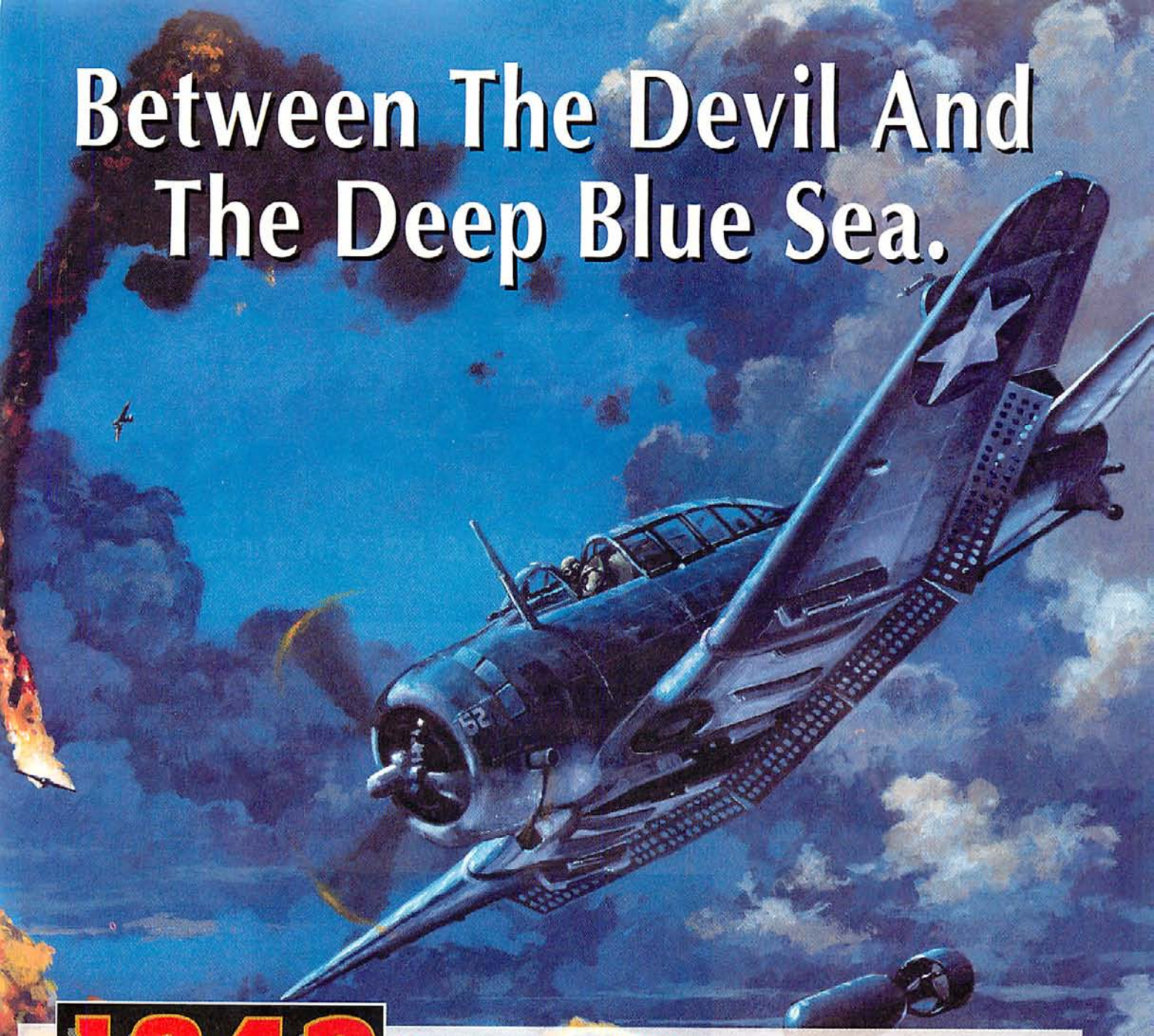
With these specific reservations in mind, I give *IndyCar Racing*'s Options and Amenities a "C+".

The Race Results

IndyCar Racing is the purest driving game ever let loose on the gaming public. Arriving just one year after *World Circuit* took the digital racing world by the arm and led it out of a rather glum situation, *IndyCar Racing* is enough of a product to push simulations to a new level. *IndyCar* doesn't deliver as complete a package as its advanced billing (and my Sneak Preview) had lead us to expect, but it attempted *a lot*, and even in falling short it sets a new standard.

And there is still hope that *IndyCar* will become all that it can be. On the side panel of the *IndyCar Racing* box is the phrase "*First in a Series from Team Papyrus Racing*," and one would think this means Papyrus is in this game for the long haul. The development team also appears to be working diligently on the production of updated versions, additions, patches, etc. These are good indications that a solid future awaits this product and its fans. **CGW**

Between The Devil And The Deep Blue Sea.



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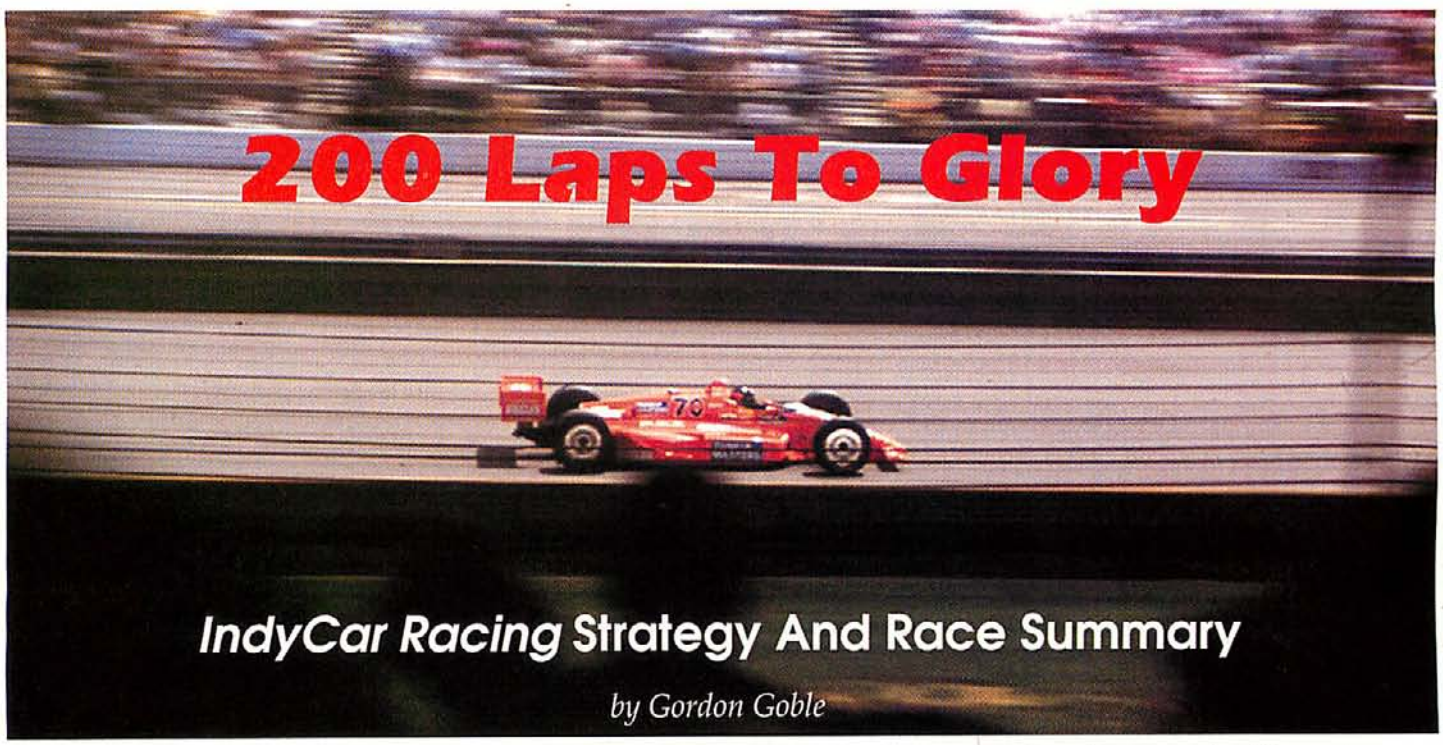

200 Laps To Glory

IndyCar Racing Strategy And Race Summary

by Gordon Goble

Photos by Larry Mahoney

The *IndyCar Racing* default 5% race distance will be a common undertaking for most computer racing buffs. At this length, a complete race can be wrapped up in no time, and with the full car damage option engaged, a serious accident will mean the undoing of mere minutes, as opposed to hours, of arduous driving.

A journey into the realm of actual *IndyCar* race distances is another matter. It is a daunting proposition, but it is a matter of honor, and an undertaking that all serious sim fans must eventually undertake. After all, it's really what the game is all about. A 100% race distance extravaganza will instill a total respect for the concentration, the decisions, and the frustrations facing a Paul Tracy or Bobby Rahal, and it entails a complete modification to your driving style. With these thoughts in mind, I took to the pavement at New Hampshire with all of the switches thrown (Opponent Strength 100%, Full Car Damage, No Driving Aids, Linear Steering through a CH Products Flightstick) and my ears pinned back.

Qualifying

Being a proud *Indy 500* addict for several years had familiarized me with the impressive and authentic car handling and modeling that Papyrus has now incorporated and built upon in *IndyCar Racing*. Although not recommended for rookie drivers, I chose the latter of the three (*Easy*, *Fast* or *Ace*) default set-ups. Accessing *Qualifying* from the menu, I realized that my opponents were recording good but not impossible times, and considering New Hampshire is the most straightforward of the *IndyCar* tracks, I knew it wouldn't take much in the way of modification to secure a solid grid position.

First to the garage, where a quick drop in fuel supply from 40 to 3 gallons would still get me around for my two qualifying flyers. The car load now lightened, an eight notch decrease in wings (both front and back) helped bring about a top speed of nearly 180 mph at the end of each straightaway, yet the car did not slow appreciably in the corners.

This wing adjustment meant that my engine was now topping out early in its current gear configuration. Taller gears would represent a higher top end, and since a good lap at New Hampshire required only a perfect sixth gear, sixth gear was lengthened by two keystrokes. Now the engine warning light reared its ugly head for just a moment and only at the end of a perfectly carved lap.

On to where the rubber meets the road. Real life Indy drivers and mechanics will tell you that adjustments should be made so as to equalize the inside, middle, and outside temperatures of each tire at the culmination of several hot laps. *IndyCar* allows the experimenting driver to monitor all tire temperatures while in the cockpit by depressing the F1 key.

Various tire pressure and chassis adjustments brought about a little more harmony in the readings, and I believe this helped to squeak out an extra half second or so in my lap times. Incidentally, my new and improved car asked for and received a rethinking of my driving line until I got it just right. Again, this wasn't the *ultimate* car set-up (I was able to turn a 180.2 mph lap in rehearsals), but it would do the trick in qualifying—if the driver held up his part of the bargain.

In the end, all the time I'd spent perfecting a knife-edge setup meant very little in application, as my fastest qualifying lap of 178.83 mph was 8 mph quicker than any of my rivals. Paul Tracy came closest at a 170.32, and I quite possibly could have grabbed the pole with just a low fuel but otherwise stock "Ace" set-up. An unmodified Ace is what I would drive as I attempted the 211.6 miles of New Hampshire.

The Race

The race was held on December 8, 1993 at Loudon, New Hampshire. The weather was

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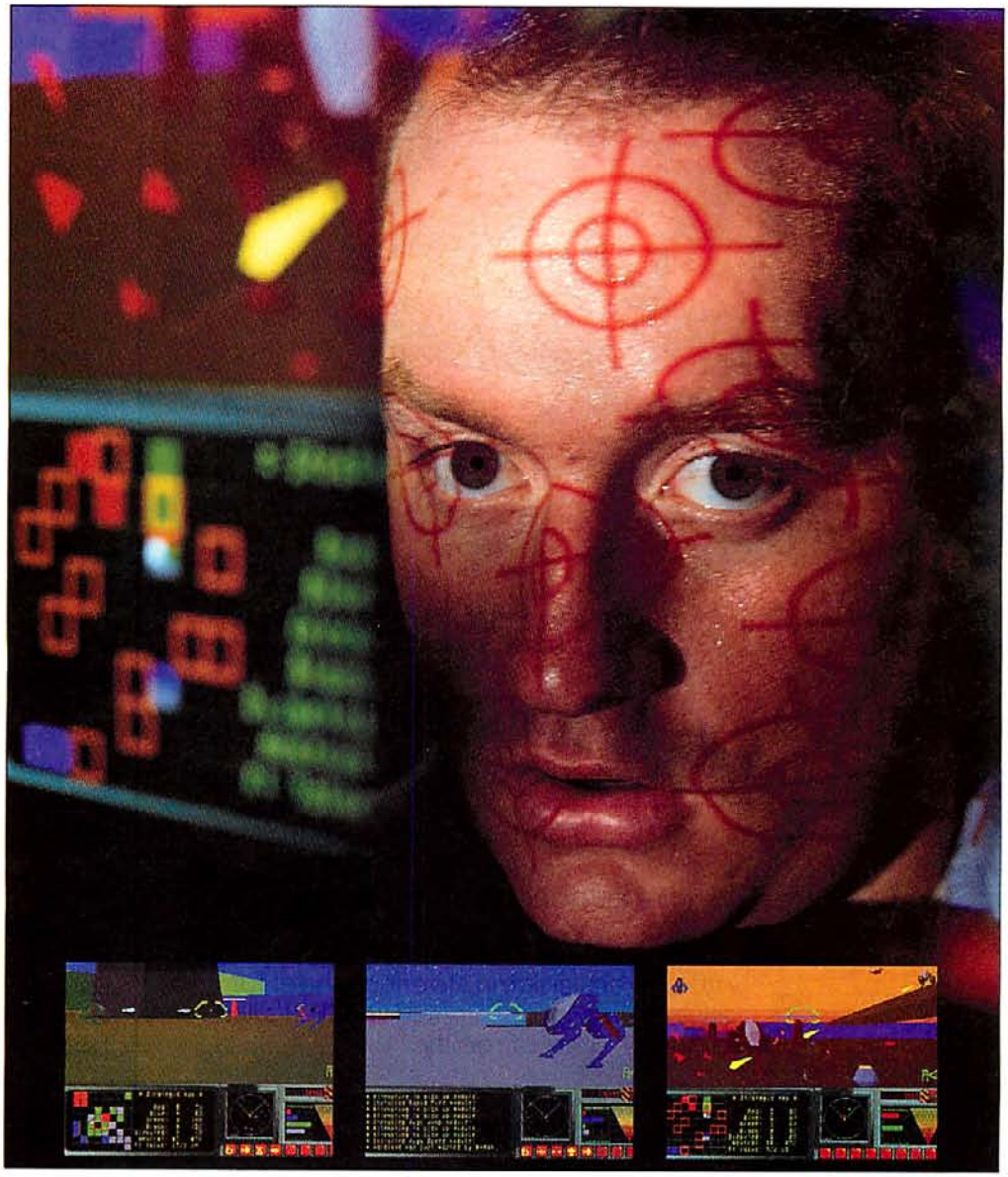

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SIMUTRONICS CORPORATION

set at default, and considering the odd time of year for a real event such as this, would not be a factor. My 486-33MHz machine with a measly 4MB of RAM allowed for just 15 entrants, so traffic would be light.

My start was lousy, even though I used my sneaky strategy: start from the back of the pack, hanging back for half the pace lap, and then make a full speed run that will often put me at the front by the green flag. Dirty, yes, and the program shouldn't really allow this sort of thing, yet I'll take any break I can.

I found myself suddenly stuck behind slow traffic. Fearful of pulling the deft maneuvering I do in a 10-lapper, I would remain in this traffic over the first five circuits. But a driver by the name of Lyn St. James was about to discover two things: 1) A man can drive as well as a woman, and 2) drafting *really* works! I got a good run at her down the front straight and set myself up directly on her rear. Just past Start/Finish I pulled into open air and hurtled past, safely ahead into Turn 1.

With a little new-found confidence in my passing ability, I worked my way smoothly through traffic and eventually passed fellow Canadian Scott Goodyear for third by Lap 10.

Dealing with backmarkers was next on the agenda, and geez!, some of these guys are painfully slow. Yet the good artificial intelligence of *IndyCar* drivers showed in a hurry as car after car, realizing what a hot shoe I was, moved aside to accommodate me. Staying low in the corners, I began lapping traffic. If this had been a shorter race I would've been taking even more chances, but I'd now moved within six seconds of a front-running Fittipaldi, and I wasn't about to crash out.

Continuing to pause the race after key developments allowed me to feverishly scratch down some notes without losing much in the way of driving rhythm, and we'll go to my grammatically-wanting unedited diary for the remainder of this event.

- Lap 24: Decided to hit F1 Key and have current standings constantly displayed in the top left corner of screen.

- Lap 30: Clear track for the first time today. Just put together three consecutive 170.5 mph laps, and Emmo's in my line of fire. Get Emmo!

- Lap 31: And he assumes the lead! Tires really biting now with dropping fuel load. Lap time: 171.4. I'm in front!

- Lap 53: First pit stop. Been running at full turbo boost, and while my half-lap lead is a definite plus, stopping now isn't. Pits are empty, and everyone else looks to be going a little further on down the road til stopping. Will turn boost down. Too nervous. Hit a couple of wrong keys in pits and took ten seconds longer than I should have!

- Lap 57: I've never, ever run this many laps in one go. I am one with the computer.

- Lap 60: Everyone's pitted now and I'm running second behind Goodyear who must have had a hell of a stop since Fittipaldi is now behind me as well. Maybe he didn't change tires. Maybe I shouldn't have. Maybe I'm losing my mind.

- Lap 78: Up nearly a lap. Mario, you idiot! Should have steered clear of erratic Andretti. We touched, he crashed, I popped a front tire. Luckily, it happened in Turn 4, close to pits. Up against outer wall, I somehow got turned around and hobbled through a line of traffic into the pit

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Circle Reader Service #134

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area. Losing much time! Program told me to "Press Esc" and start again! Stupid program! Crew knew better and fixed my car. Got fuel too.

- Lap 80: Back on track, still under Mario's yellow flag. Be careful running under the yellow—ground effects don't work at slow speeds. It's real easy to lose control.

- Lap 97: Still in second behind Goodyear. Other cars very light - Scott pulling away no matter what I do - 16.2 second lead. But he will have to pit soon. I know he will.

- Lap 99: Halfway through. Saw and heard cars in pits. Checked standings from top to bottom while running. Raoul Boesel out with handling problems, Danny Sullivan with electrical.

- Lap 130: Everyone but me in and out of pits now. Goodyear took his time—tire change? And little ol' me, with turbo at 7, has a 10.3 second lead on Emmo. I'm running a lot lighter and quicker than anyone with my last unscheduled stop.

- Lap 138: Into pits with 62 to go. Went in with one-lap lead, out five seconds behind. Can I go all the way without pitting?

- Lap 152: Rahal suddenly caught behind Jones. Road hog! Unexpectedly came down on me in Turn 2, or was that 4? I don't know anymore... Fittipaldi took the inside. I burst through the middle, inches to spare! Tight, very tight.

- Lap 164: I see Goodyear caught behind two of the slowest cars ever made. I'm now on his tail and I think we both have one more quick stop for fuel. This far into it, I don't know if I have the guts to try the moves I must make to win this thing.

- Lap 174: Went too wide in traffic, brushed wall, popped tire. Turn 4, next to pits. Good thing! Out again in third, two laps down to Goodyear and Emmo.

- Lap 180: Two cars out with engine failures. Unfortunately, not Goodyear or Fittipaldi, but lots of clear track for the hero. They're duking it out just one lap up and with boost back on 9, it's sprint time!

- Lap 186: Fourteen left and Goodyear and Fittipaldi are going at it just 100 feet in front of me. If only I was on their lap. If I get around them, I can always hope for yellow.

- Lap 190: Fittipaldi into pits! Comes out just four seconds ahead of me. When's Goodyear going to do that?

- Lap 191: I pass Goodyear and am on his lap. He's not moving fast. Low fuel, Scott? No fuel, Scott?

- Lap 198: See you later Emerson. I'm now in second, but Goodyear lives! If I crash out now, I won't give any interviews.

- Lap 200: I did not win. In most cases, second doesn't rate, but I feel fortunate to have made it this far. 13.6 behind the blue and silver machine of Goodyear (average speed of 156.7 mph), and two seconds ahead of Fittipaldi, who was at least two laps up on everyone else. Not bad for a rookie. Five cars did not finish. There was one caution period. Glancing at the clock in the bottom right corner, this race was one hour twenty-nine minutes in length.

- Post Race: Where can I find my fastest lap? Who can find my fastest lap? I know I set the fastest lap in the darn thing, so why can't I find out what it is? And while I'm at it, where is the printer support? Why can't I print this thing out! And why am I not standing on a podium somewhere? I finished second, didn't I? Is that it? Is that all there is? I've got questions! Delirious? Who, me?

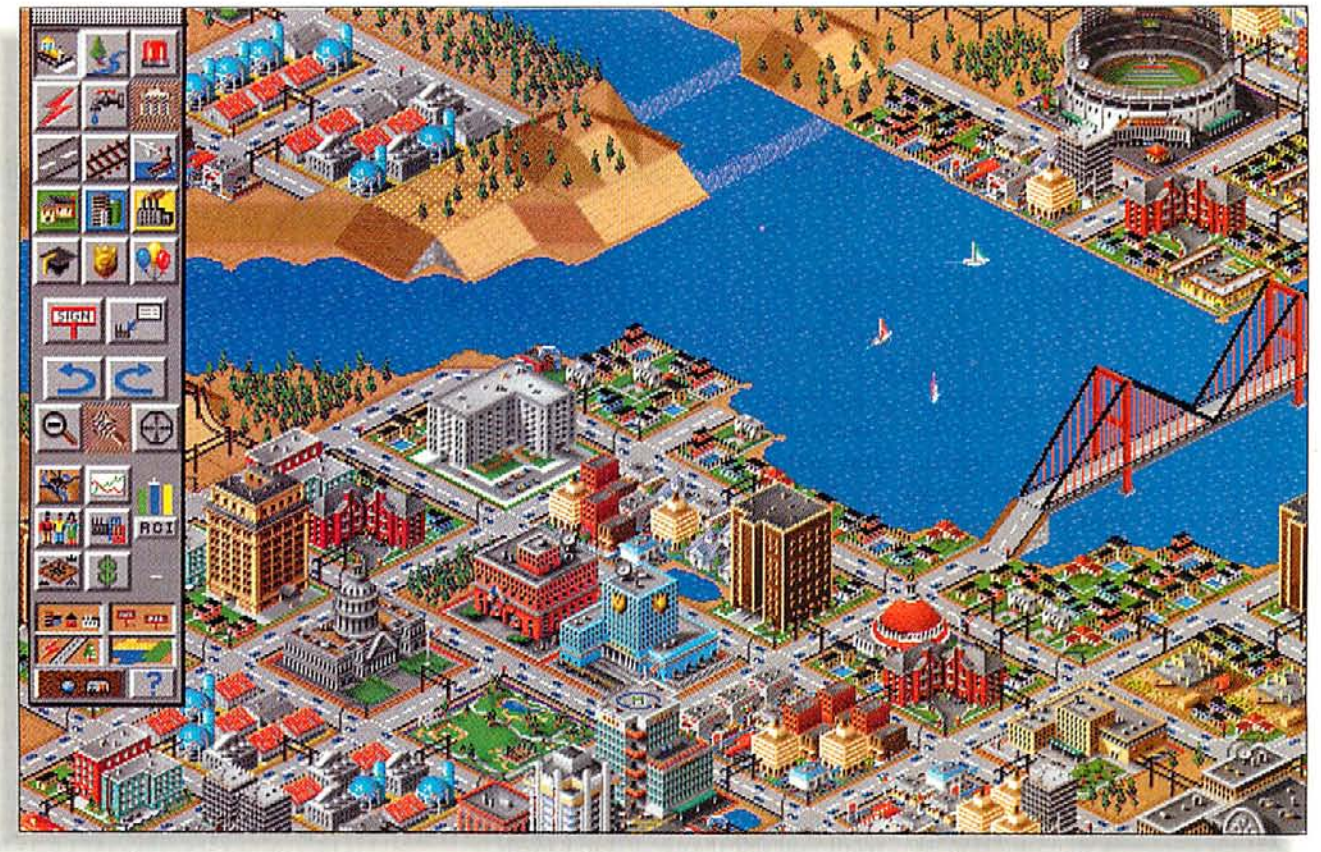
After a cool Molson and some breathing exercizes, I regained composure and finally relaxed after this grueling ordeal. Though still a bit purturbed that my 200 commitment wasn't given due treatment by the program (I would have been happy with just the fastest lap stat!), I have to admit that *IndyCar Racing* delivers the best racing experience this side of the crash wall. **CGW**

10 Steps To A Smoking-Fast IndyCar

The following suggestions are not intended for use by amateurs. We will not be responsible for the consequences. The vehicle created as a result of these suggestions will not win any races, and is almost undriveable. Yet, if handled correctly, this machine (*designed for oval tracks*) will respond with one *really* ripping fast lap, and one only. If you think you've got what it takes to handle this monster, here's the scoop:

1) Start with the program's default Ace car set-up and reduce the fuel level to 3 gallons, then lower the wing settings until the car becomes "nervous" yet driveable in the turns (reduce front and rear proportionally). Front wings should be one-half to one full degree more than the rear.
2) Configure the shocks and sway bars into the upper ranges of stiffness settings (keep the fronts 30 to 50% stiffer than the rears).
3) Install a taller top gear until the over-rev light on the dash just blinks lightly at the end of straights.
4) Put soft compound tires on all four corners.
5) Adjust camber angles and tire pressures until even temperatures across each tire are seen at the halfway point of your first flying lap.
6) Double or triple the factory stagger settings. Keep an eye on the tire temps and repeat Step 5 if they change.
7) Reduce wings further until you reach the "trade-off point" where lap times become slow despite tremendous straightaway speeds. Alter top gear proportionally.
8) Fine tune the sway bars to assist "point-in." Stiff front and soft rear will make the car loose or oversteer—the opposite will induce push or understeer.
9) This car is now extremely fast—save it to disk. If you do want to perform any additional customized tweaks, do so *one at a time* or you'll never know which change actually worked.
10) Practice. Impress friends. Be a star.

Thanks to professional crew chief, Rick Weaver, and driver, Andy Mahood, for their help in devising this set-up.



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Mac Gamers Are Abuzz Over F/A-18 Hornet

by Christopher Breen

The number of flight sims currently available for the Macintosh can be counted on one hand and a couple of fingers. Unlike the minions of Big Blue who could easily build a two-story home out of their software boxes, Apple aficionados have had to make do with a few scant offerings—mostly ports of DOS products—that barely cover the major war machines. So, an amount of excitement is understandable when a company like **Graphic Simulations**, makers of the outstanding World War II era *Hellcats Over The Pacific*, trots out a fast and fluid simulation of the McDonnell Douglas F/A-18 Hornet that is designed, expressly, for the Mac.

The F/A-18 is a modern, multi-mission jet fighter and, as such, carries all the goodies that one would expect from a pricey bit of military hardware. We're talking two General Electric F404 engines, fly-by-wire, Head-Up-Display (HUD), AN/APG-65 radar system that employs four air-to-air and two air-to-ground modes, air-to-air weapons that include the M61A Vulcan cannon and the AIM-9 Sidewinder and AIM-120 AMRAAM missiles, a variety of free-fall bombs and electro-optical missiles for air-to-ground attacks, defense mechanisms like chaff, flares, and ECM (Electronic Counter Measures), TACAN (TACtical Air Navigation), ILS (Instrument Landing System), FLIR (Forward Looking InfraRed) pod, RBGM (Real Beam Ground Mapping), other assorted acronyms that probably stand for something useful, and more lights and gauges than you could shake a Gravis MouseStick at.

Whew! Surely you can imagine an aircraft lugging about this kind of technology would require a healthy amount of training by perspective pilots. Just so. Fortunately, that training is a simple "Command-T" away.

The pilot in training is whisked off to the balmy environs of Hawaii, where he practices such skills as airbase and carrier take-offs and landings, navigation, and air-to-air and air-to-ground combat. During this period, although the young ensign is advised to follow a predetermined course of exercises to hone his abilities, there is nothing that keeps our green warrior from, say, lobbing a BLU-107B "Durandal" anti-runway bomb at Honolulu International or strafing the tourists on Waikiki. Naturally, if this sort of mischief took place during an actual mission, these untoward actions would result in a court-martial and, in addition to blemishing our recruit's permanent record, would remove him from the active-duty roster. But for now, anything goes. Once the pilot is comfortable with flying, shooting, navigating, and dodging, he can elect to move from the tropical to the topical by choosing to fly the only currently available theater of war: Kuwait.

In order to earn a ticket home from this sandy conflict, the pilot must successfully complete a tour of duty made up of seven missions, spanning four levels of difficulty, that are selected by the program from a pool of 28. Successful completion of a mission is defined as meeting the mission goals, returning to friendly territory alive (this doesn't mean that the plane needs to be in pristine condition or even recoverable), and not having destroyed any friendly property along the way. The missions cover everything from offensive and defensive strikes to escort duties to escapes from enemy bases. In each mission, enemy resistance comes in the form of surface-to-air missiles, anti-aircraft fire, and skillfully piloted MiGs.

To begin the tour of duty, you select New Pilot from the File menu. After a brief pause, up pops the Pilot window which contains three folders marked Dossier, Briefing, and Map. Dossier, the default folder, details the pertinent facts of our eager ensign: rank, call sign, number and type of enemy kills, status (active, MIA, court-martialed, dead), number of sorties and aircraft lost, score, awards, and a blank line for a user-assigned name. Clicking on the Briefing folder reveals the objectives of that particular mission as well as a hint or two regarding the kind of resistance the pilot is likely to encounter. True to its name, the Map folder provides a low-detail map of the mission area and waypoint locations. These navigation waypoints indicate the approximate position of primary and secondary targets as well as friendly bases and carriers.

Prior to flying a mission, our pilot must outfit his fighter with a range of weaponry. Although each mission carries a program-recommended load of weapons, the pilot is allowed to overrule these recommendations and select the kind of firepower that he deems necessary for success. Naturally, the pilot is limited to armaments that are intended to fit on a particular weapons station. The only other limitation regards weapons that are not approved for use in a particular mission—no fair dropping a B-57 tactical thermonuclear bomb on that pesky SAM site. In addition to weapons,

F/A-18 Hornet

TITLE:	F/A-18 Hornet
PRICE:	$79.95
SYSTEM:	Macintosh
REQUIREMENTS:	68020 or better, 4MB RAM, System 6 or higher
PROTECTION:	Manual look-up. Access code is provided with return of registration card.
DESIGNER:	Trey Smith
Publisher:	Graphic Simulations P.O. Box 797306 Dallas, TX 75379 (214) 699-7400

one has the option to load an extra fuel tank and an FLIR pod.

Once the aircraft is fueled, it's off into the wild blue—or should I say the angular, brown and blue—yonder.

From The Left Side of the Aircraft You'll See...

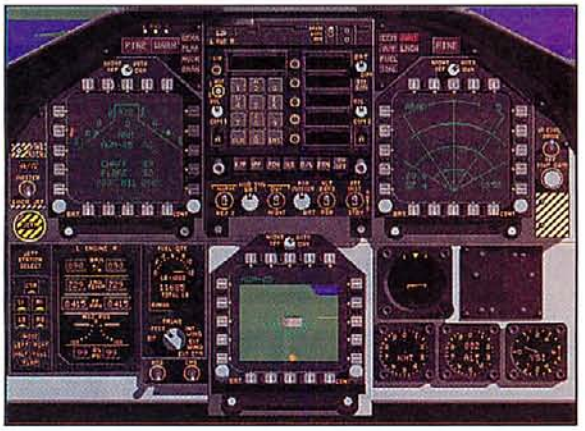
As with most flight simulators, the outside world is represented as trapezoidal mountains, rhomboid seas, and quadrilateral deserts. Graphic Simulations has attempted to add a bit of spice to the scenery by including the occasional oil field, jeep, and collection of palm trees and sand dunes. These graphic elements are present strictly as window-dressing and are not representations of "real" objects that can have an effect on your well being. To put it plainly, a willing pilot could blast through a grove of date palms at an altitude of eight feet and emerge with no damage to fighter or flora.

Although the surroundings are less than captivating, there are plenty of ways to view them. From inside the cockpit, the pilot has eight 45-degree lateral views around the aircraft as well as one above. A number of external views are also available. These include perspectives from the enemy, nearest ground viewpoint, wingman, and a four-position rotatable camera. For those CNN highlight films, Chase Weapon and Weapon-Eye views can also be selected. These views are important for more than gawking at the scenery; in some cases, there is no radar tracking of incoming missiles, and it's up to the pilot to spot telltale vapor trails.

The Buzz on Hornet

Hornet sports the features found in the best of today's flight sims: Network Play (AppleTalk and Apple Remote Access support), filmed replay of last mission complete with multiple views, determination of the competence of your enemy and the lethalness of ground weapons, support for external controllers such as the Gravis MouseStick and Thrustmaster system, multiple monitors, and the ability to make your aircraft more or less susceptible to enemy attack. Admittedly, this is a pretty powerful feature set, but all the features in the world don't mean diddley if the plane flies like a brick or the scenery strobes by. No worries here—*Hornet* feels great. There is absolutely no problem with frame rate, the action is very fluid, and switching from one view to another is seamless. In addition to making the action smooth, *Hornet*'s designers have taken pains to get the little things right. Everything from the interior of the cockpit to the inclusion of McDonnell Douglass' Hornet owners manual speaks to their attention to detail. In most cases, this detail pays off in a great gaming environment, but at other times, one wishes that things had been fudged a bit.

Take the cockpit, for instance. Rather than cram the necessary monitors, gauges, and indicators into an unrealistic single-screen view, the designers elected to provide two views: The Cockpit View that incorporates the canopy, HUD, and weapons and navigation screens; and the Look Down View that contains the MultiPurpose Color Display (MPCD), engine and fuel displays, and analog gauges. The trade off of this split view is that although the integrity of the Hornet's design is maintained, there are times when it's extremely inconvenient to take your eyes off the road. This difficulty is compounded when you consider the kind of simulation we're dealing with.



Modern Warfare

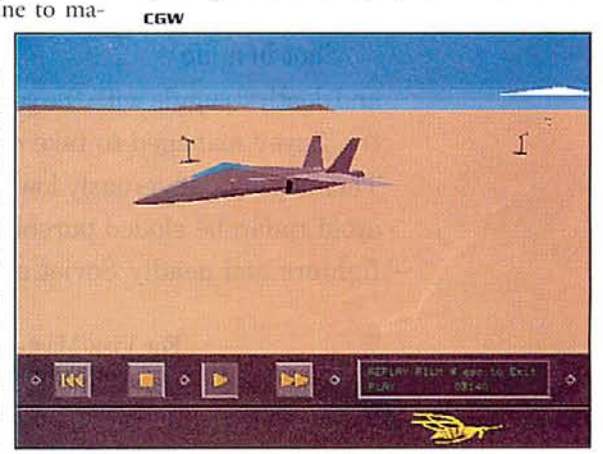
The F/A-18 Hornet is a modern jet fighter that operates under modern wartime conditions. Graphic Simulations has incorporated these conditions into its model and has produced a simulation that is very different from the dog-fighting sims to which we've grown accustomed. In the good old analog days of flying by stick, we were allowed the luxury of engaging our enemies at a reasonable altitude, within sight of each other, machine to machine. No longer.

Today, most air fighters might as well carry bumper stickers on their tailpipes that state, "If you can read this, I'm dead." A modern mission is comprised of listening for the tell-tale radar targeting beep that indicates your enemy is as good as gone, unleashing your missiles, and heading home for a warm supper. As was revealed in the U.N.'s latest conflict, the only way to get a decent look at your adversary is to check his horrified, missile-mounted video image the second or two prior to immolation. Such is the world of *F/A-18 Hornet*.

The key to survival in an unprotected Hornet (meaning you haven't invoked any of the included cheats that make your fighter invulnerable to attack) is flying low and keeping an eye on the radar screen. Here's where the inconvenience of the Look Down View becomes readily apparent. Because the current version of *F/A-18 Hornet*, in a tribute to accuracy, offers no way to automatically maintain an altitude below 100 feet—Auto Pilot, once engaged, thrusts the aircraft to 1,000 feet, where the pilot becomes so much flying meat—the pilot must hold the stick with a grip of iron. In a low-altitude run when an electro-optical missile is required, the pilot has to switch views, home in on the target using the missile's camera view in the MPCD, and hope that his hand has not strayed on the stick. At this point, one wonders if the real thing wouldn't be easier to fly.

A pilot's first forays into Kuwait may reinforce this notion. Because the simulation is so complex and detailed, the initial learning curve can be a bit steep. The player who chooses to fly without the benefit of cheating can reasonably expect to lose dozens of pilots before making the big breakthrough. Once that breakthrough comes, though, everything changes. It suddenly becomes clear that this is a simulation of strategy as much as of flight. What previously seemed impossible is now only challenging. It's true that dog-fight enthusiasts accustomed to drawing a visual bead on their enemies may be disappointed by this impersonal approach to warfare, but for those pilots willing to move into the modern age of air combat, *F/A-18 Hornet* provides an eye-opening and eminently flyable simulation.

CGW



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computer never limits your control inputs, whether inspired or foolish. Its twin Isotov RD-33 engines produce 36,600 lbs. of thrust, to the F-16's 25,000. And superb aerodynamics make it controllable at low speeds and high angles of attack that would have enemy pilots fighting to avoid a spin.

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SPECTRUM HEAD 2 HEAD

HOLOBYTE

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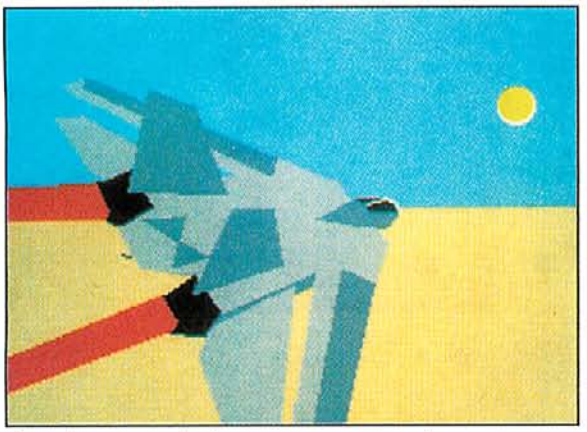
30 SECONDS OVER BAGHDAD

Psygnosis' *Combat Air Patrol* Locks Onto The Amiga

by David Moore and Paul Rigby

Amiga flight simulation enthusiasts have always suffered from a lack of quality flight simulations. The PC has basked in the glory of *Falcon 3.0* and *Aces of the Pacific* while the Amiga has had to endure a serious "sim-deprivation." Ever the champion of Amiga gamers in the U.S. and abroad, **Psygnosis** has attempted to ride to the rescue with the release of *Combat Air Patrol.* Although **Psygnosis**'s first attempt at a complex air combat simulator, they have nevertheless managed to come up with a few new twists that should interest Amiga flight sim enthusiasts.



Combat Air Patrol (CAP) is set within the Desert Storm air campaign of 17 Jan to 28 Feb 1991. More specifically, it simulates F-18 and F-14 missions from the USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN-71) during this period. You have the choice of flying either attack missions in the F-18 Hornet or air defense and reconnaissance missions in the F-14 Tomcat. Both aircraft will be in demand throughout the course of the game, so it is best to log into the game as two separate pilots.

The game plays very smoothly on a standard A500/600, but players with accelerated machines (such as 68030-based computers) will encounter a rare problem in the flight sim world—the game is unplayably fast! To remedy this, Psygnosis has thoughtfully put a constant speed option on the configuration menu that limits the speed of the game while retaining frame rate.

The game is divided into three sections; Training, Single Missions, and the Campaign. The Training option allows you to try out very tricky carrier landings (both day and night), air to air refuelings (equally tricky), and basic air-to-air and air-to-ground techniques.

The Single Missions option allows such missions as attacking a train, bridge-busting, airfield attack, SAM suppression and the like. The final option, the Campaign, challenges you with the job of removing the Iraqis from Kuwait and is the real meat of the package. Here, a strategy can be devised, air attacks planned, and orders given to coalition ground units. It is easy to see that *CAP* is more than just a basic flight simulation.

Before each mission, you receive information on friendly aircraft flying with you, as well as a reconnaissance film of the target. It's always nice to have a few Tomcats in tow when flying an attack mission in an F-18, or to have a few mental snapshots of your target when going in for a bombing run.

The weapons selection interface uses the time honored convention of dragging weapons onto the pylons of an aircraft seen from the head-on view. The weapons variety is quite impressive, particularly on the Hornet, which may choose from 15 different types of hardware.

One major fault in the manual is that it does not offer enough information on the many weapon types. One can't tell why one weapon should be used over another. (See Raiding the Larder for more information on weapons.) This is a general reflection on the manual as a whole. While not bad, it is at best patchy and does not compare with a standard **Dynamix** or **Microprose** flight simulation manual.

The two jet cockpits are very nicely rendered, with the F-18 looking the more modern of the two. There is an impressive range of views, from full 360 internal view to a range of dramatic external views including one that enables you to follow a bomb or missile to its target.

During flight, the aircraft handle well, with an appreciable amount of inertia when maneuvering. Also, speed is quickly lost when

Combat Air Patrol

TITLE:	Combat Air Patrol
PRICE:	$49.95
SYSTEM:	Amiga
REQUIREMENTS:	1MB RAM
PROTECTION:	Documentation look up
DESIGNER:	Ed Scio
PUBLISHER:	Psygnosis Cambridge, MA (617) 497-5457

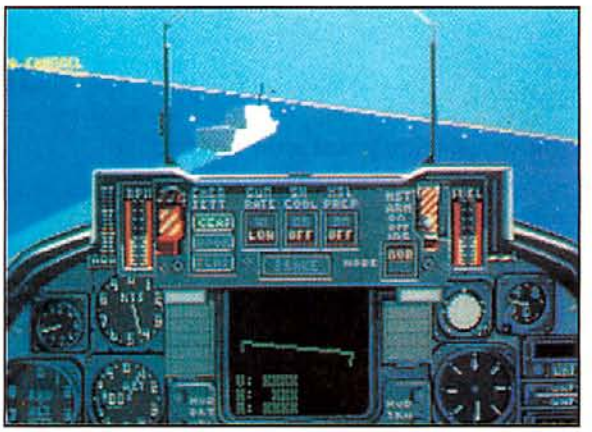
climbing or in tight turns. The sound effects are good, especially the digitized voices advising the pilot of the next waypoint heading, and there are some great visual effects. The night flying is particularly atmospheric, with tracers arcing up from the target and lights twinkling in the distance.

When a target has been hit, the mission can either be ended, or you can fly back to the carrier, which is, of course, what all "real" pilots will do. The carrier landing is, in my view, the best rendition yet seen on the Amiga, and the night landing is a real test of coordination and nerve. Once back aboard the carrier, the TARPS film of your target will be shown and damage will be assessed—a very nice touch.

The ultimate challenge of the game is the Campaign. In this mode you act as both combat pilot and coalition ground force commander—a tall order in real life. When the Campaign is begun, the briefing room provides details of the first target of the war. The first missions are identical to those in the Single Mission flights, but there are one or two extras that will not have been seen before.

There is a printer in the crew room that will provide weather information for the target area, and a computer terminal that offers access to the TAMPS—Tactical Aircraft Mission Planning System. This gadget supplies a 3-D representation of the mission route together with any threats. It allows the movement of waypoints, the possibility to add or remove waypoints, the repositioning of the KC-10 refueling tanker to a preferable location and so on. Although not a detailed mission planner, TAMPS does add an extra dimension to the game.

Before the mission is flown, the War Room can be visited where the ground phase of the war is planned. A map of Kuwait can be seen together with the surrounding areas of northern Saudi Arabia and Southern Iraq. Occupying Kuwait are the Iraqi forces shown as blue, and opposing them are the Coalition forces dressed in brown. Both sides are composed of five different types of units: Infantry, Mechanized Infantry, Tank, Mobile Artillery and Supply. By clicking on an information icon, the status of all units can be seen. Each one has a rating in five categories: Strength, Morale, Supply, Arms and Fuel. Of course, a unit's fuel decreases the further it travels, its strength is depleted by battle, and its morale will be affected by how successful the unit is in battle. For the Coalition forces, each of the categories is measured as a percentage, whereas the Iraqi forces just have High, Medium or Low as a guide to an assessment of their strength.



To move friendly units around the map you simply click on the compass face to select a direction and then click on the unit to move. When a friendly unit moves into an area occupied by an Iraqi unit, battle commences. What you actually see is the final combat resolution, as one of the symbols disappears and the victor remains—with suitably depleted attributes. Common sense needs to be applied in this strategic area in that an infantry unit is unlikely to fare well against a tank unit. When a unit's stock of fuel and weapons is low, supply units (especially captured enemy supply units), can help keep the war machine rolling.

You can order artillery and tank units to barrage enemy units up to three cells away (a cell being the distance a unit can move in one turn). As for the real life Coalition, your initial objective is the ejection of Iraqi forces from Kuwait. Afterwards, you can call a cease fire, as happened historically, or go on into Iraq to defeat Saddam Hussein completely, as some people wanted to happen.

The interface between the flight simulator and the strategy game is provided in the "War Room." Here, you can order air strikes against enemy ground forces—up to three targets per day—and you can select certain tactical strikes against Infantry, Mech Infantry, Tanks, Supply and Artillery. Other tactical missions, such as strikes against SAM sites, AAA sites, road and rail convoys, and all strategic strikes against airfields, bridges and factories are outside of your planning control.

The resultant mission make-up means that the missions that you have personally targeted will be mixed in with missions that you have no control over. When a successful mission has been flown against a target, you can see the effects of your strike on the War Room map. If it was a successful mission, the target's attributes will have been reduced, giving friendly ground forces an easier task, or the enemy will have disappeared off the map altogether allowing the Coalition forces to proceed unhindered. This method does give an impression of supporting friendly ground forces, but is not as successful as the troop support implementation in **Domark**'s *AV-8B Harrier* engine.

Combat Air Patrol is a reasonable flight simulator with a few new twists, a sort of souped-up *Interceptor* tied to a rather basic wargame. It would have been vastly improved had all targets appeared on the map, allowing you to schedule all of the missions, possibly assigning targets for other aircraft. A much better manual is also needed. For instance, a lot of the points covered in this review regarding the Campaign and Weapons Delivery were not explained adequately in the manual.

Overall, the game has much to like despite its flaws. What is disappointing is that *CAP* could have been greatly improved quite easily. Having said that, *Combat Air Patrol* is a good first effort from a company with no background in flight simulations. I only hope they keep plugging away at the genre.

Problems With Protection

The answers to the copy protection questions asked on boot-up can be found on the first page of every chapter. The manual does not tell you this, and the necessary data is very easy to miss. More than one reviewer has been fooled by this. None of the UK magazines managed to convey the solution to this problem, and Psygnosis released 5,000 games before the problem was brought to their attention. Inquiries to Psygnosis resulted in an assurance that an addendum sheet is now enclosed with the game to eliminate any possible problems.

Raiding The Larder

The weapons available for the F-18 include:

Vulcan M61 Cannon—used for close dogfighting and useful against soft targets such as infantry, trucks, trains

AIM9M Sidewinder—close range air to air heat seeking missile

AIM7 Sparrow—medium to long range air to air missile

AGM 62 Walleye—TV guided glide bomb

AGM 88 HARM—high speed anti-radiation missile

AGM 65—infra red imaging air to ground missile

AGM 84A Harpoon—anti shipping missile

AGM 84E SLAM—Stand off Land Attack Missile

Mk 82—500lb freefall bomb

Mk 82—Snakeye high drag freefall bomb

Mk 83—1000lb freefall bomb

Mk 84—2000lb freefall bomb

Paveway Laser guided bombs—based on Mk 83 or 84

Zuni Rockets—unguided rockets

Laser Designator Pod—must be carried to use Paveway bombs

The F-14 can carry the following:

AIM9M Sidewinder

AIM7 Sparrow

AIM54 Phoenix—ultra long range air to air missile

TARPS reconnaissance pod

Use of the fire-and-forget weapons, during a mission is very simple, whereas Paveway and TV-guided weapons such as SLAMs and Walleyes require more operator intervention. When using Paveways (ideal for hardened aircraft shelters and bridges) you must fly towards the target at medium to high altitude. With Paveway as the selected weapon, select the Laser Designator Pod, first making sure that a straight and level attitude is adopted. Notice that the joystick now controls the movement of the Pod itself, not the aircraft. From here you can zoom in on a target and lock onto it. The Laser Pod automatically follows the selected target. When near the target, release the weapons (one Mk 84 will destroy a hardened aircraft shelter, but several may be needed to drop a bridge) and watch them sail down to the target, eerily like the FLIR/DLIR footage that became famous on the Gulf War news coverage.

To use the TV-guided weapons, fly towards the target and select the weapon (SLAM or Walleye), go to the seeker head view and the viewpoint will change to that of the weapon. Once launched, the joystick movements actually affect the flight of the weapon, so the weapon can be flown right onto the target. **CGW**

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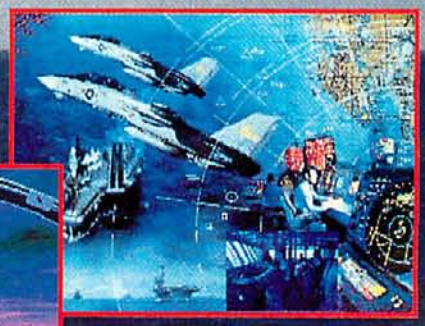

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AAX

More Than Apache

New Scenarios And New Features For NovaLogic's *Comanche*

by Bryan Walker

Released over a year ago, NovaLogic's *Comanche Maximum Overkill (CMO)* still remains the undisputed champion of helicopter flight sims. The legions of *CMO* fans, as well as gamers who haven't yet had the pleasure of dashing through gorgeous Voxel Space graphics, will definitely be interested in two new products that expand on the original classic: the *Over the Edge* mission disk and *Comanche CD*.

Sharpening The Edge

The *Edge* expansion disk serves up 40 tough new missions and a rich variety of worthy features. Unlike *Mission Disk 1 (MD1)*, *Edge* doesn't pamper you with occasional milk runs. Taking place in four new terrain models, the Silver Dove, Whirlwind, Over the Edge, and Terminal Velocity operations are flat-out tough from the word "go." In fact, many players are going to be banging their heads against the wall trying to get through some scenarios. Where all of the missions of *CMO* and *MD1* could be finished in a few days, completing all 40 of *Edge*'s adventures will be a much lengthier affair.

Edge gives the bad guys better odds with new vehicles, including the Soviet Osa and Lebed watercraft, as well as the OH-6 Cayue light helicopter. The enemy has also been gulping down smart pills and is now capable of better tracking, more accurate fire, and the ability to actually lob rounds *over* obstacles onto unsuspecting Comanches. The age-old tactic of patiently "Shooting and Scooting" is the order of the day in the *Edge*. Fortunately, you now have improved cannon and rocket effectiveness, making it easier to reach out and torch someone. *Edge* also introduces new friendlies to support and protect, including M-1 Abrams main battle tanks and Red Cross tents.

Wide-eyed gamers now faced with new terrain and deadlier enemies might overlook some of the more subtle refinements *Edge* offers. NovaLogic's attention to detail has provided graphic refinements like beautiful reflections over water and an atmospheric haze, better response to the Thrustmaster Weapon Control System, and wind effects. Arctic regions now have occasional snowstorms, and the volcanic Hawaiian scenarios feature sparks spewing from hilltops. Players with rudder-pedal accessories such as the Thrustmaster RCS will be delighted with the new ability to disengage the main rotor/tail rotor control mixing, making precise yaw maneuvers in tight "hover holes" *much* easier. The Altitude Hold feature can now be toggled off, giving the more experienced player manual altitude control. Gluttons for punishment can also turn the Comanche's stealth mode off, giving the enemy even better detection and engagement abilities...as if they needed it! Though these improvements may not seem significant at first glance, their effects add up quickly. Comparing the original *CMO* to *CMO* with the *Edge* expansion clearly shows the superiority of the new features and makes for a far more enjoyable game.

Silver Worth Gold?

Comanche CD (CCD) combines every feature, mission, and improvement included in *CMO*, *MD1*, and *Edge*, along with 10 new missions and impressive splash animations. With a total of 100 scenarios, *CCD* will take even the hottest joystick jocks quite a while to finish. The new demo and overview animations are simply stunning, and are a remarkable demonstration of the capabilities of CD-ROM. Frankly, the 10 Operation Zephyr missions available only in *CCD* aren't worth the added cost of the CD-ROM version, but when the combined cost of the mission disks are added in to the original *CMO*, *CCD* is a very good value for gamers with only the original game, or CD-ROM owners now thinking of purchasing *CMO*. Players who already own *CMO* in addition to either *MD1* or *Edge* will not get the most bang for their buck with *CCD*.

Dereliction Of Duty

While both *Edge* and *CCD* provide a great deal of challenge, many of the limitations I noted in my review of the original *CMO* are still present. These include very limited flight characteristics, small terrain models, wingmen reluctant to protect you from enemy helicopters, and the lack of a legitimate campaign game. Though the state-of-the-art Voxel Space graphics and hair-raising action make *CMO* the best helicopter simulator for the PC, it would be nice to see NovaLogic produce a chopper title on par with *Falcon 3.0* in the technical realism arena. And that's certainly within their capability.

Edge and *CCD* are the most well-rounded *CMO*-based products to date. These commendable efforts may also be NovaLogic's last *Comanche Maximum Overkill* releases. While neither title provides a complete gameplay overhaul, few fans of the original *CMO* will be able to resist the extra action these products offer. A few of the new missions might be too much for some gamers, but most sim fans are going to find that *Over the Edge* and *Comanche CD* will definitely be turning up the heat during the long, cold winter! CGW

Comanche Maximum Overkill: Over the Edge; Comanche CD

TITLE:	Comanche Maximum Overkill: Over the Edge; Comanche CD
PRICE:	Over the Edge: $49.95; Comanche CD: $74.95
SYSTEM:	IBM
REQUIREMENTS:	Over the Edge: 386SX or greater, 4 MB RAM, VGA adapter, 8 MB of HD space, and original Comanche Maximum Overkill. Comanche CD: 1 MB HD space, CD-ROM drive
PROTECTION:	None
DESIGNERS:	Kyle Freeman, John Garcia
PUBLISHER:	NovaLogic, Inc. Tarzana, CA (818) 774-0600

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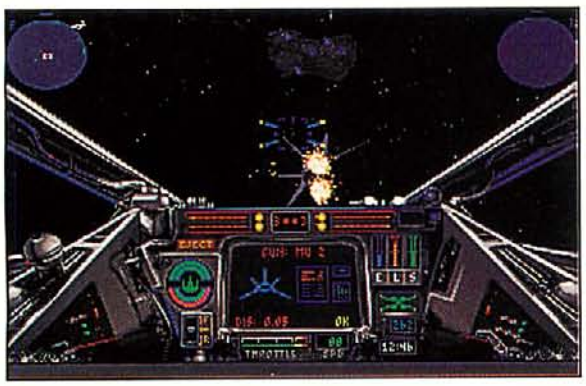
Circle Reader Service #68

The Expanding Universe Of X-Wing

The Saga Continues With *Imperial Pursuit* And *B-wing* Add-ons

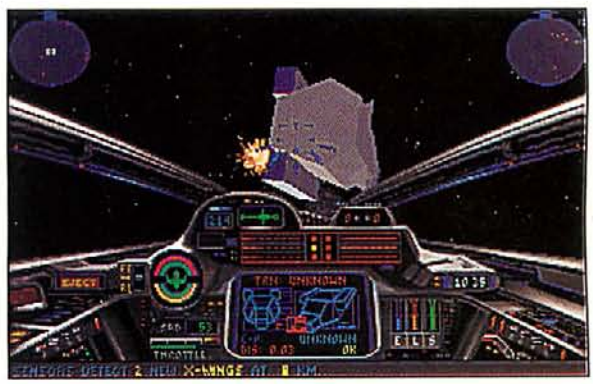
by Jeff James

After destroying the Death Star and beating the pixelated stuffing out of the Empire in *X-Wing*, what does a self-respecting rebel fighter jock do next? Retire to a lush planet with his metals and android servants? Not while there's Ultimate Badness about, he won't! And more battles with Ultimate Badness is what we have in LucasArts' two new expansion diskettes *Imperial Pursuit* and *B-wing*. Together they provide a collection of new missions and animated cut scenes continuing the *X-Wing* saga. Both expansion disks require *X-Wing* to operate, although they do not require each other to function (i.e., playing *B-Wing* does not require that you already have *Imperial Pursuit* installed).



In addition to new missions and animated sequences, both expansion disks include an on-line hint system to help you through the more difficult missions and a Top Ace pilot that can be used to play any mission in the original game, or as an experienced wingman in the add-ons.

The first of the *X-Wing* expansion disks, *Imperial Pursuit*, picks up the story after the destruction of the Death Star. Fifteen additional missions are included, beginning with the player flying escort duty for rebel transports fleeing an Imperial armada heading towards the rebel base on the Yavin. In terms of mission difficulty, *Imperial Pursuit* appears to share the same inconsistency of mission difficulty found in X-Wing, with some missions being exceedingly easy and others virtually impossible. The mission hints seems to help somewhat, but the utmost of skill and lots of luck are the only things that will get you through the tougher missions.



B-Wing picks up where *Imperial Pursuit* leaves off, with the rebels still looking for a new rebel base. *B-Wing* also introduces yet another alphabetic rebel starfighter: the B-Wing. In addition to a new, 20-mission Tour of Duty, *B-Wing* gives players the opportunity to put this new heavy assault fighter through its paces on the training grounds and to fly the B-Wing in six historical missions. The historical missions are a trifle disappointing; roughly half of them simply insert the B-Wing into older Y-Wing or X-Wing missions.

In flight, the B-Wing is a bizarre looking beast. Beneath its eccentric exterior, the B-Wing proves to be a potent vessel with impressive offensive capabilities. In addition to three laser cannons and three ion cannons, the B-Wing can carry up to 12 proton torpedoes, making it the ideal craft to take out Imperial capital ships. When in flight, the B-Wing handles much like a quicker, more nimble Y-Wing, even though the B-Wing has heavier weaponry, shields and armor. I found the third ion cannon on the B-Wing (located at the end of the S-foil under the cockpit) extremely difficult to target accurately, making it nearly impossible to hit small, fast-moving craft with any consistency. Dog fighting daredevils will prefer the A-Wing or X-Wing; the B-Wing performs best when allowed to fire linked weapons at the broadside of an Imperial capital ship.

To the avid *X-Wing* disciple, both expansion disks should be considered must-buy products. If you can only afford one expansion disk, *B-Wing* is the better value. It offers more Tour of Duty missions (20 as opposed to *Imperial Pursuit*'s 15), includes a new starfighter, and offers additional historical and training missions. *Star Wars* mavens hoping for the chance to pilot the Millennium Falcon through an asteroid field or to blast Imperial AT-AT Walkers on the icy tundra of Hoth in a rebel snowspeeder will have to wait and hope—neither craft is available for use in either expansion disk, and *B-wing* is the last of the planned *X-wing* add-ons. It seems that the *Star Wars* baton will be passed to LucasArt's next project, the forthcoming *Tie Fighter*. So, the next time we meet, we'll have ducked under the curtain and emerged on the Dark Side. And I'm sure the Emperor has some expansion plans of his own...

CGW

Imperial Pursuit and B-Wing

TITLE:	X-Wing Tour of Duty: Imperial Pursuit X-Wing Tour of Duty: B-Wing
PRICE:	$29.95 each
SYSTEM:	IBM
REQUIREMENTS:	Original X-Wing game
PROTECTION:	Documentation look up
DESIGNERS:	Lawrence Holland and Edward Kilham
PUBLISHER:	LucasArts San Rafael, CA 1-800-STAR-WARS

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Circle Reader Service #45

Get In Control

F-117 Stealth Cockpit. Photo Courtesy Department of Defense

Peripherals for Power Players

by H.E. Dille

Whether playing the latest scrolling, shoot-em-up, or a state of the art combat simulator, computer gamers want their input to be taken seriously. The keyboard is no way for a Prince of Persia to rescue fair maidens, and a scrawny two-button joystick does no justice to the sophisicated fly-by-wire control of an F-15. Gamers want *control*, and control specialized to their gaming needs. Here, then, is a look at some of the various peripheral options available.

One of the most innovative and thoughtful new additions to the joystick arena is undoubtedly **Suncom**'s *My Joystick*. Realizing that most pre-school and primary age children have difficulty in manipulating a full size joystick, they designed a half-size stick that really fills a gap in the market. The unit features a down-sized base that can either be held in the off hand or used on a desktop. Three over-sized control buttons are color coded for easy distinction between them, and located for equal access by right or left handed players. A signal selector switch also allows parents to change the functions of the various buttons to suit their child's preferences for the software in use. Rounding out the design is a short and stout control stick that is perfect for small hands to maneuver. (Suncom Technologies, (708) 647-4040).

My Joystick

Triax Controls offers a PC version of their unique line of *Turbo Touch* video game pads. Unlike conventional pads that use mechanical rocker arms for directional control, the *Turbo Touch* uses capacitance to register motion. Underneath the blue

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octagonal touch plate are a series of sensors that register a change in capacitance when the player's finger passes over them. This

Turbo Touch 360

signal is transmitted into a directional command. The sensitivity of the pad is such that little pressure is required to register a response. In fact, the application of pressure actually degrades the controller's performance, because if the finger (yes it is now possible to control via the index finger if desired, instead of just the thumb) flattens under pressure, it comes in contact with more than one sensor. As such, the controller actually trains players away from the "death grip" that leads to hand fatigue and "numb thumb" syndrome. Further, the design offers the best diagonal and circular control on the market. The *Turbo Touch PC* is a must for fans of action/arcade games for home computers. (Triax Technologies, (800) 858-7429).

PC Gamepad

Advanced Gravis also has an entry into the PC pad market. The *Gravis PC Gamepad* features a diamond shaped four button control face and a conventional rocker arm pad. The latter also boasts a removable joystick handle for precise fingertip control. Other features include a selector switch for right or left hand control and independent single shot or turbo-fire options for the button array. Included in the purchase price is a premium coupon for a free copy of one of seven PC titles, such as *Prince of Persia* or *Lakers vs. Celtics.*

The *Gravis Analog Pro* is a conventional, full size stick with several nice features. The unit is most suited to flight simulations, featuring a recessed throttle control dial, three stick mounted buttons (a front trigger and two thumb controlled weapons buttons on the top of the padded stick), and two other buttons on top of the base. Stick tension is adjustable to suit your preferences. Also, a "throttle off" feature eliminates the second joystick conflicts that occur in some games. The unit is very durable during

Analog Pro

those high-G maneuvers that sometimes snap the yokes of cheaper offerings. It is available as a stand alone purchase or bundled with the *Advanced Gravis Gamecard.* (Advanced Gravis Computer Technology, (800) 663-8558).

Another bundling deal is offered by STD. Their *PC Raider* stick is an auto-centering two button desk top model that can either be purchased separately or in conjunction with a copy of *F-19 Stealth Fighter* and their game port. Though less capable

PC Raider

than some of the other products discussed here, the *PC Raider* should be viewed as an excellent starter stick for players who don't require some of the other special features. (STD Entertainment, (410) 785-5661).

One of the boldest attempts to advance the state of the art in peripherals is **Logitech**'s *Cyberman.* This odd-looking, multi-dimensional controller is designed primarily for use with free-scrolling 3-D worlds like *Ultima Underworld, Shadowcaster,* and *Doom.* Its unique design offers mouse-like "proportional control" in two dimensions and yaw, pitch, roll, and vertical control in three dimensions. It also provides tactical feedback in the form of simple vibrations, so that in games like *Shadowcaster* the device will vibrate when your character takes a hit. Unfortunately, the execution of this great idea falls short of expectations. Control in 3-space can be clumsy, even in games that support the device specifically, the acrobatics required to use it can be tiring to the hand and wrist,

Cyberman

and the vibrating feedback quickly losses its novelty. While a nobel attempt, it seems the *Cyberman* will need to go back to the drawing board. (Logitech, (800) 732-2935).

CH Products offers two designs of interest to flight simulator fans, the *Flightstick Pro* and the *Virtual Pilot.* The former is a multi-button stick with independent trim controls and a top mounted "coolie" switch. You can eliminate a lot of keyboard interaction with these features, which allow you to view the surroundings, activate radar, arm and disarm weapons and so on, without ever having to take your hand off the stick. The unit is shipped with special drivers for Microsoft's *Flight Simulator 4.0,* which provide flaps, gear, brake and trim controls. All games may be played with the stick, but some of the special features in each may not be controllable without specific driver programs which must be obtained from CH Products.

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Flightstick Pro

Their second unit, the *Virtual Pilot*, is a desk-mounted flight yoke that precisely controls ailerons and elevators, plus features a self-centering response that simulates actual flying conditions. For example, if you are flying straight and level at proper trim and change the pitch, roll or both, you need simply release the yoke to cause the plane to attempt to regain it's previous level flying position (provided, of course, the maneuver did not exceed the flight envelope and put the plane into a stall or spin). On the front face of the yoke is an elevator trim tab that may be used to trim the plane

Virtual Pilot

to climb, fly wings level, or glide when the fuel gage shows empty. Again, this feature has greater applicability to "civilian" flight simulators like the Microsoft line than afterburner-based dogfighting products. The throttle control is a conventional "T" stick on top of the unit, but is not supported by all games. The unit is also very good for driving simulations. (CH Products, (800) 624-5804).

The closest competitor to the *Virtual Pilot* is the *G-Force Yoke* from **Suncom**. Also best suited for driving and flying simulations, the unit features a spring loaded self-centering yoke with both horizontal and vertical trimmer switches. Though the latter are not specifically designed to do so, they can be used to replicate the functions of the elevator and aileron trim tabs discussed previously. A column mounted linear potentiometer acts as the throttle control. The G-Force Yoke is also equipped with dual fire buttons for left or right hand operation, as well as trigger-finger and thumb tip control. A center mounted selector switch allows the user to vary button functions for personal taste.

Weapons Control System

Thrustmaster Control Systems has recently released the Mark II versions of their venerable flight and weapons control systems (*Flight Control System* and *Weapons Control System* respectively). When operated in conjunction with their rugged rudder control pedals, the Thrustmaster system remains one of the most versatile, dependable series of flight simulations accessories on the market. (ThrustMaster, (503) 639-3200).

Pro Flight Control System

At the high end of specialization, **Thunderseat Technologies** is marketing an entire line of controllers and accessories that approach professional flight simulator quality, but do so at a corresponding price point. You won't find these products in stores, because each is built only when ordered directly from the manufacturer.

The *Thunderseat Multimedia Chair* is of general interest to all players. In essence, it is a padded cockpit seat mounted over a massive subwoofer. The unit may be used in conjunction with existing speakers for enhanced performance or hooked up directly to the output of any source, from a sound card to a VCR. The intent of the design is to translate sound, such as the whine and rumble of a high performance aircraft, to vibrations which increase the player's suspension of disbelief. Side consoles are available that allow convenient mounting of Thrustmaster's *FCS* and *WCS*, or any other sticks. A swing out keyboard holder is also available and, for those who want the full effect, rudder pedals and a strap-in harness may be had.

For those whose interest in aviation extends beyond casual game play to include the pursuit of a private pilot license, Thunderseat Technologies is ready to meet your needs as well. The *YM-2 Thunderflight Control* is built with the same precision yoke ATC used in their 610 model, the

YM-2 Thunderflight Control

largest selling FAA approved IFR simulator in the world. The unit is heavy-duty steel construction and capable of supporting a monitor within the outer frame. An optional power grid mounts to the right side of the console for control of auxiliary functions like fuel mixture, cowl flaps, carburetor heat and others. Even more capable is the *King Air Style Yoke*, featuring an actual Beechcraft layout with functional dials and switches, as well as a separate radio stack. Though these designs may seem like overkill to a lot of players, the company's intent is to obtain FAA approval for the first home-based flight simulators at a cost of under $3000. If any of these high-end items are a "must have" purchase, contact

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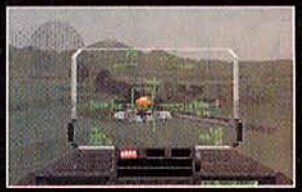

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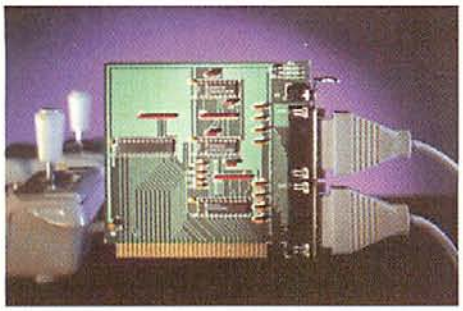

Gameport 2000

Thunderseat for a catalog and more details. (Thunderseat Technologies, (310) 410-0022).

Suncom's *Gameport 2000* is a high performance peripheral for its diminutive asking price. First, it is fully responsive in all speed ranges, from low end 286s to Pentium based 586s running at 80 MHz and beyond. In addition, it has a dedicated audio port that improves base PC sound. Although you shouldn't expect MIDI quality from this add on, it does represent the least expensive way on the market to improve sound quality while still enjoying the benefits of a premium game port.

Speaking of game ports, notebook and laptop users have suffered without them for too long. Fortunately, this situation has been rectified by two different companies. **Colorado Spectrum**'s *Notebook Gameport* connects to the serial port of the host unit and provides a fully functional joystick port, as well as a pass through serial mouse port. The second offering, **Genovation**'s *Parallel Gameport*, converts a parallel port to a 15-pin game port for use by a joystick, yoke, weapons system controller or even rudder pedals (it is currently compatible with more than 60 games). They also manufacture a separate port doubler which allows the connection of two such devices. Both of these peripherals might also appeal to desktop owners who need a gameport but don't want to install a card or lack the available slots. (Genovation, (714) 833-3355).

Notebook Gameport

Parallel Gameport

As you can see, the preceding group of products has something to offer to virtually everybody. Fortunately, it is also the tip of an iceberg that gets bigger and better all the time. Expect to see expanded coverage of even newer products after the January Consumer Electronics Show.**CGW**

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Circle Reader Service #38

A001CGW

Hackin' The Nights Away

SSI's *Dungeon Hack* Slashes Role-Playing Down To Its Roots

Every once in a while, even the most dedicated role-players long for something simple. They long for a game that doesn't require months of playing time, reams of notes, pages of hand-drawn maps; a game where they can just go out and let loose with some primordial bloodlust hack-n-slash, never mind any convoluted plots or story lines.

Until now, a game like that was hard to find. Especially one that you'd want to play more than once. Now, however, there is SSI's *Dungeon Hack.*

Dungeon Hack is a single-player game that uses the same engine and graphics as *Eye of the Beholder III*, only the graphics here are much better, especially the monster images. The "plot" is simple: wade through a dungeon full of nasty critters to retrieve a magical orb. That's really all there is to it.

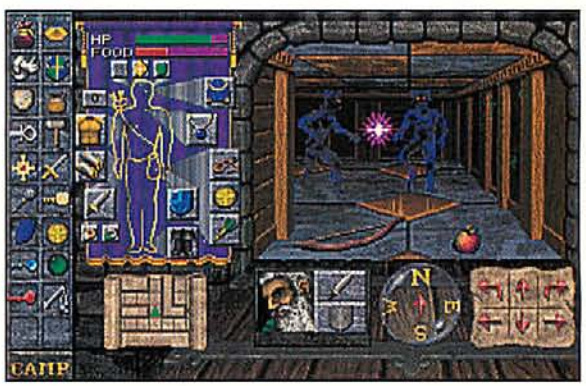
That doesn't sound like a whole lot, and ordinarily it wouldn't be a whole lot. What makes *Dungeon Hack* interesting is that you can customize the dungeon to your own specific tastes. You have control over a majority of the physical and play factors, and you can create a dungeon however you want.

The size of the dungeons can range from 10 to 25 levels. Monster strength varies from wimp to supercritter. Treasure can be everywhere or hardly anywhere. Food can be readily available or difficult to find. Magical traps can be all over the place or nowhere. Character magic spells can be potent or weak. Enemies can lurk behind every door or they can be out to lunch. Undead can be turned off so they don't appear at all (Yes! My favorite feature!). The same is true for enemy spellcasters. Most of these controls have ranges, so you can really fine-tune the dungeon exactly to your tastes.

Death In The Afternoon

Perhaps the most interesting feature of all is "Character Death Real." This dungeon setting is for the truly hardy (or suicidal), because once your character dies, that's it. The save games go away, too, and there is NO restore for this one. Your character has adventured for the last time. It's one way to add a nail-biting thrill to the game play.

For the first time, all the character classes from *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* 2nd edition—including the bard class—are available here. The only option missing is dual class for humans; human characters must be single class, but as usual they can choose any profession.



Character creation is a simple process: pick gender, race, class and alignment. Stats can be modified up to their maximums (always advisable), including 18/00 Strength for both male and female fighters of all races except Halfling. Choose a picture for your character and enter a name. Most beginning characters start at level 3, except triple-classed Half-Elves, who start as 3rd level clerics and 2nd level in the other professions, pure Mages who begin at 5th, and pure Clerics who come in at 4th.

When that's finished, you move to the main dungeon creation screen. Here you can choose easy, moderate, hard or custom. The first three are automatic settings; custom is where you make what you will of the dungeon and is likely to be your preference when you start up.

The important thing to keep in mind here is that each dungeon is created for a specific character, and once you move on from the dungeon creation screen, nothing can be changed again. This is the one and only dungeon for that character, and if you don't like it, you must create a new character and a new dungeon.

There are no puzzles, as such, in the dungeons. The closest thing might be finding keys for certain locks, discovering where the illusory walls are (if you have that feature turned on), and looking for buttons to open apparent dead-ends. Otherwise, the levels, however many there may be, are pretty straightforward.

You can make it a bit more difficult by turning multi-level puzzles on, which means an item you need on level 5 will be found on some other level. That means dragging a lot of extra stuff with you, and while the inventory slots are generous (you can carry up to 54 items!), they can fill up rather quickly, especially if the treasure level is set high.

I preferred the high treasure setting, since most of the goodies you find are randomly generated each game, and there is no telling what will show up. A high treasure setting, however, doesn't mean Monty Haul. If you set it high and expect to find swords +5 and plate mail +3 all over the place, you will be sorely disappointed. Really good items are rare, whatever the setting.

TITLE:	Dungeon Hack
PRICE:	$60.00
SYSTEM:	IBM
REQUIREMENTS:	386 or better, 2MB RAM, VGA graphics, 12MB hard drive space; supports Ad Lib, Roland and Sound Blaster sound cards
PROTECTION:	Documentation look up
DESIGNERS:	Thomas Holmes, Chris Straka
PUBLISHER:	Strategic Simulations, Inc. Sunnyvale, CA (408) 737-6800

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Circle Reader Service #76

Also, the treasure generator skews some of the items toward character class. For example, my Paladin never came across any mage scrolls, but for the Cleric/Mage and the Fighter/Mage, they showed up often. Similarly, blade weapons appeared for the Paladin and Fight/Magic User, but not for the Cleric/Mage, except for daggers.

This makes sense. Fighters can't use mage scrolls, and mages can't wield swords, so why put them in the game? Typically then, anything you find will be usable by your character as one class or another (except perhaps those Bracers of Archery, which show up everywhere, even for pure Mages!).

That doesn't mean you would want to use it, as a fair number of items happen to be cursed. A certain amount of care is necessary when handling newly-found objects (keys and key-like objects are always safe, though). Saving the game is always a good idea before trying on that new armor you just picked up.

Mages and multi-classed mages have an easier time of it. They come with Improved Identify in their spellbooks, which tells you exactly what an item is. Non-mages, however, must rely either on trial-and-error experiments, or finding the scrying glass that acts as an Identify spell. The glass is a random item, and may or may not show up. It has a limited number of charges, so it needs to be used with some discretion. Typically, it is best used to identify rings and potions first, weapons second.

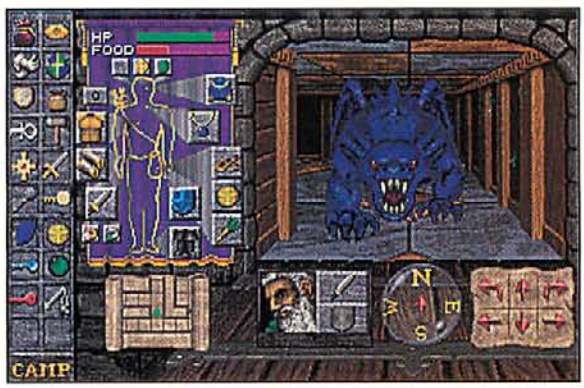
Getting Around Underground

The game has a very nice auto-mapping feature, with dual maps. A small one in the left-hand corner is always on, showing your immediate location and changing as you move around the level. Clicking on this brings up the level map, showing the entire area. Naturally, those places you haven't seen yet are blank.

Also detailed on the map are the locations of monsters (shown as red squares), stairs up and down, pits, illusory walls, doors, teleporters, and treasures lying on the floor (black squares). Of course, these are only visible in areas you've already visited. In addition, the level map can be sent to your printer for a hard copy of the map.

The only flaw in this otherwise excellent mapping system is that it doesn't show the locations of alcoves. These are small niches set into the walls at random places, usually hallways. It is all too easy to walk right by one and never see it. Using a different color on the map for that section of wall would have been a great help in finding missed alcoves.

Having gone through *Dungeon Hack* four times to completion, twice to level 10, once to level 15, and once to the 25th level (whew!), plus running other characters to varying depths, I have concluded that a 10-15 level dungeon is probably the best.



For one thing, 25 levels is a *long* way to go when you're just hacking through critters with no other objective than wiping them out. Sooner or later, the monsters begin to repeat, and you end up fighting "the same old stuff" as you go further down. And let's face it, 25 levels of plain killing can get boring after a while.

The generators for monsters and treasure exhibit some anomalies. For example, in the 25-level dungeon I fully expected to run across all the monsters (except undead, which I had turned off). However, there were five types that never appeared at all, including, oddly enough, hobgoblins, which are staple monsters for the second and third levels, and had appeared in every other dungeon I created.

A Measure Of Treasure

Armor was often hard to come by in the dungeons, even mundane stuff (this at high treasure level, too). That's important for fighter types who start off with nothing better than ring mail (another good reason to max out dexterity). Most of my fighters had to go down a fair way before something better than leather showed up, and even shields were often in short supply. Eventually, you do get your hands on some good armor, but it usually takes longer than it should.

Mage scrolls seem weighted towards the more powerful showing up early. More than once, high-level scrolls such as Death Spell, Power Word, and Stun appeared on the first and second levels, while the more-useful (at that point) 2nd and 3rd level spells were hard to come by. My Fighter/Magic User who went the 25 levels, for example, never happened across a fireball scroll (she did have Lightning Bolt, though). As these scrolls are the only way for mages to learn new spells (no training halls in these dungeons), running a pure mage can be a difficult undertaking.

Sad to relate, SSI decided to invoke the "no mage spells in armor" rule of the 2nd edition AD&D rules. This really hampers spellcasting for multi-classed characters. Running around without armor is an excellent way to die an early death, especially once you get down to around level 4 where the monsters take a decided turn for the nasty. Until you have a decent selection of robe, bracers and protective devices, spellcasting will be either limited or dangerous in combat. Armor restrictions do not apply to Clerics, who can wear anything, nor to full Elves in Elven Chain Mail.

On a positive note, I'm happy to say that the game ran very cleanly. No crashes, freezes or lockups; no weird things happened with the graphics. That's really quite amazing when you consider that the dungeon, and everything in it, is created anew each time you generate a character.

The manual is good, providing all the necessary details on play and dungeon generation. Read the races section carefully so you know how far any race can advance in a given profession. There is, however, one omission in the list of monsters: somehow, the Living Muck was overlooked. This is a nasty critter that likes to eat metal weapons.

Overall, in spite of some weak points, *Dungeon Hack* delivers what it promises: the chance to create your own, specially-designed, hack-n-slash paradise. Whatever you want, be it killer dungeon or easy romp or something in between, it can be yours with this program. So the next time that bloodlust urge strikes, don't take it out on the loved ones. *Dungeon Hack* it out of your system.

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Dark Sun ■ Lands of Lore ■ Ultima VII: Black Gate ■ Ultima VII: Serpent Isle
Hand of Fate ■ Return to Zork ■ Darkside of Xeen ■ Ultima Underworld II
Crusaders of the Dark Savant

So here we are in the mail room, which is overflowing as usual. What with the holidays, new games, and distracting screams from the dungeon, we just haven't had the chance to do any cleaning up. The dump trucks are supposed to arrive soon; I sure hope they come, because I can barely fit all of you in here. Meanwhile, hold your breath and think thin thoughts.

Before we get to the good stuff, I have to say a few words about that dread condition, Selective Dyslexia. It can strike anyone, anywhere, anytime. Among *CGW* readers, it generally manifests as "Dear Scorpia, I read your column in *CGW* every month and think it's great. Now I need help with...." and that's all that's in the envelope; there is no all-important self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Somehow, people manage to read my entire column, right down to the address...but that part about "If you live in the US, enclose a SASE" doesn't come through. I get about five letters per month from SD-stricken individuals, so it's not a rare problem. Don't become a victim of Selective Dyslexia! Put that SASE in there! And now, on to the mail!

Dark Sun: From Kevin C. in Malaysia (the mail seems to be working again) comes important news about the endgame freeze after the final battle. If you hit the ESC key while the post-battle graphics are being displayed, you can bypass the whole thing (avoiding the hang entirely) and get back to the game. Hitting the ESC key must be done *before* the sequence reaches the "picking up the sword" section. This has been tested at **SSI**, and it works. If your game freezes after the final fight (or if you want to make sure that it doesn't), just use the ESC key and you'll be okay.

Lands of Lore: In my article a few issues back, I mentioned that it was possible to endlessly duplicate the Vaelen's cube. It turned out later that this was (ahem) a bug, and you weren't supposed to be able to do that. This has been fixed in subsequent releases, and you can't do it anymore. A pity, since those cubes came in very handy on level three of the White Tower, where a lot of people have trouble, especially with the Spirit Snakes. The snakes are a spell cast by the ghosts, so the quicker you kill off the ghosts, the less snakes you'll have to face (and there is no way to kill the serpents themselves). Remember ghosts can walk through walls, so keep moving while you're on the third level.

Ultima VII—The Black Gate: Letters still show up from people having a hard time in the final dungeon on Avatar Isle—specifically, in the area with the cells to the north and the locked door to the east. As you go up the northern corridor, the second door is supposed to retract into the floor, while the first door rises behind, sealing off the corridor and "trapping" the party in the cell area. This entire sequence is triggered only by reading the scroll in the Shrine of the Codex *before* you enter the dungeon at all (yes, it's bizarre, but that's how it is). If the door is not retracting as you approach it, restore to a save before you went into the dungeon, read the scroll in the shrine, and then enter the dungeon. If that still doesn't help you, get in touch with **Origin** for additional assistance.

Ultima VII—Serpent Isle: Some readers have had strange things happen to them while trying to use the serpent jawbone to travel via the serpent gates. The characters start to freeze or the game hangs. This is usually the result of using an *empty* jawbone on the gate. Never do that. Every time you obtain a tooth, put it into the jaw right away, because the thing only works properly when the teeth are in place.

Hand of Fate: Although the review for this game is only showing up this issue, questions have been coming in about it already. The con-man octopus and his shell game seem to be giving some people a hard time. Well, of course. Didn't your mother ever tell you not to gamble with strangers? Heh. Anyway, you have to be more than quick-eyed to win this game; you have to be lucky. With the right item, you'll be a real shoe-in.

Return To Zork: Having made it down river to West Shanbar, a number of players are having a hard time getting any further. Some of them have figured out that the door under the mill leads to other places, but finding the key to it, that's another matter. Actually, getting the key isn't hard at all, if you give it some thought. I'll drink a toast to your success (third time's the charm!).

Darkside of Xeen: It wasn't too long ago that I gave a hint about getting the Chalice from the Tower of the Vowelless Knights, but people still keep asking about this one (hey, ya gotta re-read those old back issues!). It's such a simple answer, most tend to overlook the obvious. Remember the lessons from the lower level? Remember what you typed in as answers? That's what you need to do here, and you don't have to be elaborate; three letters are enough.

Ultima Underworld II: It's not too hard to make a bottle of gin...ah, a Djinn bottle for yourself. There's someone in the Pits of Carnage who can give you complete directions about accomplishing that. And Nystul can tell you whether or not you've done it right (that hysterical laughter is a dead giveaway, heh). But filling the bottle with spirits, as it were, that's the tricky part. You don't want to go breaking anything until you're well-protected and up close.

Crusaders of the Dark Savant: Summoning demons for fun and profit is always an interesting experience. Of course, it helps if you have all the right ingredients before you make the attempt (kids, don't try this at home). Some players may find themselves without an essential part. It's usually the part from the basement of Orkogre Castle. Rations, anyone? (ick!)

That's it for this look into the mailbag. Remember if you need help with an adventure, you can reach me in the following ways:

On Delphi: Stop by the GameSIG (under the Groups and Clubs menu).

On GEnie: Visit the Games RoundTable (type: Scorpia to reach the Games RT).

By US Mail (enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you live in the US):

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Until next time, happy adventuring! CGW

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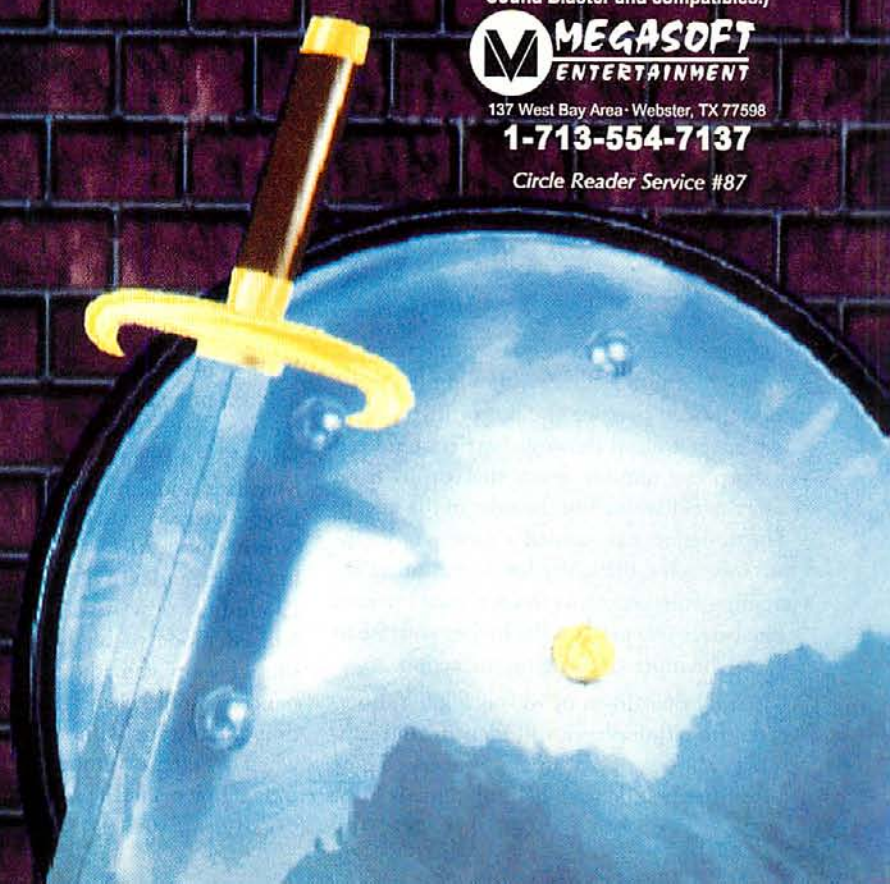

GLOW, LITTLE FIREWORM...

Inline Designs Turns On The Bug Light At The *Firefall Arcade*

by Richard Mulligan

Normally, I am unimpressed with "twitch" games of the arcade variety; they just don't hold my interest anymore. But as my rictus grin and beat-up fingers will attest, *Firefall Arcade*, **Inline Software**'s latest release for the color Macintosh family, is a rare and welcome exception to the action game realm. Designed and developed by Dave Triplett and Brian Greenstone, *Firefall* is a masterful blend of 256-color graphics, animation, sound effects and music that creates an exciting playing environment. The game is near flawlessly executed and quite addictive.

"Bugs, Mr. Rico! Zillions of 'em!"

Taking its cue from the old *Centipede* arcade game, the objective is to shoot and destroy each body segment of crawling nasties called Fireworms. As the Fireworms creep left and right around barriers, moving from the top of screen towards the bottom, you must maneuver around the same barriers and keep a sharp eye out for death that drops from above or rolls out from the sides of the screen. The designers have added a variety of weapons, obstacles, difficulty levels and other intriguing enhancements to keep your interest. The better you get and the higher you rise in score, the more challenging the action.

Not all that drops or rolls is a killer, however; the astute player will identify and capture a variety of advantage makers. These powerups include such helpful items as Heat Seekers, Shields, Double Shots for the guns, Ghosters that allow movement through barriers, and the ever present Extra Lives. The trick is to destroy enough barriers to allow room to maneuver and shoot the Fireworm while dodging the nasties and grabbing the goodies.

As each level of difficulty is completed, there's a Bonus Round. Here, you are challenged with the task of destroying three complete Fireworms, with the bonus growing larger with each Fireworm destroyed.

"'Zounds, I missed!"

The interface is intuitive and trouble-free. You can use the mouse, keyboard or Gravis GamePad to move and fire. The player icon is intentionally designed with a smooth-scroll delay between movement of the mouse or arrow key and reaction by the icon, but this is easily adjusted to and seamlessly adds to the challenge.

There are two play modes, Normal and Enhanced. The difference between the two is in the quality of the graphic animation and effects; in Enhanced mode, the sounds and music seem sharper, and the destruction of a barrier or nasty creates an interesting "firefall" effect (hence the name of the game). However, the graphics, animation and sound are excellent in both modes.

The Enhanced mode is designed for high performance Macintoshes; the manual recommends a Centris 610 or better, meaning a system speed of 20 MHz or better. However, the game was tested on a 16 MHz Mac IIcx and Enhanced mode ran perfectly, if a tad slower than Normal mode. In fact, for learning the ins and outs of the game, I found the slower speed of Enhanced mode to be a boon. I should warn you, though: Enhanced mode play speeds up dramatically and without notice when a certain number of the moving pieces in the game have been destroyed. Be on the lookout for that; you'll either be quick or dead.

With such a simple and intuitive interface, Inline has wisely refused to load the game box down with a lot of unnecessary manuals. The documentation consists of one three-panel reference card that lists the keyboard commands, point values of the game objects, and color pictures of the powerups with a short description of the function each performs. Nothing more is needed.

"WARNING!!! Danger, Will Robinson!"

When *Firefall* was first installed on the Mac IIcx test machine, it conflicted with **Fifth Generation Systems**' *AutoDoubler* compression program. It conflicted so badly, in fact, that the game installation failed and the *AutoDoubler* control panel device was trashed and had to be reinstalled. If you use this compression program, boot the control panel device for *AutoDoubler* and turn it off *before* installing the game. On the test machine, *AutoDoubler* was turned back on after the *Firefall* installation and no other problems were experienced. The *AutoDoubler* problem was the only control panel or INIT conflict experienced, out of over 30 installed on the test computer.

Firefall Arcade is a simple, elegantly rendered and enjoyable arcade game. The action ranges from the sedate to the furious and the animation and sound are excellent. So, if you enjoy a good arcade interlude or have kids that do, *Firefall Arcade* is a must-have for your household. **CGW**

Firefall Arcade

TITLE:	Firefall Arcade
PRICE:	$49.95
SYSTEM:	Mac
REQUIREMENTS:	Mac LC or better, 256 colors, 3MB RAM, 3.7MB hard drive space
PROTECTION:	None
DESIGNERS:	Dave Triplett, Brian Greenstone
PUBLISHER:	Inline Software, Inc. Lakeville, CT 06039 203-435-4995

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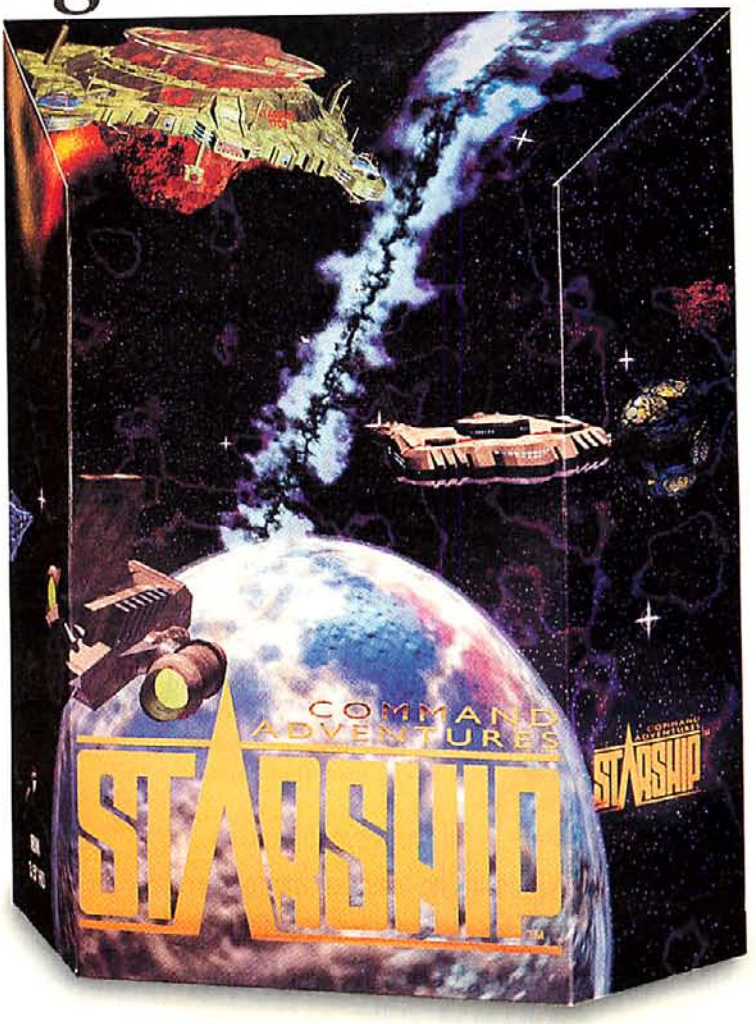

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The Digital Auto Club

The Tour Book for the Future of Interactive Entertainment

by Johnny L. Wilson

All Teched Up And Nowhere To Go

At the recent InterTainment '93 conference in Santa Monica, California, there was a jarring juxtaposition of the present and future of interactive entertainment. Many companies are currently involved in providing interactive television games, location-based amusement park experiences and on-line network games in the here and now. Other companies represented were speaking about an industry that is yet to happen: widespread video-on-demand, interactive movies and multi-player gaming experiences via cable television. Conflicts between the present reality and visions of the potential future were inevitable, so the conference served as something of a reality check to people like myself.

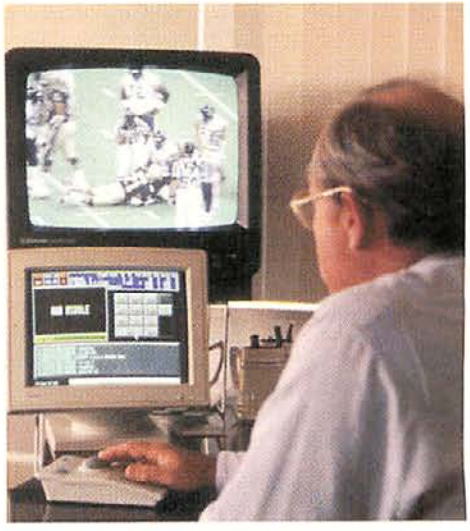
"If we leave interactive television in the hands of the merger experts and media pundits, we will probably end up with something that will surpass Orwell's worst nightmare. If we leave it in the hands of the creative people, we might end up with something that will surpass Shakespeare's greatest vision."

—Paul McKellips
Director of Corporate Communications,
Interactive Systems

You see, I spend so much time looking at the games and technologies that are "on their way" that I sometimes fail to look at the landscape around me. As a result, the session on "Interactive Television Today" threw a lot of cold water on my hopes for the future. The speakers who are involved in this business are certainly willing to settle for a much lower threshold of interactivity than I am.

For example, Sami Saad of Info Telecom, a provider of interactive quiz shows in three European countries, demonstrated his LUDICS controller. This $20 handheld controller has four buttons for input and a serial number encoded in the chip. Would-be trivia masters register the serial numbers and are able to play in up to 16 quiz games per day. The player sends encoded transmissions of his or her answers by telephone. The system works. The company is making money, but every interaction is limited to four menued choices. In contrast, joysticks and video game controllers have more directional choices than four. So, the potential for interactive experience seems entirely too limited.

However, if I thought LUDICS was too limited, I was really shocked by the new "interactive" device from Interactive Systems. Now, from the inventors of "Sabre Rider and the Star Sheriffs," the animated series developed for Mattel Toys and Merv Griffin Enterprises, comes Toby Terrier toys. The toy dogs are electronic and respond to an invisible VEIL (Visually Encoded Intelligent Light) source which is broadcast along with the images and sounds of a television show. When the on-screen Toby asks if children and their simulated pets are ready to sing or play, the VEIL causes the dogs to yip, bark or nod. When the songs and dances are taking place on-screen, the dogs are signalled to bark in time with the music. Frankly, such a design seems to be moving the wrong direction in interactivity. Indeed, we could almost call it simulated interactivity.



NTN's football play-calling game QB-1 foreshadows the future of interactive TV.

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One approach to interactivity that seems to hold a lot of promise, however, is that being taken by NTN Communications. NTN operates the trivia games that are available in hotels, bars and restaurants across the country. Competitors compete against players all over the country in their quest for high scores. Currently, NTN Trivia is not only available in these location-based venues, but is also offered via GEnie and soon, The Imagination Network. NTN also operates a football play-calling game called QB-1. Although the latter game requires a special input device called a Playmaker, it shows how interactivity can be piggybacked to existing programming. In this case, a football game is broadcast normally, but viewers who have the special input device can compete against other players (usually in sports bars, but occasionally on cable television networks).

The installed base of Playmaker units is currently 1.5 million and the company translates that into 5 million gamers, since there are usually three persons gathered around each Playmaker. NTN expects to introduce a new sports application based on pari-mutual racing in the near future. The racing game will be for cable television and touches on another consideration—, gambling. One service that could feasibly cause demand for the interactive highway to skyrocket is on-line gambling. Of course, given existing state-by-state jurisdiction over gambling, this will have some interesting obstacles for the cable industry or telephone companies providing interactivity to surmount.

It's The Interface, Stupid!

At the InterTainment '93 conference, as at most conferences on the new interactive frontier, there was much talk about the interface issue. Gary Louder of ICTV, a Silicon Valley corporation that specializes in interface development for interactive television, believes that the answer is in the software and not in the so-called set-top box. His ideal is to build systems which use existing platforms and boxes. The guiding principle of his company is that "Services have to look more like television than computers."

"General purpose computers will cease to exist." — Howard Postman, President, Ideal Point, Inc.

Howard Postman, President of consulting firm Ideal Point, Inc., went further. He insisted that interactive television will pave the way for services far beyond movies and shopping. He even presented the vision of a computerless society where the smart interfaces of the future will meet each individual's needs. However, he warned, "There is no way that a common interface is going to meet everyone's needs. Anything that is not an adaptive interface is not going to work."

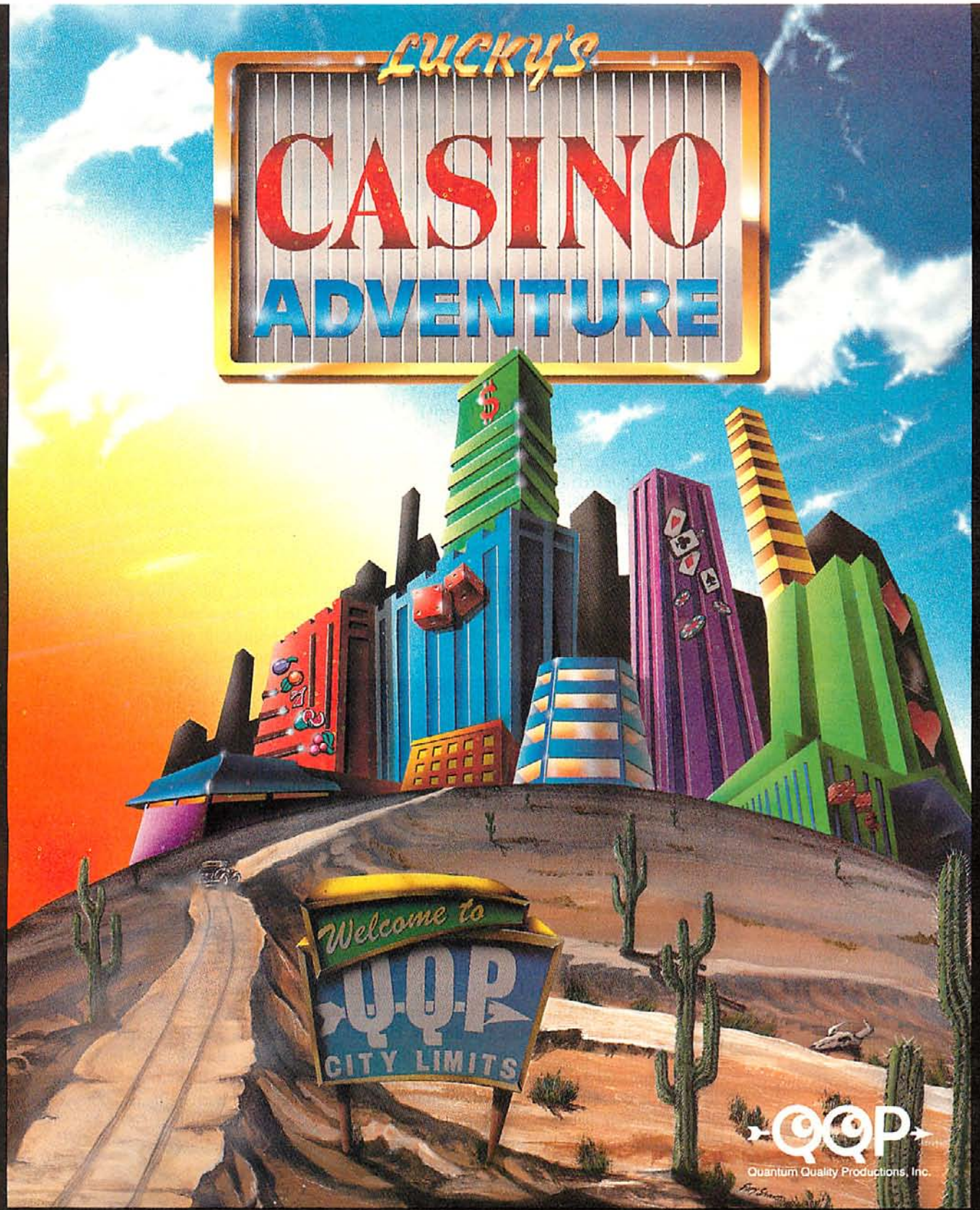
Obviously, I think Postman's vision of the computerless society is about as unrealistic as the vision of a paperless office that was so prevalent a little over a decade ago. Still, just as software drives today's hardware platforms, it will be the smart filters and intuitive interfaces of the future that will empower "everyman's" computer, whether that computer be keyboardless and voice-actuated through a fiber-optic network or a keyboard/mouse configuration tied into the home LAN and outside gateways.

FINANCIAL KINGPINS

Sometimes said to be the most powerful man in Silicon Valley, Arjun Gupta (center) of venture capitalist giant Kleiner, Perkins, Caufield and Byers, spoke on the panel concerning finance for interactive ventures. He predicted that the interactive software business would end up in the hands of five or six big publishers, much like the half-dozen book publishers that presently control that market. He believes Hollywood will continue to partner in interactive entertainment rather than purchase the market, since "Everything in Hollywood is twenty times the return of either the best-selling CD or cartridge products." More ominously, he predicted a future bloodbath in specialized hardware systems before the market stabilizes on a standard.

How Do They Do That? (Video On Demand)

Bellcore Labs has been working on a delivery system for video-on-demand (or, more accurately, near video-on-demand, since there will always be a time lag) for some time. Currently, they are experimenting with a system that incorporates Philips CD-I (with the digital video cartridge) as the set-top box/player. According to this system, a huge file of digitized film is stored on a tape drive. When a film is requested, it finds the file and downloads the movie at 1.5 MB per second to a disk array capable of holding up to 12 full length movies. From the disk array, the data is buffered to an intelligent line card which, in turn, moves the movie data down to the viewer's individual CD-I boxes. In turn, the CD-I's interface allows editing, windowing and multi-lingual features which have not been available in pay-per-view until now.



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The Galapagos Were Never Like This!

Maxis' *UnNatural Selection* Sends *SimLife* to Boot Camp

by Randall Black

When Charles Darwin discovered that plants and animals owed their existence to a process he named "evolution by natural selection," he revealed that life is a competition that awards survival only to the fittest. The SimFolks at Maxis have succeeded in bringing the intensity of the evolutionary contest, "red in tooth and claw," to the computer screen.

UnNatural Selection combines the intricate simulation of life forms found in *SimLife* with a knock-down drag-out strategy game. The heart of the action can be found in the Secret Missions, in which you take the role of scientist Dr. Ted Jackson. Jackson has been recruited to combat ferocious "theroids," genetically engineered beasts that have overrun nine islands. He and co-researchers originally began the theroid research program in an attempt to relieve world hunger. Now we learn that six months ago, Jackson's fellow scientist, Dr. Ingrid Skinner, disappeared with a number of theroid specimens that have mutated into monsters. Jackson's job is to breed even tougher animals to take the islands back.

Using digitized speech and a computer "movie," the game introduces most of the plot by way of one Franklin Griggs, a crusty, loud-mouthed colonel who ramrods the operation and heaps abuse on Jackson when things aren't going well. The game begins when Jackson and Colonel Griggs arrive by helicopter aboard an aircraft carrier that will serve as Jackson's laboratory during the island-hopping campaign against the theroids. Central to Jackson's lab and still being assembled by Dr. Andy Anderson, a third scientist and consummate nerd, the DigiLife AL-2000 console controls the unnatural selection of three types of theroids: zips, hulks and slugs. Zips are speedy creatures, hulks possess higher strength, and slugs have greater stamina. But all three body types are really variants of a basic theroid that has genes for eight characteristics. By selecting for fighting, mating, eating, speed, strength, stamina, vision and momentum (the tendency of a creature to travel in a straight line), you attempt to breed a theroid that can kick the tar out of its wayward cousins.

As the game progresses and new capabilities are added to the DigiLife-2000, the pocket-protected Anderson interrupts research to announce the lab's latest additions. Housed in pens in the carrier's hangar deck, the theroids are under control of the Neural Pattern Regulator, which can put them into a state of frozen paralysis. The original theroid breeding stock is, to put it politely, genetically challenged. Jackson's job is to whip these chromosomal weaklings into fighting trim. Using yet another device, the Synthetic Neural Injector, you can create new, slightly less pathetic individuals and plunge them into the gene pool.

The console also comes equipped with controls for the level of radiation, which produces genetic diversity by inducing mutations in the animals' genes. Alas, the radiation also causes harmless viruses to mutate into nasty X, Y and Z viruses that are spread during mating and inherited by offspring. The Y virus causes blindness, the Z virus lowers the birth rate, and the dreaded X gradually saps stamina in subsequent generations. In general, it's important to eliminate infected theroids quickly before viruses get a chance to spread throughout your entire breeding population. However, virus-laden theroids can be sequestered in a pen of their own to later serve as the vehicles of biological warfare against enemy theroids.

The most powerful tool on the DigiLife is the database. The database can sort hundreds of theroids according to one or a combination of many traits, allowing you to select the best and move them to a separate pen, or grab the worst and zap them into oblivion. Although they reproduce sexually, all theroids are hermaphrodites, creatures equipped with both male and female reproductive organs. The different body types are capable of mating with one another. Eventually zips seem to dominate the population simply because they get around to mating faster, but they can acquire the strength and stamina of even the best hulks and slugs.

UnNatural Selection

Title:	UnNatural Selection
SYSTEM:	IBM
PRICE:	$49.95
REQUIREMENTS:	386SX or higher, 330K EMS RAM for sound, 15MB hard drive space, mouse; supports Sound Source and Sound Blaster sound cards
PROTECTION:	None
DESIGNER:	Jim Simmons, Peter Fokos, Nick Corea
PUBLISHER:	Maxis Orinda, CA (510) 254-9700

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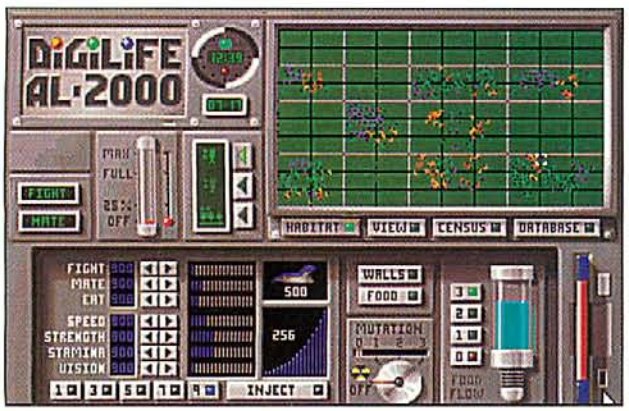
As you take the role of Jackson, feverishly trying to breed a batch of theroids tough enough to take on Dr. Skinner's runaways, the clock is ticking. At 0700 hours, Colonel Griggs comes on the horn and announces in his warmly dictatorial tone, "It's showtime, Jackson! Are you ready to go to battle stations, now?" You can delay the attack, but at great cost: Skinner's theroids get tougher in the meantime. Stalling, in effect, sets the game to expert level, significantly boosting the numerical values of the enemy theroids' genes. Even if you have a theroid deficiency, it's better to go paw-to-paw with the opposition sooner rather than later.



As Jackson, you oversee the loading of theroids into three fast Sea Stallion helicopters, each holding up to 17 critters, and three slower Sea Knight choppers with room for 36. In addition to theroids, the helicopters can carry boxes of cargo, a mixed armamentarium of materiel to support the assault. Cargo includes regular food along with special red "rage" chow and pink "lust" that increase fighting or mating behavior. Another kind of food, "bran," can be dumped on enemy theroids to use up their eating drive without providing nutrition (and presumably giving "regular" army a whole new meaning). A limited number of noisemakers let you temporarily clear areas of creatures by frightening friend and enemy alike. Another type of cargo, "decoys," serve as combination punching bags and inflatable party dolls to sap enemy fighting and mating drives. In addition to the chopper fleet, a C-130 Hercules transport plane orbits the island, prepared to lay down a swath of regular food to hungry troops.

Once Jackson's theroids are dropped on the island, it's possible to aim a "satellite beam" at individual animals to increase stamina, strength, speed, fighting, eating or mating. Like the proverbial horseshoe nail that lost the war, the beam can make the difference between victory and defeat. Yet another control is the NPR button, which puts every one of your theroids into stasis, rendering them invulnerable to attack. Since theroids often hit the ground in a shockingly low state of stamina, a valuable strategy is to freeze them *en masse* with the NPR and then zap the weak sisters to boost stamina before turning off the NPR to unleash your scaly horde.

Once Jackson's theroids take over the island, it's back to the lab to continue refining the remaining theroids before the next port of call and Colonel Grigg's mellifluous call to battle stations. The smart player will have reserved the highest quality breeding stock for the next round of mutation and selection. In fact, the relative calm of the aircraft loading deck turns out to be an ideal place to continue selecting for stronger traits by shipping misfits off to their new island home. While Jackson sweats to crank up his babies' genes, the enemy theroids continue to mutate, and each island is more challenging than the last. Through judicious mutation and selection, the true champions, body types called "beasts," begin to emerge. The combative beast is difficult to breed because these hard-fighting theroids have trouble mating. Although it's relatively easy to mutate a maximum gene value for fighting, the trait quickly becomes extinguished because theroids maxed out for fighting are too busy tangling to tango. Even beasts at less than maximum levels of fighting make poor mothers and reproduce very slowly, making them poor candidates for colonizing and holding territory. To take over an island it helps to have an ample supply of better breeders. Still, by the time you reach the ninth island, you also had better have some really bad mothers on board.

UnNatural Selection is actually two products rolled into one. To practice breeding and assault tactics for the secret missions and explore the incredible sophistication of the lab and theroid variables, the game includes an "Independent Research" section with 15 bizarre islands of its own. The designers have provided a mind-boggling depth of control over virtually every feature of laboratory settings and theroid bodies. Also included are 16 "textbook experiments" that explore everything from cannibalism and carrion-eating to theroid "intelligence." As do the Secret Missions, the Independent Research lab provides a number of visualization options, including two levels of close-up viewing and numerous ways to examine genetic make-up and watch behavior. In the extreme close-up you can actually see the creatures fight, mate, eat, and die in claymation action. These animated bits add a cute dash of splash, but they become irrelevant after the first few viewings.

Despite some creative departures from real science, *UnNatural Selection* offers a vivid demonstration of several key principles underlying Darwinian evolution. And, like other rule-governed life simulators, the program gives rise to surprising "emergent behaviors" in which the organisms display unexpected trends in the ways they evolve. In the bargain, *UnNatural Selection*'s database provides unprecedented control and insight into the forces driving its particular brand of artificial evolution. Given the intuitive grasp of genetic selection *UnNatural Selection* provides, not to mention its entertaining format, it would not be surprising if instructors began assigning the game as homework for college-level courses in evolutionary biology.

As a game, *UnNatural Selection* supplies a set of increasingly difficult challenges that will drive the obsessive personality to go without sleep. The last two Secret Missions require the toughest beasts, every trick in the book, and significant stamina on your part. The movie sequences, especially the friction between Griggs and Jackson, and the plot itself, stimulate interest without intruding on the game. The Secret Missions offer closure to the plot and an interesting surprise with the conquest of the ninth and final island: Dr. Skinner's breeding pens. Overall, *UnNatural Selection* offers up a slick, funny and memorable game combined with a fascinating artificial life laboratory.

A science writer for more than a decade, Randall Black has written for such publications as Smithsonian Air & Space, Wildlife Conservation, Science Digest and OMNI. CGW

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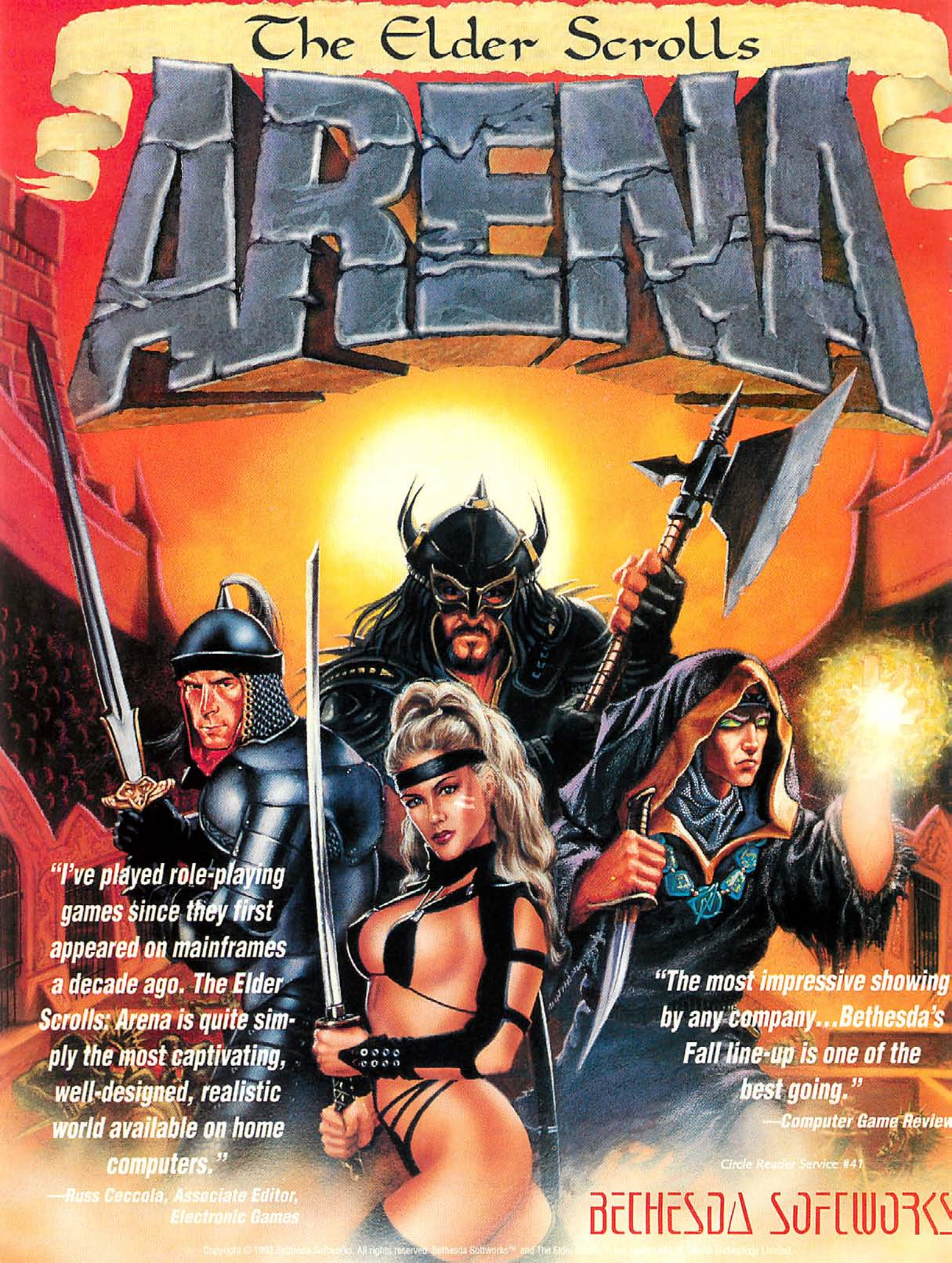

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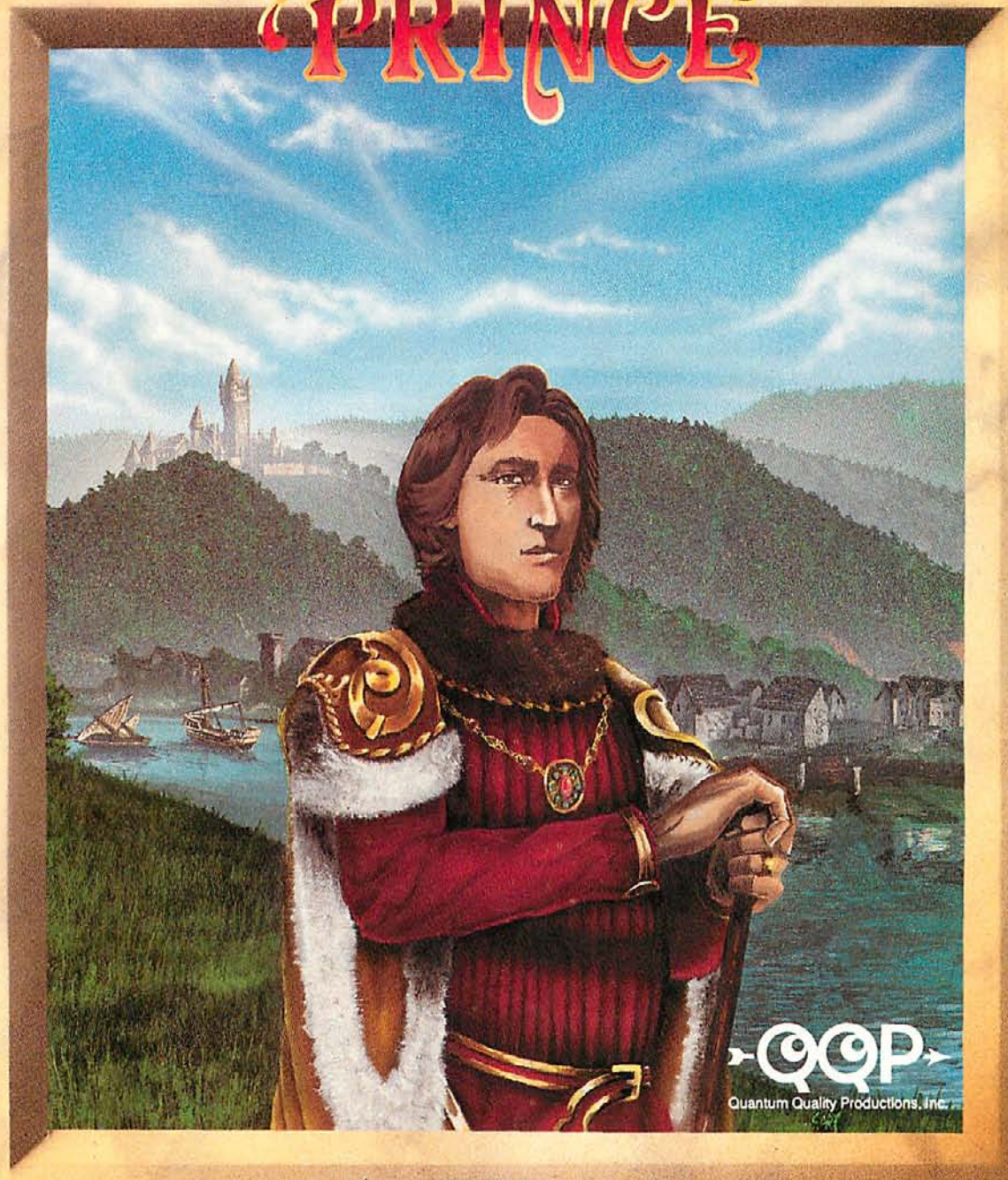

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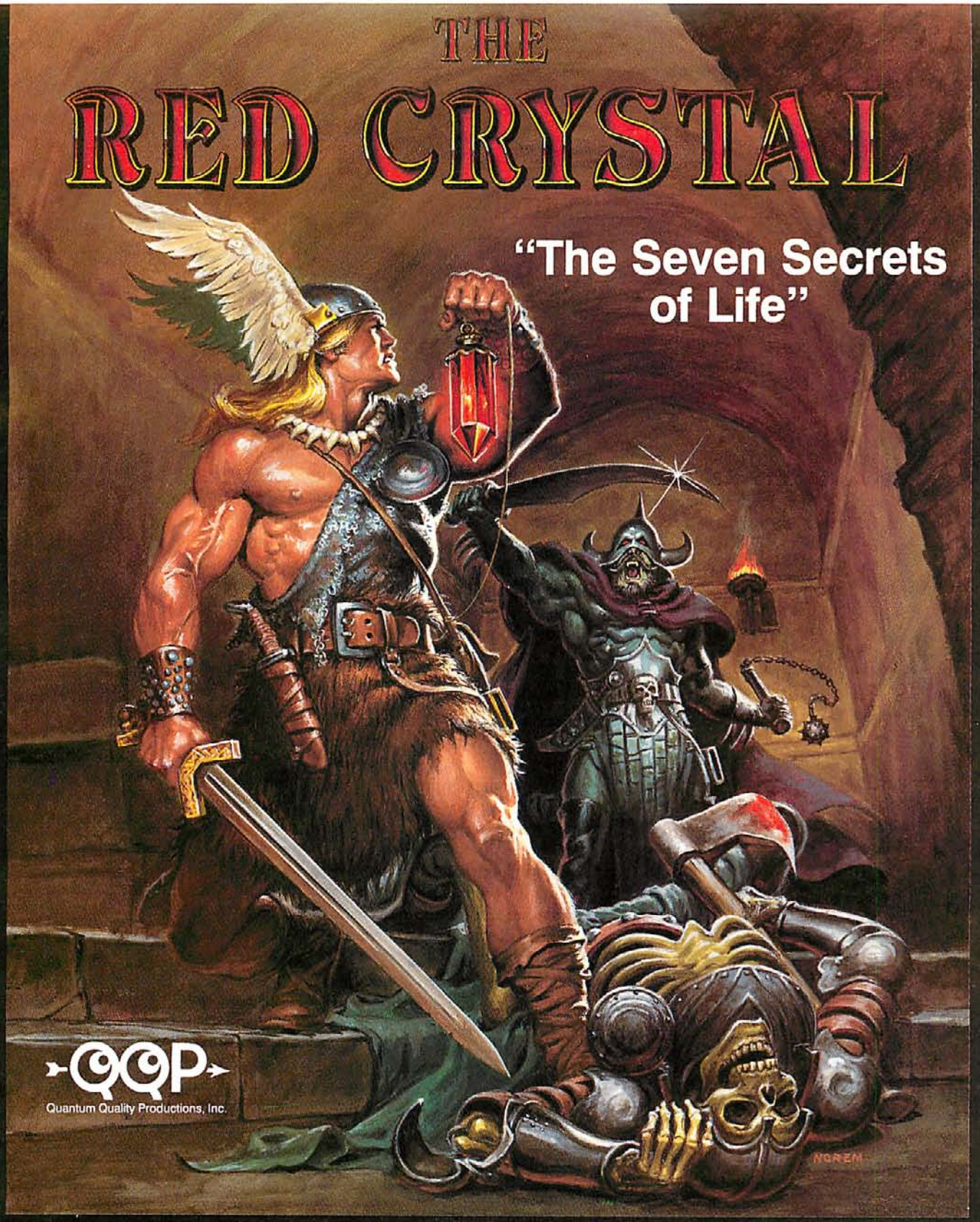

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Circle Reader Service #116

A Thayler For Your Thoughts

Or How To Buy Friends and Influence People In *The Patrician*

by Tim Carter

Ah, to be rich. To acquire great fame and fortune, marry a beautiful wife, and buy one's way into political office. The dream, as we all know, of every medieval European merchant. That's right, medieval Europe. Sorry, no knights in armor, no large wars of conquest, only hoards of money and political power. So take off those general's stars and put on your best Donald Trump smile and take a look at *The Patrician*, a German design distributed in North America by Readysoft.

The Patrician is a game of medieval trade and political power. The game is set in 14th century Europe, along the Baltic and North Sea trade routes. You take the position of a lowly merchant in one of the towns that formed the Hanseatic League. The League was a powerful alliance of merchants in the 14th century that dominated trade in the Baltic for almost 200 years. The objective of the game is to rise through trade and politics to the head of the League.

While there is some conflict in *The Patrician*, the central focus is definitely economic. You are required to fend off pirate attacks from time to time, and status and political power can be gained from participating in the League's military ventures, but the overriding priority is money.

While only a successful political campaign will win the game, political campaigns cost money. An unsuccessful merchant will never succeed in politics; an ample purse is vital, and this can only be obtained through a clever economic strategy.

Aristocratic Appeal

The Patrician is presented in an attractive and pleasing manner. While not quite state of the art, the graphics are very good, particularly for a strategy game. On my 486-50 the scrolling map was smoother than any I have ever seen. On slower machines it was not quite as smooth, but it was still impressive. More importantly, the screen was attractive and easy to understand, even on the black and white monitor of a laptop.

The game interface is clean and logical. The game shifts from town to town as ships arrive and depart. Each town has the a similar layout: a commercial screen (the waterfront), a political screen (the town square), and a construction screen (the shipyard). Clicking on the various buildings provides access to the offices inside, where most of the activities take place. All commands may be given by mouse, although a combination of mouse and keyboard commands works best, particularly when entering numbers.

The ease and accessibility of the interface is particularly important for *The Patrician*, as the manual is somewhat less than helpful. To be fair, it is probably very informative in its original German, but the English translation leaves much to be desired. The history that constitutes about half of the total manual is difficult to read and provides little assistance to aspiring merchants. The actual instructions range from clear to completely obtuse, depending upon the topic. In some cases the manual is wrong, as in the names and descriptions of the various ships available. It also discusses commodities that do not exist and fails to accurately describe the steps necessary to win the game.

Surprisingly, however, this does not really detract from the play value of the game. The manual is not so bad that the mechanics of the game are obscured, and the interface is easy enough that, once I got going, I was able to do just about everything without referring to the instructions.

Merchant Manners

At the heart of *The Patrician* is a trading simulation. The game revolves around the buying and selling of 18 commodities in 16 towns stretching from London to Novgorod. You can buy and sell anything from corn and fish to furs and pepper. With one exception (noted below) the commodities are transported from town to town by ship, and so a large, well organized fleet is vital to commercial success. Ships may be purchased at any town, however the supply of wood and other raw materials

The Patrician

TITLE:	The Patrician
PRICE:	$59.95
SYSTEM:	Amiga, Atari ST, IBM (IBM reviewed)
REQUIREMENTS:	Amiga: 1MB RAM, hard drive, mouse; supports RAM expansion; IBM: 286 or better, VGA graphics
DESIGNER:	Triptychon
PUBLISHER:	Readysoft Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada (416) 731-4175

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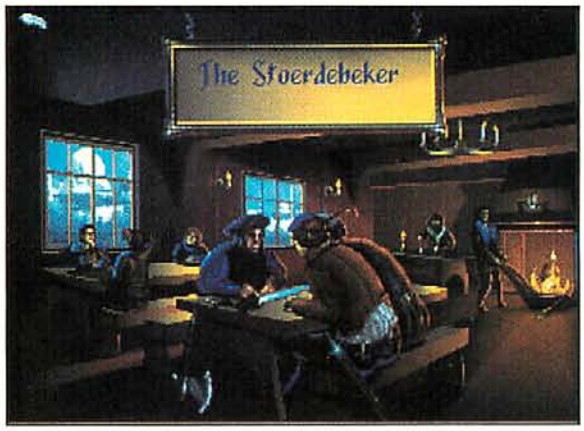
will greatly affect the price as well as the time of construction. For those in a hurry, ships may also be purchased at periodic auctions, although the condition of most auctioned ships is not good, to say the least.

The one exception to this system is the caravan route between Hamburg and Lubeck. These are two of the richest towns in the League, and players are well advised to consider either for their home. The caravan route allows you to ship large amounts of commodities by road between the two cities. Goods should be sent via the caravan route whenever possible as it reduces the wear and tear on ships and allows merchants to safely send very large quantities of goods in a single shipment.



Trade revolves around the prices of the different commodities in each of the cities. Obviously, the aim is to buy goods low and sell high. Prices are determined by supply and demand, and the difference in prices between towns can be great. This provides structural advantages that should be exploited regularly. For instance, furs will always be cheap in Novgorod and expensive in the West. At the same time, Fish Oil is usually very cheap in Scandinavia and scarce everywhere else. Prices also fluctuate according to the season (naturally, the supply of some goods declines over the winter) and according to the stocks each town has built up through trade.

Because prices are sensitive to the activity of traders, a diverse trading strategy is necessary. Trading only in high value goods, such as pepper and furs, will quickly deplete the cash of your home town, leading to economic (and thus political) ruin. In general, it is a good idea to buy more from your home town than you sell there. This will keep the local merchants and citizens happy and the town prosperous.

A smart trade strategy will benefit from the use of warehouses. These can be built in any town on the map and provide a number of advantages. If left empty, they supply rent and can be considered a form of long-term investment. More importantly, warehouses can be used to stock up on seasonal commodities during the harvest when prices are cheap.

In addition, merchants can hire workers to develop raw materials into more valuable finished products. This is done by retraining workers in a particular town and then stocking raw materials in a warehouse in the same town. For instance, wool can be converted to more valuable cloth, greatly increasing its value, even if it is never shipped to another location.

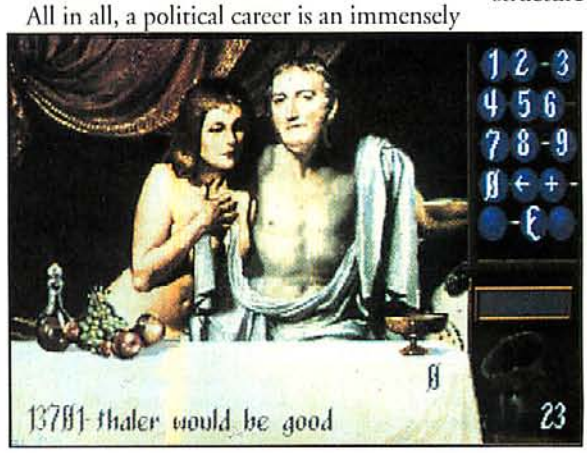
Becoming Pious And Mighty

Once an effective trade network is established and a number of ships are in operation, a political campaign can (and must) be mounted. To compete for the leadership of the League, it is necessary first to be elected mayor of one of the towns that make up the league.

Election is based upon popularity with the townspeople, which can be increased in a number of ways. First, one needs to be a successful and prosperous merchant. Second, it is important to be sufficiently pious; there are church constructions to finance, poor people to support, and, of course, indulgences to pay. Third, social status can be increased through membership in trade guilds, through public feasts, and through a socially successful marriage, including a prestigious and sufficiently grandiose wedding.

Finally, contributions to the defense of your home town and the military expeditions of the league are crucial to the success of a merchant's rise to power. They are also the most expensive. Not only do military expenses draw cash away from trade, expeditions usually require heavily armed ships, which are then not able to ply the trade routes.

All in all, a political career is an immensely expensive undertaking. The nature of the economic model is such that expenses do not level off either, so that with increased expansion comes increased costs. Artisans and crew members must be paid, warehouses and ships maintained, and new ships purchased. Ships deteriorate over time, particularly if they carry heavy loads in rough seas. Every time a ship is repaired it loses carrying capacity. A well used ship will, over time, lose the ability to carry enough cargo to pay for itself. Therefore, there is no such thing as a complete fleet or a capital expense plateau: new investment is required constantly.



Traders In Training

While the interface is easy to learn, this does not altogether compensate for the failings of the manual. Almost no numbers or formulae are provided to explain how the economic model works. Absolute control freaks will not be able to stomach such an omission, while the rest of us would just like to know how much we are paying the crews of our ships and the staff at our warehouses.

Furthermore, the number of commodities (18) and the number of different buying and selling prices for each (16) makes for a bookkeeping nightmare the first few times you play the game. An experienced player will come to know where each good can be obtained for the best price and where each can find the best market; however, for beginners, an on-line bookkeeping system would have been appreciated.

Once the pricing system is understood, the trading element of the game becomes somewhat repetitive. As prices change constantly and special events alter the regular supply of a particular commodity there is still plenty to do, but a smart merchant is virtually guaranteed to make money.

Finally, there are no levels of difficulty or options for an altered start. While it is possible to begin the game in a number of different towns, this does not alter the basic price structure that underpins the game.

These limitations are unfortunate because underneath them is a solid program and a fun game to boot. It has a limited scope, but what it does it does well. The lack of options will ultimately reduce its replayability, but the game is sufficiently long that this shouldn't be a huge problem for casual strategists. Players looking for a strategy game with an interesting and less combat-oriented approach will find that *The Patrician* fits the bill nicely. **CGW**

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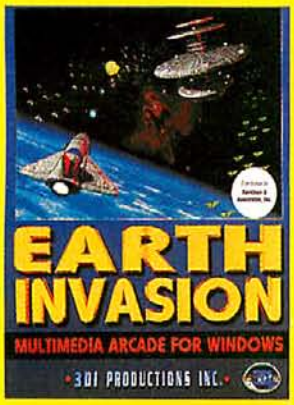

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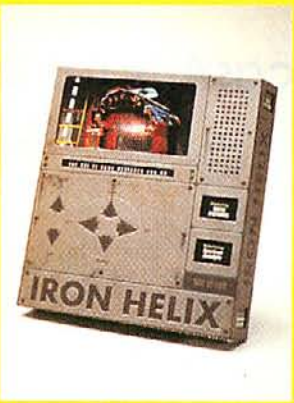

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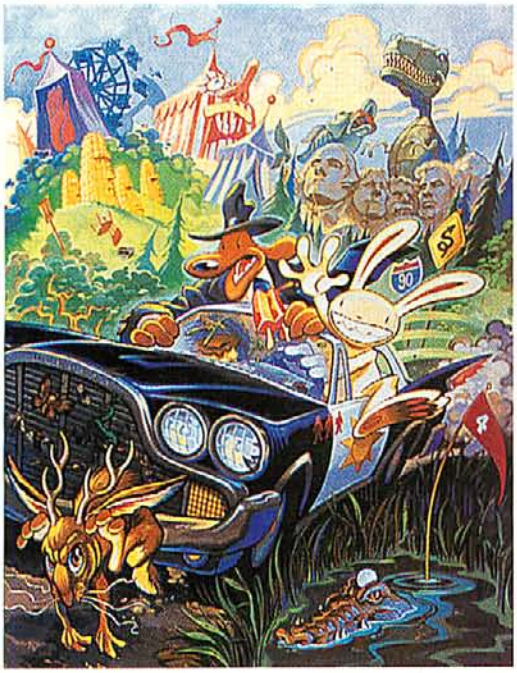


HIT *the* ROAD, MAX

LucasArts Takes To The Highway With Sam & Max

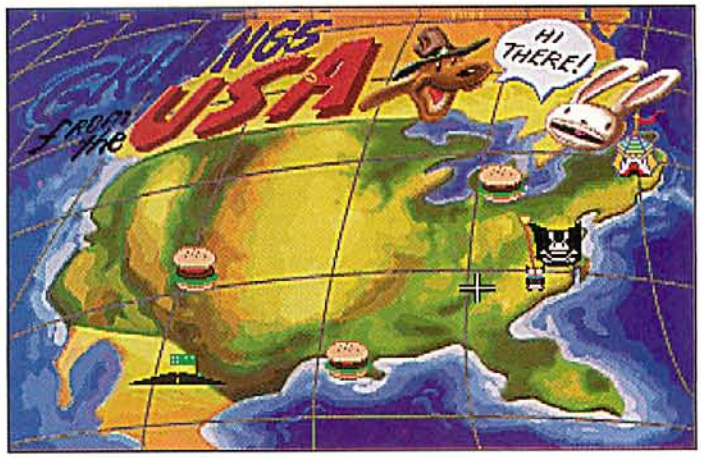
by Charles Ardai

Sam and Max, readers of Steve Purcell's comic strips will know, are a couple of weird-looking, sarcastic, gleefully subversive guys who have roughly as much respect for cows of the sacred variety as Beefsteak Charlie has for the ordinary sort. They delight in puncturing pomposity, exposing the tacky underbelly of our fine nation to the ridicule it both invites and deserves, and generally behaving like a pair of willfully malicious imps. They remind me of my friends.

They are *also*, respectively, a laconic, suit-wearing dog and a hyperactive, misshapen rabbit. In this regard they do not resemble my friends. My friends are not laconic.

If I like my friends, it would seem to follow that I must also like Sam and Max, and probably the new LucasArts game in which they make their software debut, *Sam & Max Hit the Road*—and, in fact, I do. However, I have to admit to liking it measurably less than LucasArts' previous foray into cartoon-inspired comedy, *Day of the Tentacle*.

Tentacle felt like an old Looney Tunes short, complete with pratfalls, goofy gags, and scads of silliness. *Sam & Max* has its share of pratfalls, too, but it feels less like a Warner Brothers cartoon and more like an underground comic book. To begin with, the art is more edgy and raw. (Sam is a closer cousin to Matt Groening's "Bongo" from the "Life In Hell" strip than to Bugs Bunny.) The music is quietly unnerving jazz instead of rousing calliope schtick. Some of the plot material the game introduces is chancier than a mainstream cartoon would permit, the images more scabrous, the jokes more adult. ("Every time I catch enough fish to fill my net," one character complains, "a helicopter swoops down and carries the fish off...It's like being stuck in a Norman Mailer novel.")



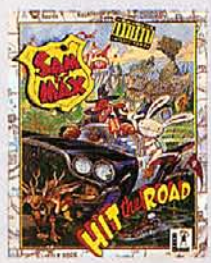
While, on the whole, I believe that the designers should be commended for taking a chance with material that is certain to appeal to a smaller audience than they might have reached with something easier or more accessible, it is a gamble that does not always pay off. There is a reason that mainstream is more popular than underground, no matter what field you are discussing: it is more fun and less "in your face"; it's calculated to entertain rather than to disconcert.

For the sake of comparison, consider the field of professional magic. More people like David Copperfield than Penn & Teller, a duo who resemble Sam and Max in many ways. Why? Because even if you enjoy their style and appreciate that they are less conservative and predictable than Copperfield, Penn & Teller can be hard to take after a while.

Self-referential jokes, sneering remarks, deadpan derision, sarcasm, and ridicule can all be funny, but only to a point. Push the point too far and you can give the impression of the party guest trying too hard to be "on," the comedian who doesn't know when to let up, or the teenage boor with a wisecrack for every situation.

It is probably not very useful to psychoanalyze cartoon characters, but Sam and Max are a pair of aggressive little buggers who vent

Sam & Max Hit the Road



TITLE:	Sam & Max Hit the Road
PRICE:	$59.95
SYSTEM:	IBM
REQUIREMENTS:	386-33MHz or better recommended, 2MB RAM recommended, VGA graphics, 16MB hard drive space; supports Ad Lib, Sound Blaster (Pro/16), PAS, Roland and General MIDI sound cards
PROTECTION:	Documentation look up
DESIGNERS:	Sean Clark, Mike Stemmle, Steve Purcell, and Collette Michaud
PUBLISHER:	LucasArts San Rafael, CA (800) 782-7927

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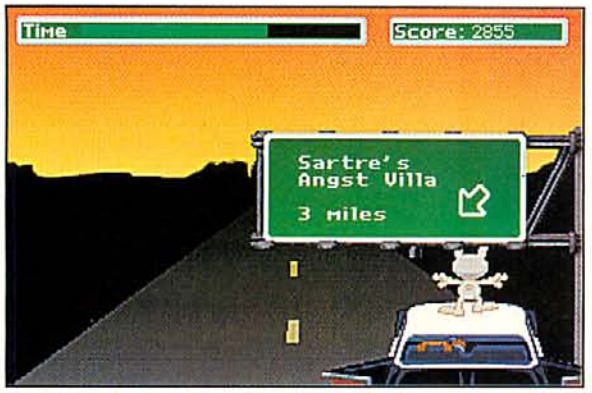

gobs of latent hostility and alienation in their obnoxious running commentary on everything they encounter. They are constantly egging each other on, trying to top each other in cleverness and sang-froid, and it tries one's patience. Not that the obnoxious remarks aren't funny, if you go for that sort of thing—they often made me laugh out loud, but enough is enough, and what is funny for the duration of a ten-panel comic strip starts to grate after a few hours of gameplay.

Play It Again, Sam

The gameplay itself is solid. LucasArts has renovated its SCUMM game engine by removing the inventory and command icons from the screen, allowing the whole space to be occupied by graphics. The result is that there is room for the characters to be drawn large and in detail; this, plus the elimination of the "interface frame" surrounding the graphics, helps break down the barrier between the player and the action. It's one more step, and not a negligible one, toward allowing gamers to "play a cartoon."

Players still select from the usual command icons (Walk, Talk, Use, Take, Look), which they cycle through by clicking the right mouse button. Clicking on a cardboard box stowed in one corner of the screen calls up one's inventory; any of the objects one has collected can then be picked up and used as command icons themselves. (It is worth mentioning that, once again, LucasArts has come up with some of the cleverest and best-drawn icons in the business. What these guys can conjure up in less than a half-inch of space is incredible.)

Perhaps the most novel element of the gameplay is the way in which conversations are handled. When the player clicks the "clacking teeth" icon on a character, a row of dialogue and subject icons appears across the bottom of the screen. Instead of choosing from lines of dialogue, as in *Tentacle*, the player selects a type of speech act—question, exclamation, non sequitur—or else chooses icons representing characters and events in the game. This allows the game's writers to continually surprise the player with their context-sensitive witticisms, rather than displaying a list of gag lines in a bland menu format. The technique adds spice already in the floppy-disk version of the game; when the inevitable CD-ROM version comes out, replacing printed text with speech, the degree to which the new system improves interactive conversations should be even more apparent.

Extensive use of spoken-word audio will also help in a less obvious way. Some of the dialogue text, which is color coded to indicate who is speaking, is hard to read against some backgrounds. Sam's brown text is especially prone to illegibility, while Max's white letters can be eye-searing if your monitor's brightness is turned a notch too high. Replacing text with audio should eliminate the problem.

Of course, different color schemes or some kind of letter shadowing could also have eliminated the problem, and the fact that they weren't used suggests (mildly) inadequate forethought on LucasArts' part. There are other examples, too. Consider one quirk of cycling through icons rather than selecting them from a menu: if one attempts to use an object on someone or something inappropriate, the computer jumps the cycle back to the default "walk" icon, requiring the player to click several times in order to bring up the object again for another try. Or consider the peculiarities of icon placement: sometimes, if you want to look at Max (for instance), placing the "eye" icon right on top of Max will not work, while placing it above Max's head will.

None of the above interferes with gameplay to a serious extent, but it is needlessly annoying. The new interface would need some tweaking, therefore, before I could recommend it unreservedly.

Hare Of The Dog

Less easily tweakable is the game's storyline, a rambling, picaresque mishmash centered around the pursuit of an AWOL sasquatch who has vanished from a New England freak show. Sam and Max, "freelance police" by trade, are called upon to track down Bruno the Bigfoot and, while they are at it, Trixie the Giraffe-Necked Girl, who vanished on the same day. They undertake this mission by poking around the freak show's various tents and trailers and (for no apparent reason) a chain of discount grub-huts called "Snuckey's." Their investigation leads them to a series of tourist traps around the country such as "The World's Largest Ball of Twine" (where they have to chat up a psychic and steal a mood ring) and "The World of Fish" (where they have to pilfer a pailful of fish and then disguise themselves as a giant trout).

Along the way there are lots of weird characters to talk with (my favorite being the painfully loquacious Doug the Mole Man) and puzzles to solve. The latter tend not to be very hard, particularly since the characters periodically give the player a nudge in the right direction. ("I'm sure this is somehow useful," Sam says at one point, pointing to a set of binoculars. "I think we're supposed to do something in there," says Max at another, as they exit the carnival's Tunnel of Love ride.) The hardest puzzles are the ones that require the player to use Max as a tool, since it is not obvious just what he is useful for. At various times, you

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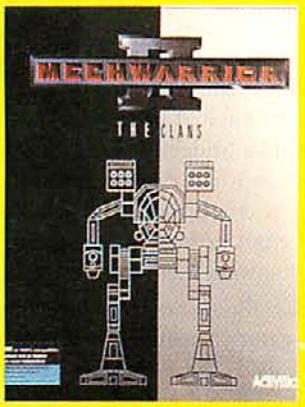

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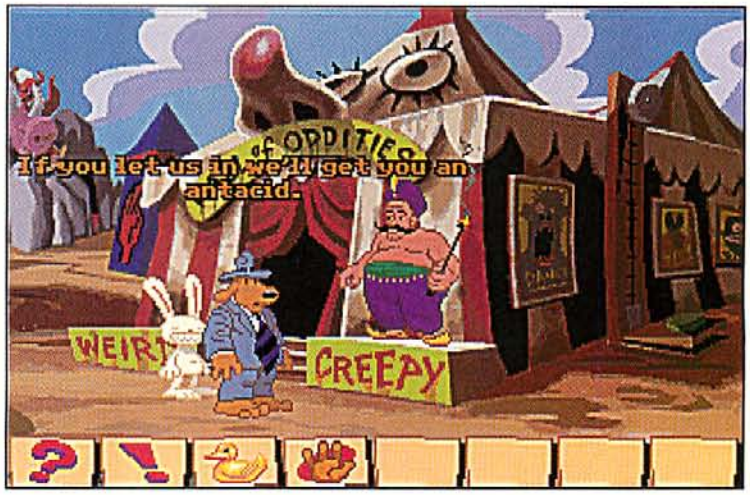
have to use him as an interrogator, a circuit breaker, and a knife; the best heuristic to keep in mind is, "When all else fails, try using Max."

Other sequences that some players may find difficult include the two action sequences that must be completed successfully to finish the game, "Wak-A-Rat" and "Gator Golf." The former has Sam pounding rats with a hammer at the carnival; quick and accurate placement of the mouse is key to passing this hurdle. The latter has Sam whacking fish into a gator-infested swamp in order to build a bridge between the shore and the island on which Max is imprisoned. Dexterity is less crucial here, but it takes a while to figure out how to get the gators to move where you want them to.



Sam & Max also contains a handful of optional sub-games, including a version of "Battleship" called "CarBomb," a coloring book, a set of Sam and Max dress-up dolls, and a simple driving/jumping game called "Highway Surfing." Of these, only the last (in which the player can get up to Level 7 or thereabouts just by sitting back and doing nothing) is weak. None of them have anything to do with the game's story, however, and their presence (along with that of a bunch of screen savers that kick in if you don't do anything for a few minutes) contribute to the feeling that *Sam & Max* is more a computerized busybox—not unlike the very road trip "activity books" the designers satirize at every turn—than a unified, focused piece of fiction.

To The Max

However gonzo *Day of the Tentacle* got, it was always grounded in a very clear and well-developed storyline and it made sure we cared about the characters and their plight. *Sam & Max* is all over the map, literally; its main characters are basically jerks; and the quest they are on is of no significance even to them. So, although individual scenes in the game can be quite funny, the whole is rather less than the sum of its parts.

Day of the Tentacle was that rarest of all creations, one in which everything came together perfectly. *Sam & Max* is fine, but lesser. It's like the difference between *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*—or between the original *Maniac Mansion* and its lackluster follow-up, *Zak McKracken and the Alien Mindbenders.*

Gamers ravenous for a LucasArts fix after finishing *Tentacle* will find that *Sam & Max* affords a couple of hours of somewhat similar amusement. Endlessly sarcastic New York intellectuals like my friends will find its tone wholly agreeable, but whether it plays in Peoria remains to be seen. *Sam & Max* marches to a different drummer. You'll have to decide if you can dance to its irregular beat. **CGW**

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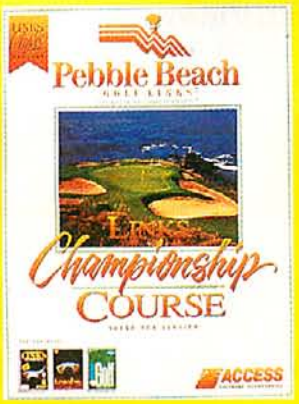

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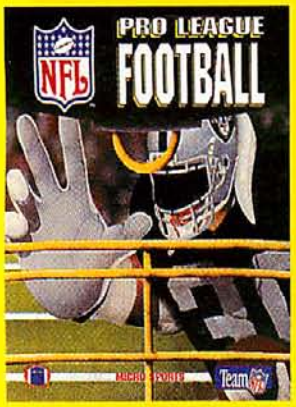

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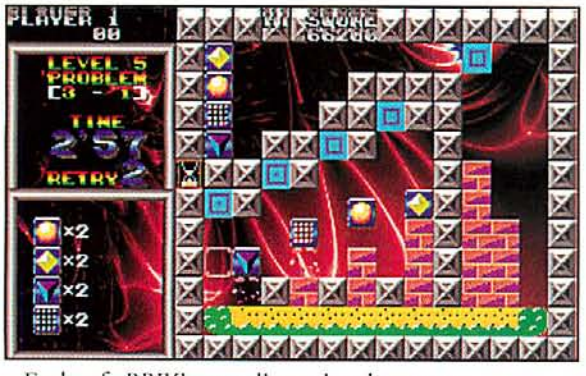
Mortar Combat!

Battling With *BRIX* In MicroLeague's Latest

by Allen L. Greenberg

The secret to the success of the rubber band and the paper clip in the office environments of the world is twofold: they are simple, useful and cheap. And, perhaps more importantly, they are cleverly disguised toys for bored executives and secretaries. This may be the best explanation for their ubiquity in desks throughout the world, especially those mahogany desks generally lacking in papers to be clipped or objects to be rubber-banded.

With the invention of the desktop dartboard, the executive fly-swatter and *Tetris*, the demand for office toys has been brought out into the open, and such toys need no longer masquerade as marginally useful pieces of office equipment. Now, proudly and without false pretense, a pastime based on the common household building brick becomes an object of recreation in *BRIX*, a new abstract strategy game from MicroLeague Interactive.



Each of *BRIX*'s two-dimensional screens contains a maze, the walls and borders of which may not be altered during the game. The bricks in *BRIX* are inscribed with a variety of patterns and are scattered throughout each maze. The object is to manipulate the bricks so that two or more touch each other. When they do, look out. Call it love, call it hate—either way, the brief affair ends explosively. Each patterned brick must "meet its match," so to speak, in order for the level to be complete.

BRIX is played using only the keyboard, and neither the mouse nor the joystick are supported. A brick-shaped cursor is manipulated about the screen using the four directional keys. Once the cursor is on a brick, it may be highlighted using the space bar, at which point that brick may then be moved in whichever direction is open. Those familiar with the classic computer and arcade game *Boulder Dash* will probably feel at home with the action here.

The game is divided into *BRIX 1* and *BRIX 2*, which probably reflects its shareware origin. Both games contain seven levels, each of which are divided into a variety of sub-levels, difficulties, and sub-sub-levels so that the package boasts a total of 224 different challenges. Each puzzle is tagged with its own secret code so that you can return to the puzzle in the future without playing through the earlier portion of the game.

As long as they are adjacent to each other either horizontally or vertically, any number of matching bricks will cause an explosion. Several different brick patterns appear in each maze, and there is a varying number of bricks that bear the same pattern. An even number of matching bricks is usually easier to eliminate, since these may be taken out in pairs. An odd number of matching bricks means that, at some point, the three bricks must be brought together at the same instant.

The mazes can be quite complex and therefore require some careful study. Unfortunately, careful study is a luxury you cannot afford due to a countdown timer that restricts each round to a small number of fleeting minutes. An option to pause the game is not available, and although each round of the game may be reset to the beginning as many as two times, this option does not reset the timer. Players who enjoy tackling these types of challenges at a leisurely, crossword-puzzle manner may be unhappy with this panicked pace.

Making *BRIX* somewhat more interesting than the average brain teaser are a variety of gadgets appearing in some of the mazes. Automatic laser guns destroy everything in their path and are set to fire every few seconds. You may destroy bricks by dropping them into an acid or water bath, although using the acid bath will cause the round to end. Transporters beam bricks from one portion of the maze to another. There are elevators that carry bricks up or down, as well as crumbling bricks that turn to dust within several seconds of supporting another brick. The most interesting of these gadgets is an hourglass that causes the entire screen to do a vertical flip every few seconds.

BRIX includes a "level solver" which will, mid-game, demonstrate the solution to a particular puzzle, provided you have earned enough game points to pay for this service. There is also a puzzle editor that allows you to alter an existing puzzle or to wipe it out in favor of one of your own design.

BRIX is certainly an entertaining little exercise, although its potential for desktop-based addiction is not quite as high as its package would lead you to believe. It may, however, prove more engaging, and certainly more challenging, than creating paper clip chains and shooting rubber bands into coffee mugs. **CGW**

BRIX

TITLE:	BRIX
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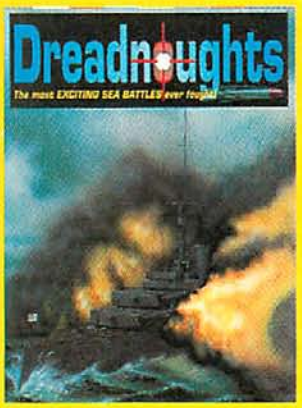

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The Year The Stars Fell

An Overview of 1993's Space War Titles

by Martin E. Cirulis

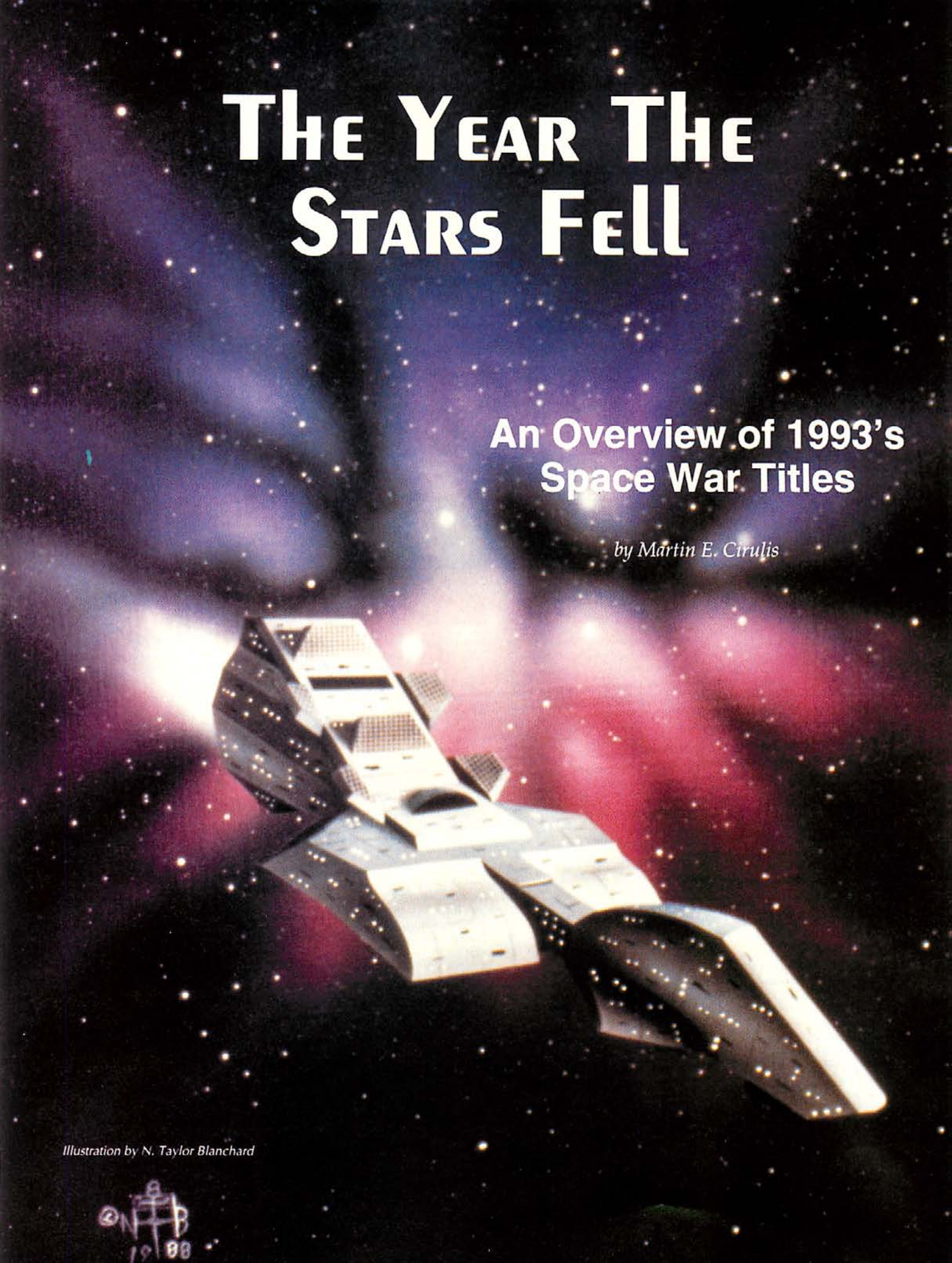
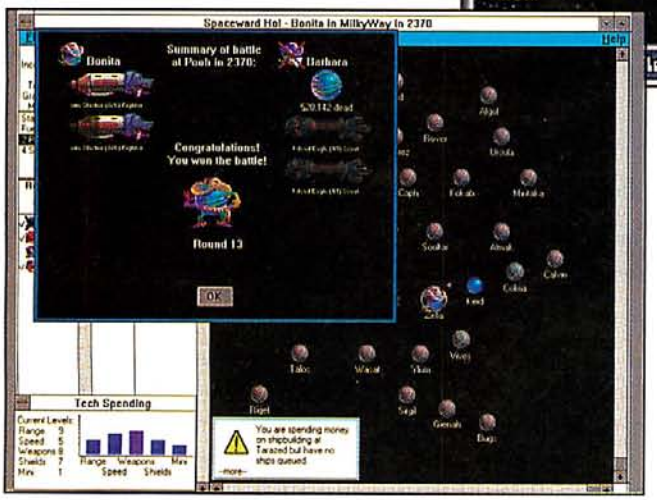


Illustration by N. Taylor Blanchard

It could have something to do with the latest crop of TV science fiction, good and bad, or a reflection of the newest plague of brush-fire wars on our own little world; or maybe it's just that time of decade again. Whatever the cause, 1993 produced a hoard of software titles with science fictional elements, revolving around various aspects of tactical and strategic warfare in the depths of space and across the surface of alien worlds.

Over the past year, I have had the occasionally dubious pleasure of playing most of the science fiction wargames to hit the shelves. The pack was large and competitive, including the epic but light-hearted *StarControl II* by **Accolade**; the much buzzed *Master of Orion* from **MicroProse**; the repetitive *Star Legions* and the Siamese twins of the software world, *Tegel's Mercenaries* and *Strike Squad*, all brought to you by the busy kids at **Mindcraft**; a fast-paced tribute to Frank Herbert's dream, *Dune II* from **Virgin**; the wacky cowboy frontier of *Spaceward HO!* marketed by **New World Computing**; a game that just couldn't live up to its box-top brags, *Maelstrom* by **Merit Software**; the gory child of **Games Workshops**' boardgame, *SpaceHulk* distributed by **Electronic Arts**, the uninspired *When Two Worlds War* and the complex and innovative ship-to-ship wargame, *Rules of Engagement 2*, both given life by **Impressions**; and last but far from least, a dedicated and evolving shareware spaceploitation game, *VGA Planets 3.0*, distributed by its designer, **Tim Wisseman**. As you can probably imagine, with a field as extensive as this, there was very little time this year for me to play much of any other genre, never mind getting enough sleep.

Master of Orion: the *Civ*-ilized space game.



Spaceward HO!: the wild, wild Western spiral arm of the galaxy.

Spaceploitation HO!

With an attitude that would strike terror and rage into any aboriginal heart, the colonization and exploitation of alien worlds was the major facet of the three games that were closest to the traditional model of SF wargames. *Spaceward HO!*, *Master of Orion* and *VGA Planets* are all based on the explore/conquer/build fleets template which has been with us since the days of SSI's *Imperium Galactium* on the old C-64 (nearly a decade ago!). Still, this new crop of spaceploitation titles has re-invented itself in a variety of distinctive ways.

Spaceward HO! was the most notable because it presented the spaceploitation concept with a hybrid sci-fi/wild west theme and played the colonization of space for laughs. Its simple economics and development were all controlled by convenient slider bars and, most importantly, it did away with the agonizing hotseat of most multi-player games with its networking capability. With space for 20 players, human and computerized, *HO!* brought a cheer from most social gamers and drew in many non-wargamer types with the use of clever bells and whistles.

Master Of Orion came out in the second half of the year and turned out, by coincidence or design, to incorporate many of *HO!*'s user-friendly aspects into a more traditional, serious clash of empire. The game involves 10 races with distinct traits and advantages; any particular scenario involves five races randomly selected from the pool. *Master Of Orion* has the kind of attention to detail that keeps you coming back to try new strategies. The only drawback was the fact that it was a single player game; *MOO* could have made a brilliant multi-player platform. Instead it is another in a disturbing trend of non-social wargames from **MicroProse**.

The most traditional spaceploitation game of the year, *VGA Planets*, still managed to break new ground; it is a shareware game that runs on a computer Bulletin Board System. Up to 11 players can carve up and exploit a

500 world universe in the comfort of their own homes, and when they have finished a round of managing their worlds and fleets, they simply order the software to pack the turn into a convenient single file that can then be uploaded to the BBS. The BBS host program integrates the turns, resolves conflict, and updates the galaxy. Diplomacy, treaties, and Jihads abound in this game, which is very similar in feel to a play-by-mail system but without the cost and wait. A new version, *Planets 4.0*, will support up to 20 races, a workable AI, and offer even more refinements to the hosts, allowing them to fine tune games to their own taste. *VGA Planets* can be found as shareware on an ever-growing list of BBSs.

"This World Must Be Mine!"

This year also brought a narrowing of the Space War focus down to battles over the surface of worlds. *Star Legions*, *When Two Worlds War* and *Dune II* all revolved around the trials and tribulations of invading and securing a single world. Economics and politics were either sacrificed or dealt with very superficially in order to concentrate on individual structures and military units as the focus moved from strategic to tactical. It seems that reaction time was also considered important on this smaller stage as all three of these titles were based on a system of real-time continuous action instead of the more relaxed and pensive turn-based simulations most wargamers are used to.

StarLegions came out early this year and tried to present the gobbling of worlds by a giant empire, not from the Admiral's lofty perch, but from the up-close perspective of the General in charge of securing a world once the flash and glory space combat is over. *SL* examined many interesting points of planetary invasion. Bombardments could cost you the destruction of the very prize you sought, and you are always gambling glory against disgrace as you try to "bid low" on the ships and troops you will requisition from your Empire to get the job done. Unfortunately, the game suffered from a high tedium factor. World after world offered fewer surprises and more sheer numbers. Over-simplification of game mechanics that reduced your options and undermined the futuristic premise of the game did little to help.

Impressions narrowed the focus even further with *When Two Worlds War*, a head-to-head conflict either against the AI or a human via modem. You have to protect your own world and its Military Industrial Complex while journeying to your foe's world and paving it with lasers and bombs. Of course the enemy has the identical set of priorities, and with the game running in real time, a prospective warlord has to think fast and react faster. *W2WW* incorporated a basic research and development system along the lines of that found in *HO!* and gave you a multitude of options, but all this work on the designer's part was almost for naught; the simplification of mechanics demon struck again and rendered most of the game's tactical options moot. A weak AI opponent was also a fault, but the modem capability helped get around this and make for an enjoyable two player game.

Dune II was generally lauded as a great improvement over the first computer game version of this legendary SF series. Only a token nod was given to the elegant and treacherous politics of Frank Herbert's immortal books, but **Virgin** still managed to capture the feel of fighting across this strange and arid world. You must contend against one, two or even three rival houses in a scenario while trying to gather up enough precious Spice to support your war efforts. In addition, there are the awesome Sandworms wandering the landscape, gobbling up assault tanks like popcorn. To capture Dune, you must battle over individual provinces, conquering one before being allowed to move on to another, very much like **Bullfrog**'s *Powermonger* from last year. The AI for the opponents' Houses is tenacious and tough most of the time. In the final analysis though, Dune is but a single world and, from a wargamer's point of view, once you have captured her in the role of each different Noble House offered to you, there is very little reason to go back. Modem support could have made a world of difference to the lifetime of this game.

Dune II: Sand worms, spice, and many a gamer's vice.

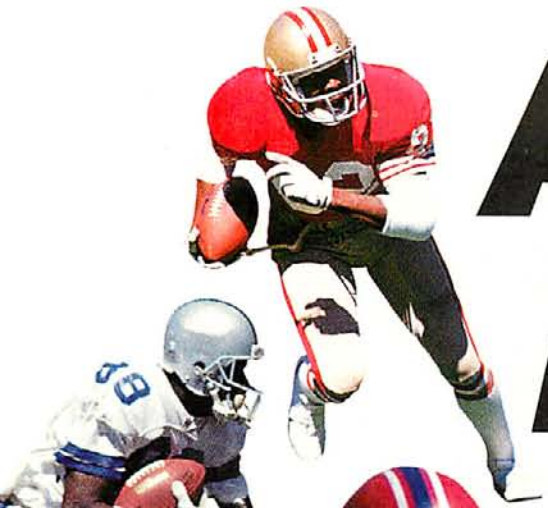
Roll The Dice, Move Your Mice

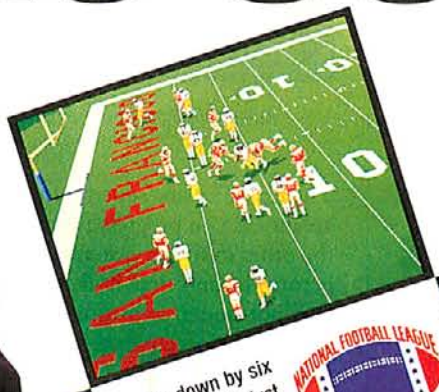
With the wargaming microscope turned to its highest power, we venture into the world of conflict where a player controls only a handful of dynamic units. In *Tegel's Mercenaries*, and its unofficial sequel, *Strike Squad*, you are controlling small squads of troops by ordering each person individually. In *Rules of Engagement II*, your job is to captain a single starship while giving orders to other ships in your fleet. Real-time combat is a big part of all three of these titles, and they trade heavily on the concept that you are a being with a mission.

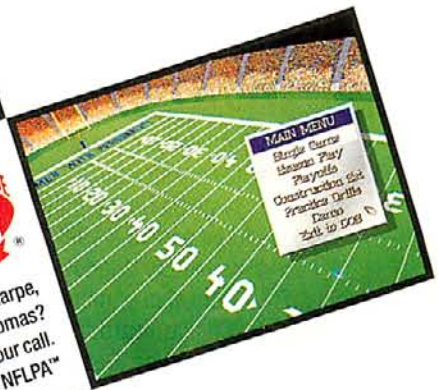
Tegel's Mercenaries and *Strike Squad* from **Mindcraft** are in the tradition of squad level wargames that can be traced back to **Avalon Hill**'s boardgame, *Squad Leader*. In these games you are the commander of a group of mercenaries who find themselves in the unenviable position of trying to save the civilized galaxy while maintaining a healthy profit margin. Commanding these characters is a matter of guiding them around a skewed 3-D landscape while issuing very basic fire/grab/drop/move orders. Characters not under your direct control possess a rudimentary intelligence; enough to shoot at any enemy in range, but not enough to come in out of the laser rain on their own. Among other problems, the linear storyline of *Tegel's Mercenaries* reduced its replay value almost to nil. *Strike Squad*, while keeping an almost identical graphic and control engine, added permanent locations that could be revisited and an *Ultima*-style "go-there-talk-to-that" storyline. Unfortunately, the setting of a broken leg did little to alleviate the patient's heart condition, and **Mindcraft** seems to have declined to advertise the fact that *Strike Squad* is *Tegel's 1.5*.

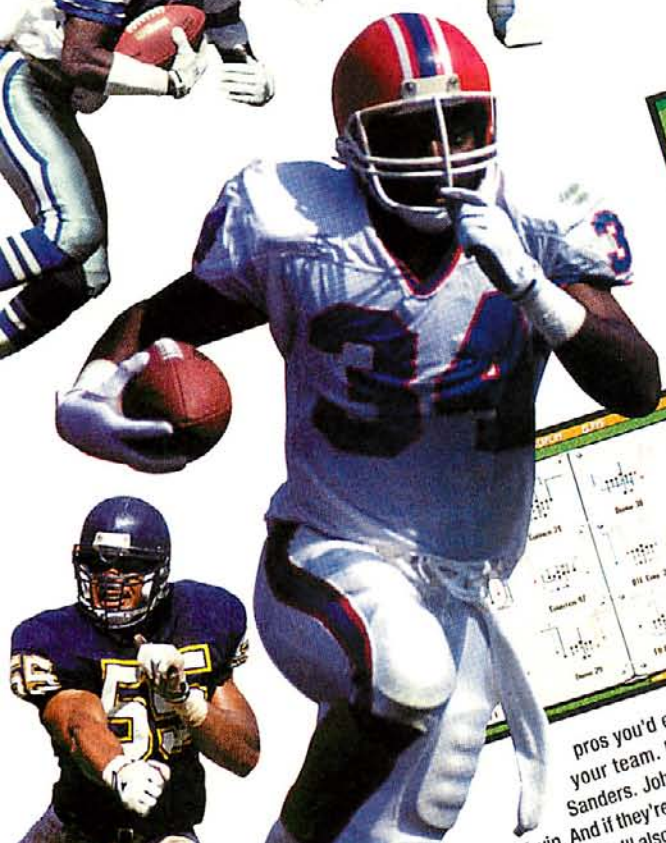
Space Hulk is not a game about a big green muscleman in a spacesuit. It's actually the first of what I am sure will be many computer conversions of the extensive and nihilistic *WarHammer 40K* series of games from England's **Games Workshop**. Distributed by **Electronic Arts**, this software package is extremely faithful to its boardgame incarnation. Squads of Imperial Marines, a military branch that has evolved into a neo-religious order, must root out the dark and twisted enemies of humanity in the bowels of ancient dreadnoughts and the subterranean caverns of shattered worlds. Game play is relatively simple and easy to get the hang of. You face a hostile world through a first person point-of-view similar to *Wolfenstein 3-D*, but lacking the fluidity of motion found in that title.

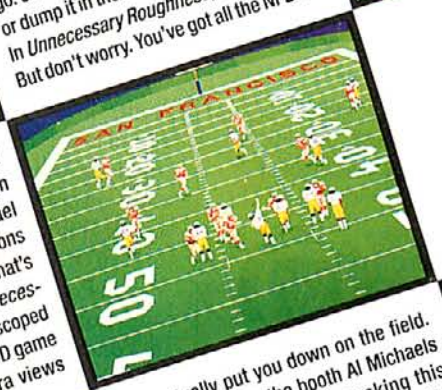
All Pros. No Cons.

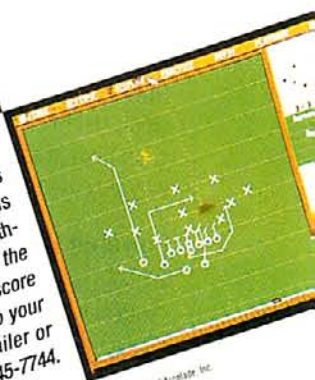


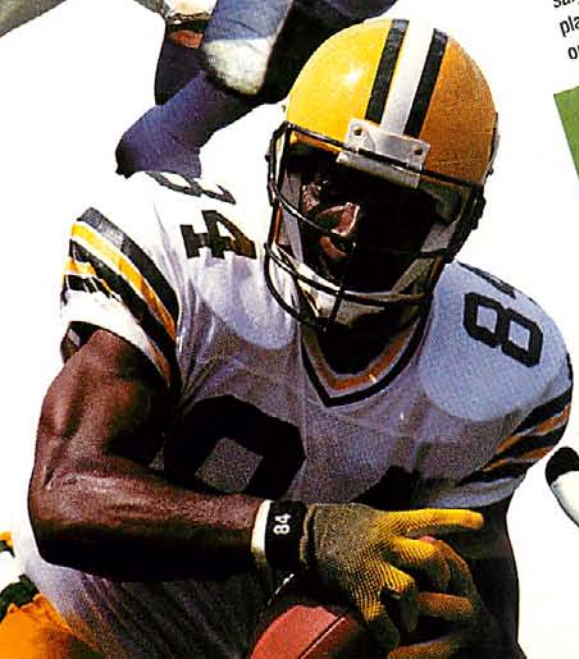


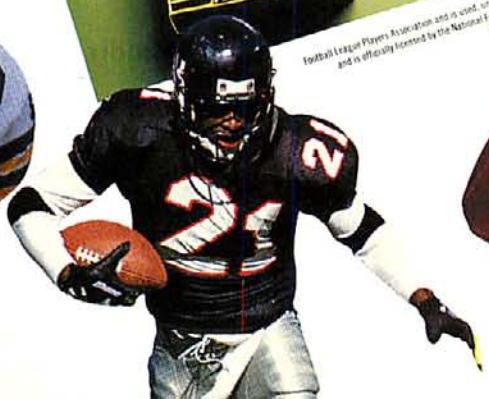












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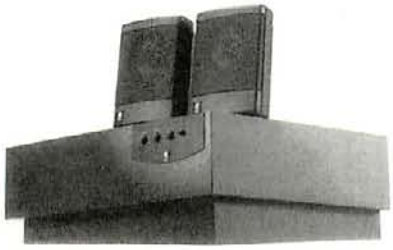

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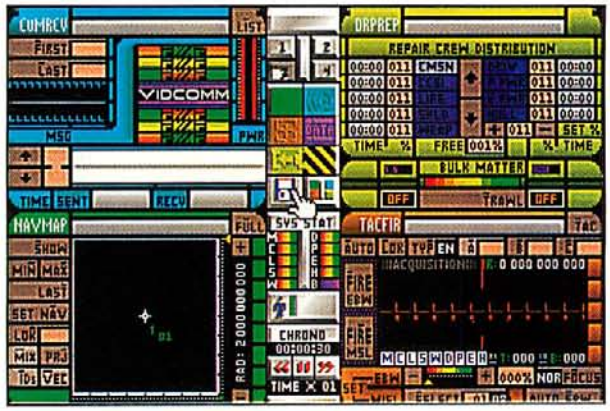

Rules Of Engagement 2: Underneath all those buttons is a great game.

The graphics are superb, and there is gore aplenty as you progress from one scenario to the other in the service of your undying Emperor. The only drawback is that squad members not under your direct control have the same life expectancy as those old *Star Trek* guys in red shirts.

Rules of Engagement 2 seems proud to acknowledge its sequeldom and is a great refinement of its previous incarnation. As part of **Omnitrend**'s *Interlocking Game System*, *RoE2* is meant to be linked to *Breach 2* or, preferably, the upcoming *Breach 3*. With the games interlocked, the boarding of enemy ships and installations is resolved at the squad level of control. *RoE2* is actually more like a starship simulator but without the arcade qualities marking other titles in this category. Here, your decisions are tactical in nature, and quick thinking combined with fluid tactics are far more important than lightning reflexes. Personnel have their own personalities and motivations that affect how they respond in combat, so you need to choose your ship captains wisely. Make no mistake; it uses a polished ship-panel interface, but *RoE2* is a complex game—definitely the most complex of the games covered here. It rewards every moment you put into it. There is even a magnificent scenario builder that allows you to construct entire campaigns based on the success/failure branching paths that have been so successful in **Origin**'s *Wing Commander* series.

Adventure Is My Middle Name!

With all these bombs going off across the galaxy there were bound to be a few mutants around, and sure enough, there were a couple of hybrids in the genre this year. *StarControl II* and *Maelstrom* are both wargames at heart, but they are driven by adventure game plots. Yes, you must still collect material, make ships, and blow up other people's ships, but there is a developing storyline that evolves around you and demands your participation. If you play the narrow military commander and pay attention only to battles while the universe goes by outside your viewport, you've found a sure way to lose these games. Unfortunately, the gene splice brought with it the flaw of the adventure game genre: the end of the story brings the end of gameplay, and the software graveyard gains another played-out hulk.

Maelstrom came on the scene early in the year claiming to be the final word in clash of empires simulations. At this point in the sales curve it seems *Maelstrom* was about as successful at fulfilling this claim as Idi Amin was at being President for Life. The general idea was good: you are a renegade military commander trying to keep your former empire from crushing the entire civilized galaxy in its mailed fist. You control a fairly large network of ships, operatives, research teams and mines that support precarious revolt. It's a great idea that falls short in the details. Unfortunately, the combat system makes most of your neat research gadgets moot, and most of the plot devices stretch the credulity of the player much too far. *Maelstrom* touts itself as having a high degree of replayability because the turning points of the plot occur different times in different games, but no matter when you dip, it's still the same old dance.

Somewhere between the pretension of *Maelstrom* and the wackiness of *Spaceward HO!* is **Accolade**'s *StarControl II*. This game is the fruit of a marriage between the action game *StarControl* and the very popular *StarFlight* adventure game. As a sequel to the wars fought in the original *StarControl*, *SCII* brings you the same bunch of friends and enemies, but in much closer detail. Now you can talk to them, reform alliances, and intimidate old enemies. In fact, the first half of the game plays much like an interstellar "Where are they now?" episode. Combat is a series of single ship combats in high arcade style, each race having a special ship type with its own tactical profile. There is enough humor in the story to keep you from minding the thin parts of the plot, and the only drawback to the wargame aspect is the fact the computer fights too efficiently to make any ship but your human dreadnought worth using. As an adventure game it must come to an end, but to keep you from pulling *SCII* off your hard drive too soon, the designers have included a ship-to-ship melee sub-game that allows you

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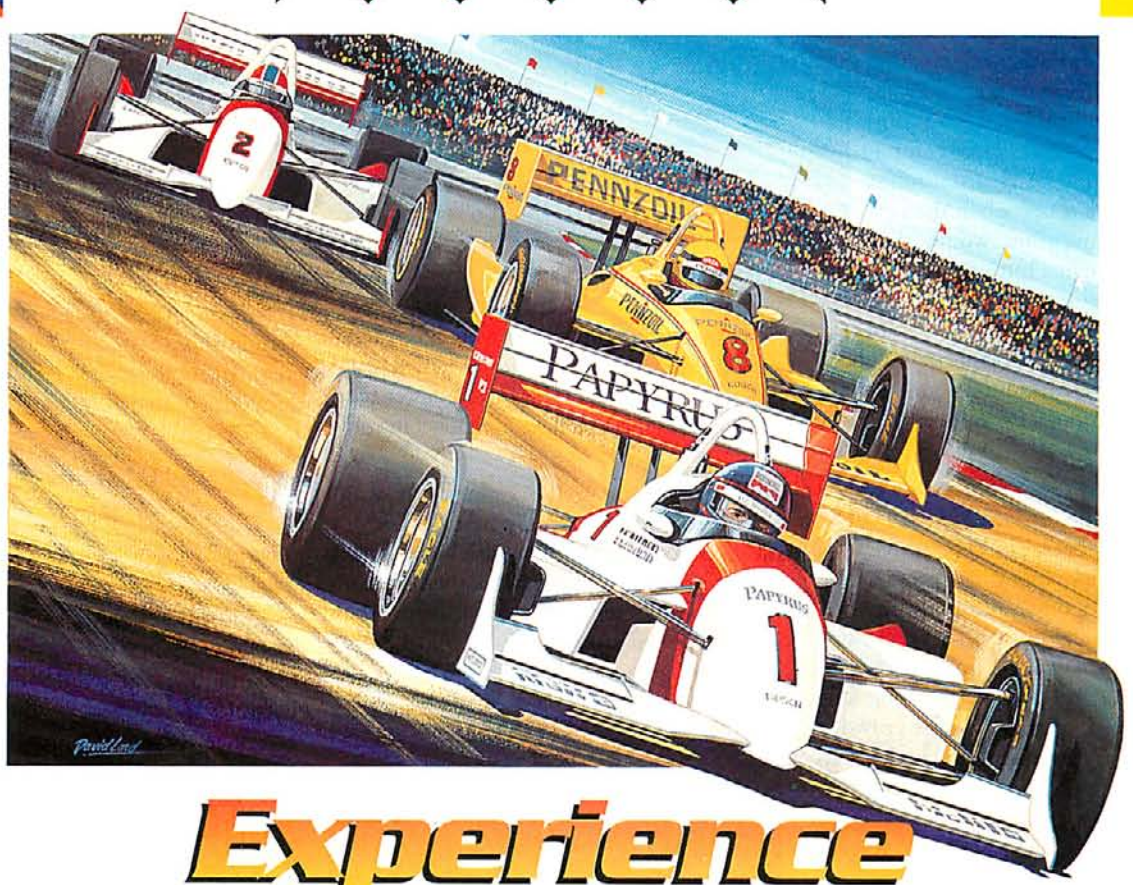

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to slug it out with any ship available in the game, either against the computer or a friend.

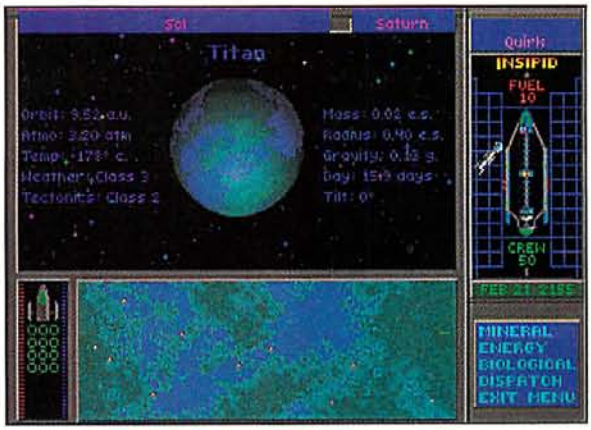
The Manhattan Project

If there was a trend in SF wargames this year it was that of scientific research. It should be easy to see how fascinating technology advancements are, and what an involving dynamic they add to a computer game. Let's face it, a large component of those 4:30 AM *Civilization* games was waiting to see when the new and wonderful invention would slide out of the wise man's hut and finding out how quickly you could put it to use in smiting your enemies. The lesson of this incredibly popular wargame has not been lost on the software community, and technological research popped up all over the place in 1993.

The forms this research capability took were part of what defined this new crop of SF wargames. For example, in *HO!* or *W2WW*, research is a quick and dirty proposition: invest so much of your economy into research, decide what ratio of that research money is going into what discipline, get a new technology level and a cooler looking ship icon. Get one tech level behind the crowd—that's bad. Get two down, you better start shopping for mausoleum space.

In a more complex game like *Master of Orion*, the arrival of new technologies took on a more random aspect: after a certain amount of basic research on a topic you could make a breakthrough next month or ten years from now. Also, instead of simply researching generic levels of technology, you could choose specific devices to research, from weapons to computers, and each one of these advancements had a name and unique effect in the game. This is a quantum leap in realism, giving a person's virtual empire a sense of identity that reflects his or her own personality; the more attached a person becomes to something they feel they are creating, the more involved they become in the simulation.

Maelstrom further refined this process by allowing you to decide which characters to hire and place in charge of what projects. Even games with no research model, like *VGAP* or *Dune II*, still let you spend more money on facilities that would build you a better arsenal. I think it's safe to say that new technology modeling and SF wargames are safely joined at the hip now, but there are still dangerous complications, especially for designers trying get a product out without paying attention to detail. The more intricate your technology modeling gets, the more options are given to the player, which is usually a good thing; but beware: nothing will bring out the limitations of a wargame faster than tactical decisions that have no impact in combat.



Star Control 2: It's got graphics, it's got story, who could ask for anything more?

For example, suppose I think the Zappotron cannon looks really neat, so I invest my empire's tremendous wealth in creating it and re-arming my fleets. If I then find no noticeable difference in combat from when my ships were armed with the old Goober gun, I am going to realize that what should have been a tactical decision has been reduced to irrelevant chrome and gradually lose interest in the game. On the other hand if there is a difference, or better still, if I find out later that there are subtleties—i.e., though the Zappotron is far more effective in open space, it fails to function at all in a Nebula where the old reliable Goober Gun did—not only will I feel the grim satisfaction of having learned something I didn't suspect, but the illusion that I am playing a dynamic, evolving simulation will be strengthened and I will be far less likely to pull it off my hard drive in a week and tell my friends to avoid it.

> Nothing will bring out the limitations of a wargame faster than tactical decisions that have no impact in combat.

The same general problem occurs with AIs. Weak ones will appear far weaker in an environment with many choices that they never utilize. The AI for *W2WW* was purported to be as strong as the one in QQP's *The Lost Admiral*, and it very well may have been, but an AI that shines in an enjoyable but relatively simple game like *Admiral* is severely intellectually-challenged in a game like *W2WW* where it is presented with a palette of sophisticated choices that it is simply not up to manipulating. This makes the game easy to beat and thus, pretty dull. On the other hand, an AI designed to take full advantage of a game from the design stage up, as appears to be the case in *Master of Orion*, is enjoyable to play again and again. The moral here is that a multitude of gadgets looks great in the manual, but the game's AI had better have the subtleties to match them.

"Mr. Checkov, set plots on repetitive!"

While the worst of these games still held a few moments of enjoyment for me, the most common disappointment I had was discovering how much SF wargaming has come to resemble bland SF television and movies. The premises and plots of some of these games are extremely weak and would not be tolerated for a moment in historical wargaming, but are here acceptable because, "Hey, what do you want? It's all made up stuff anyway." Unfortunately, in a big media world no one ever learns from a mistake. Studios produce turkeys like *Last Action Hero*, which die at the box office despite their desperate hype, and in our little corner we have soulless drones like *When 2 Worlds War* or the tritely plotted *Maelstrom*. When they do badly, it's because "The SF wargame market is tiny and dying." Right.

SF wargames are in the same state that fantasy adventure and role-playing games were a few years ago: Fun, but mired in derivative plots from books, TV and D&D. "Go out, kill something and get its stuff." Spaceploitation is in the same hole now, but hopefully, a few designers will start complicating these tired plots with real world concepts; i.e., people are generally afraid of players who rape and pillage as a hobby and will tend to hunt them down instead of giving them the game winning doohickey. SF wargames need a Lord British-type designer to drag them kicking and screaming out of the galaxy of Space War pastiches and into the light of other more respected gaming forms. If I was invading Russia, I would be expected to have to deal with partisans, and if I am raping an entire world I should have to dedi-

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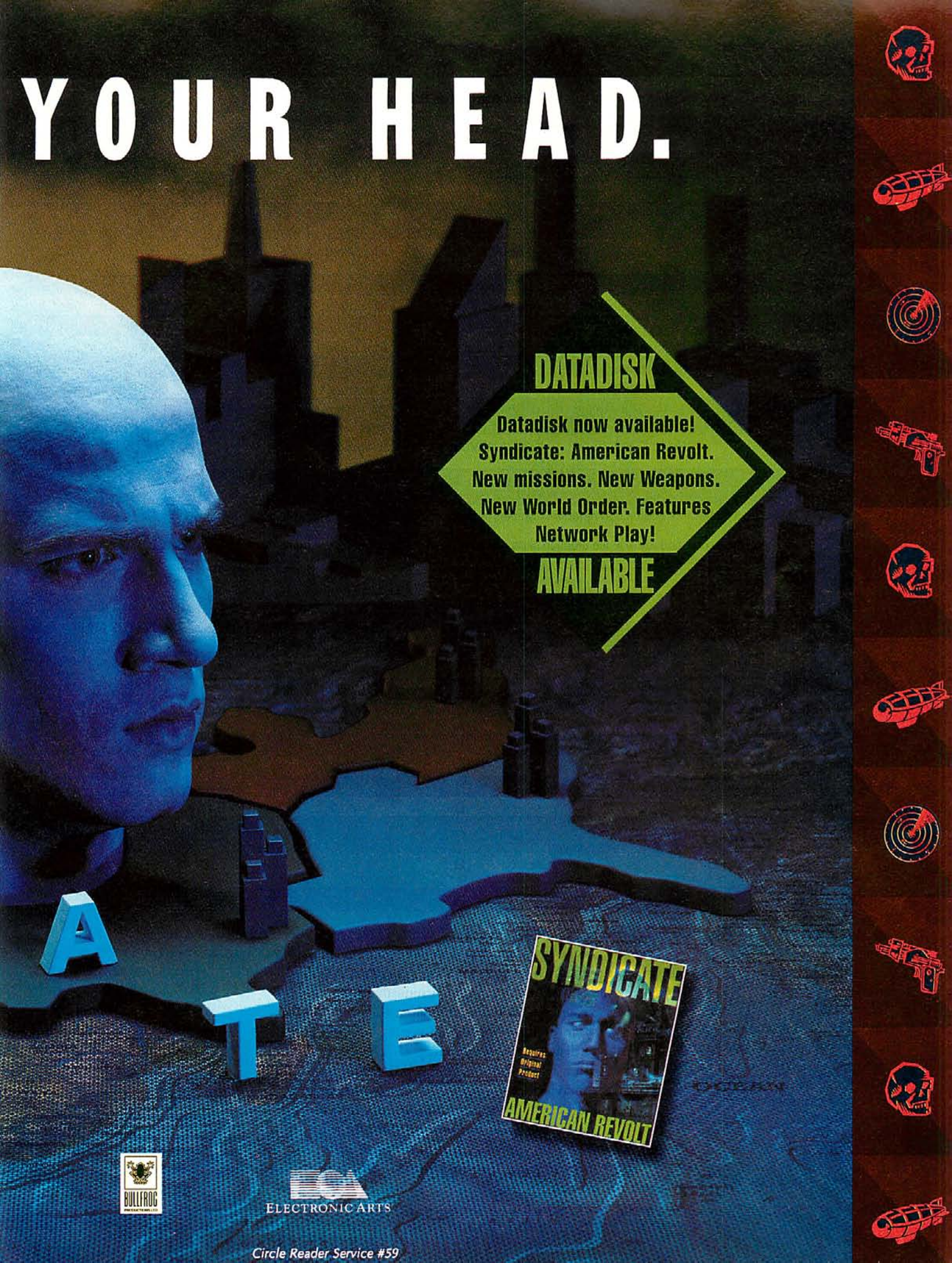

Circle Reader Service #59

Game Attributes Summary

Title	# of Players	Focus	Scale	Motivation	Economic model	Complexity[1]	Windows?2
Star Control II	1	Exploration, Warfare	Single Ships	Plot Driven	Very Simple	5	without sound
Tegel's Mercs	1	Mercenary Missions	Squad Level	Connected Scenarios	Very Simple	6	no
Strike Squad	1-2	Mercenary Missions	Squad Level	Plot Driven	Very Simple	6	no
Master of Orion	1	Exploration, Exploitation	Fleets	Conquest	Good	6	yes
Dune II	1	World Domination	Individual Vehicles	Conquest	Simple	5	yes[3]
Spaceward HO!	1-20	Exploration, Exploitation	Fleets	Conquest	Good	3	yes[3]
Maelstrom	1	Politics, Warfare	Fleets	Plot Driven	Simple	5	no
VGA Planets 3.0	2-11	Exploration, Exploitation	Fleets	Conquest	Good	7	no
Star Legions	1	World Domination	Divisional	Conquest	None	4	yes
Rules of Engagement 2	1	Fleet Command	Single Ships	Connected Scenarios	None	8	yes[3]
When 2 Worlds War	1-2	World Domination	Individual Vehicles	Conquest	Simple	6	no
Space Hulk	1	Extermination	Squad Level	Connected Scenarios	None	4	no

1) Complexity is rated on a scale with 1 being comparable to Snakes 'n Ladders and 10 being a game with a game manual the size of a New York phone book.
2) This criterion is a very loose one and my .PIF file creation skills are nowhere near good enough to make these definitive or bug free statements.
3) Indicates designed Windows compatibility.

The Cirulis Scorecard

Title	User Friendliness	Replay Value	A.I.	Graphics	Premise / Execution	Overall
Star Control II	B+	C	A	A	B/A	B+
Tegel's / StrikeSquad	C+	D	D	C+	E/C	C-
Master of Orion	B	A	A	B	B/A	A-
Dune II	C	C	B	B+	A/B	B+
Spaceward HO!	A+	A	B+	B	A/A+	A
Maelstrom	C	C-	C	C	B+/D	C
Star Legions	C+	C+	C	C-	B/C-	C
Rules of Engagement 2	C	A+	A	B+	A/A	A-
When 2 Worlds War	C+	C+	C	C-	B/C	C+
Space Hulk	C-	B	A	C	B/A	B

cate some resources to quelling the inevitable revolution.

There were steps in some more interesting directions in 1993. In *MOO*, the Orion of the title is a lost world full of technologies but guarded by a dreadnought older than mankind. It's still conquest, but it's conquest that begins to have an interesting point to it. Further, in Tim Wisseman's *VGA Planets*, at least populations will grow angry and riot if you tax them too much or over-mine their world.

In the year 2525...

What will 1994 bring? I'm not really the right being to ask, but I can tell you what would be nice to see. It would be nice to see connectivity becoming a more important option. I think we can safely assume that at least a couple of computer gamers have friends and more of these friends are getting network cards at home or work every year. A few more titles taking advantage of this hardware would be nice—space war has always been an ideal, multi-player arena. Finally, more interlocking games like *Rules of Engagement/Breach* would be appreciated, perhaps a planetary invasion game that links with a fleet battle system.

As for what we are *sure* to see in the next year: there will be things like *Breach 3* from **Impressions**, and two giant robot games, but it remains to be seen how much wargame there will be mixed in with the sheer arcade simulation of the cockpit. The grand strategy front seems quiet, and other than the 4.0 version of *VGAP* there is not much else in sight. I think *MOO* will safely reign supreme well into the new year. But even as I write, a new game from **Merit Software** has crossed my desk; It's called *Command Adventures: Starship* and it seems to have my name on it. So if you'll excuse me, I have many stars to cross and worlds to conquer before I sleep.

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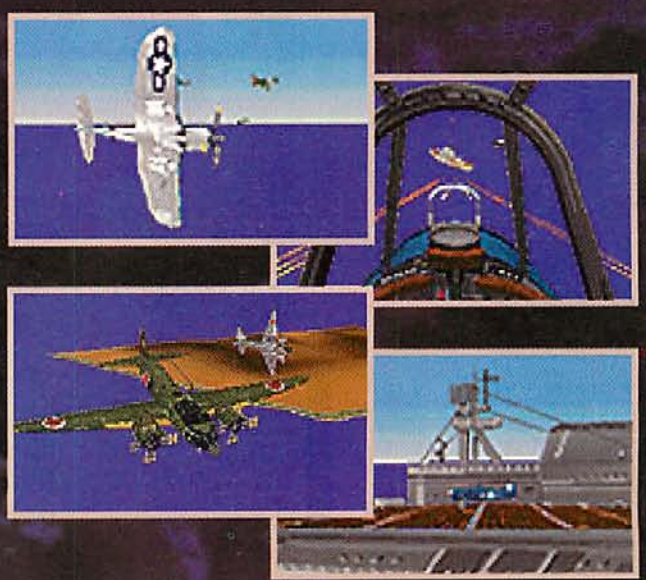

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PUBLISHER: Access **$56**

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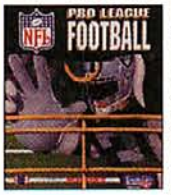
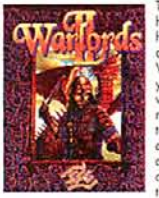


Brace yourself for impact. Strategy, graphics and Pro League play so real, it's licensed by the NFL, the NFLPA, and chosen by USA TODAY to simulate Super Bowl play. Full-field detailed color animation with actual NFL logos, NFL players, teams, uniforms and statistics. Design plays from scratch, or choose from 198 offensive and defensive plays. Coach your favorite team using the Pro Draft, Pro Trader and Team Editor modules. Full rosters with injuries and substitutions. True modem play with chat mode.

PUBLISHER: Micro Sports **$34**

WARLORDS II



The sequel to the highly addictive, hugely successful, award-winning Warlords. Now you have more worlds to conquer, more mighty armies to make, and more enemies to vanquish. New magical items and abilities. Hi-res graphics and backed by a full sound track. Features include random worlds for infinite playability, mysterious hidden maps, exciting and dangerous quests, and exotic army types. Contains 640x480 VGA graphics and sound board support.

PUBLISHER: SSG **$38**
PART #: 31521

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THRUSTMASTER WEAPONS MARK II

User programmable throttle and weapons functions. Compatible with 5-pin keyboard connectors. Program your joystick for any current or future game. Your gaming peripherals (joystick and WCS) will be instantly compatible with current or future games. Features: LED lighting system indicates when certain functions are activated; Screw-down connector; Handle moves fore and aft for throttle control; Sturdy seven-foot cables; Allows joystick programmability through joystick interface; Digital/Analog mode toggle switch; User-programmable functions; One-year warranty.

PUBLISHER: Thrustmaster
PART #: 31258

$90

GAME BLASTER

Converts the VGA output from your PC to a video signal so you can play all your favorite PC games on any TV set. Display on-line services like Prodigy, America Online, and CompuServe. Includes $150 worth of FREE games: Prince of Persia, JetFighter II, and Spectre Challenger! Supports 640x480 VGA resolution in 256 colors, outputs NTSC video in RCA composite and S-VHS super video standards. Includes A/C Power Supply, 6-foot RCA cable, 6-foot S-VHS cable and a VGA Y-cable. Supports TV Auto Blanking, Toggling between VGA monitor and TV display.

PUBLISHER: ADS
PART #: 32333

$99

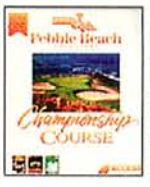
UNNATURAL SELECTION

You are a brilliant scientist, happily working to end world hunger by designing Theroids. Theroids are large, docile animals with the potential to be a cheap, efficient food source. Then things start to go wrong, and one of your colleagues disappears with the genetic samples. Unstoppable mutant Theroids go on the rampage and the military is holding you responsible. A high-tech, genetic battle-strategy game with incredible sound effects and speech. Features actual digitized film footage of real actors. Ultimate, super "beasts" are yours for the making.

PUBLISHER: Maxis

$27

PEBBLE BEACH GOLF COURSE



FOR USE WITH LINKS, LINKS 386 PRO, or MICROSOFT GOLF. Located on the Monterey Peninsula in California. The only course of its stature open to public play. Along the shores of Carmel Bay, professional and recreational players alike have experienced first-hand the wonders of this seaside layout, rich with tradition and natural beauty. Nine national championships have unfolded at Pebble Beach. Super VGA version features real sound with all major sound boards. Enjoy becoming a part of history!

PUBLISHER: Access Software
PART #: 32479 DOS

$19

MOTORMOUSE RED CORVETTE

A serial mouse styled as an exact replica of a 1985 Chevrolet Corvette. A sporty alternative to your dull grey "mouse". A high-quality three-button mouse with buttons on the hood. Gives you the same quick access to on-screen functions. Simply plug it into your computer's serial port. Includes a special Windows driver that turns the cursor into an animated version of the car, including sound support to rev the "engine" and sound the horn. FOR IBM PC AND COMPATIBLES ONLY.

PUBLISHER: MotorMouse
PART #: 32941

$35

NHL HOCKEY '94

Combines hot arcade action with in-depth simulation and stats and a full season mode. NHL and NHLPA Licenses allow inclusion of player names and faces as well as team names and logos (including the Stanley Cup!). Simulate the actual 1993 84-game NHL season. Compile team and player stats throughout the season. Ron Barr's digitized voice sets up every game of the season. Digitized rink announcer voice reports goal summaries and penalties. Realistic organ music brings rink to life. Each rink features individual music, over 50 pieces in all. Supports Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Roland MT-32 sound.

PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts
PART #: 31741 DOS

$40

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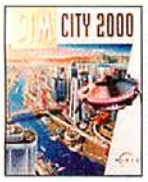

The ultimate city simulator. This morning, you approved a new solar power plant, designed an underground transportation system, and jumped five points in the polls. Then you raised taxes, read two local newspapers, built a zoo, and pushed your education bill through the city council. It's time for lunch— unless, of course, there's a fire, tornado, earthquake or alien invasion. Scenario challenges include the 1991 Oakland fire, unemployment in Flint, Michigan and more. Import saved cities from SimCity and SimCity Classic.

PUBLISHER: Maxis
PART #: 31457 DOS
PART #: 32616 MAC

$39

GABRIEL KNIGHT

Gabriel Knight is the last in a long line of Shadow Hunters, those fated to fight the dark forces of the supernatural. Haunted by a centuries-old curse, he's tormented by terrifying nightmares. Now he must spend every waking moment scouring the side streets and back alleys of New Orleans for the key to his dark past. Features more conversation, more clues, more game options, and more dark secrets to discover. Includes a bound and illustrated graphic novel. IBM CD version $46.

PUBLISHER: Sierra
DOS/WIN

$39

THE HUMANS

You've never seen anything like them! Inside every Human is a small but usable brain. Humans must learn to cooperate throughout all 160 levels by using and sharing tools that are "discovered" along the way. Cooperation is the key in this world of dinosaurs and enemy tribes. It's a naive struggle against extinction, where you score points by finishing levels with as many of your tribesmen intact as HUMAN-ly possible. Features eight original sound tracks, colorful animations and three levels of difficulty.

PUBLISHER: Gametek
DOS, IBM CD

$25

UNNECESSARY ROUGHNESS

Suit up and go head-to-head against real NFLPA pros in a ferocious battle of outrageous tackles, impossible one-handed catches, brutal head butts, and flying helmets, in a graphically intense PC football game. Design your own plays, rosters and logos. Take the field as TV sportscaster Al Michaels and call every exciting play. Filled with intense graphics, realistic animation and high-impact gameplay. Import and export teams from all 28 NFL cities. Features 1-2 player competition, or 2 player cooperative game play. Supports all major sound boards.

PUBLISHER: Accolade

$34

KEYBOARD COMMANDER TEMPLATES

High-quality, full-color keyboard overlays for flight simulators will turn any AT101 keyboard into a 3-D looking "control panel". Includes all key commands in a logical layout, and legend boxes for cockpit displays. Available for MS FS 5.0, FALCON 3.0, MIG 29, STRIKE COMMANDER, ATP, X-WING, COMANCHE, F-15 III, ACES OF PACIFIC, JETFIGHTER, SECRET WEAPONS, B-17, GUNSHIP, ACES OVER EUROPE, TORNADO and more! Ask about Falcon 3.0's Keyboard & Utility bundles! Quantity Pricing: 2 @ $21.50, 3 @ $30.00, any 4 or more only $9.25 each!

Publisher: Keyboard Commander Corp.

$13

EIGHT BALL DELUXE PINBALL

Experience real pinball on your PC. Features a country and western pool table theme with great graphics, sound and realistic ball motion. Three flippers control the action as players go for the 8-ball and then the Deluxe. Play along speech and background sounds encourage you to "Quit talking and start chalking". Features detailed 256 colors graphics and real-time animation. Includes tilt, 3-way nudge, 3 flippers and multi-channel digital sounds.

PUBLISHER: Broderbund
DOS, MAC

$29

LANWORDS FOR WINDOWS

Fast-paced, challenging, entertainment value that's fun for all ages. Seven word game variations, or create your own version. Change the look of your games with a choice of colorful tile patterns. Offers 20 different computer opponents with increasingly sophisticated vocabulary and skill, ranging from beginner to expert levels, containing 160,000 words. On-line help, "best plays", anagram finders, and word finders are also included. If you've got network support, you can receive and send messages to your opponents via a chat windows screen.

PUBLISHER: Saber Software
PART #: 32743 WIN

$23

BEAT THE HOUSE

Prepare yourself for a casino gaming experience! Includes the 160-page study guide, "Beat the House Companion." Featuring slot machines, blackjack, roulette, video poker and craps. Beginners will learn the rules, rituals and terminology of casino play. Seasoned gamblers are schooled in strategic counting techniques as well as profitable betting strategies. One to four people can play against each other, or computer players will fill the empty seats. Anyone can be a High Roller when they know how to "Beat The House!"

Publisher: Spirit of Discovery
Part #30343

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Adventures in Cynicism

A Review Of Merit Software's *Command Adventures: Starship*

by Martin E. Cirulis

I can appreciate irony of almost any kind, but there are times when it gets a bit thick, even for me. As I was finishing my overview of the year in science fiction wargaming, a new piece of genre software arrived, *Command Adventures: Starship (CAS)* from **Merit Software**. After pawing happily through the contents of the bright shiny box I ended my article on the hopeful note that perhaps this new game would avoid some of the pitfalls that had plagued at least half of the previous year's crop, and start the new year well. As I installed this new beastie (a big'un, weighing in at 25 megs of hard drive) I was even more pleased. Great sound and graphics washed over me during the intro, and the manual, though sparse, promised a profusion of equipment and options that reminded me of fine games like *SunDog, Elite* or *Privateer.*

Then, the chrome faded and game play began.

Into the V.O.I.D.

Contrary to first impressions, *CAS* only pays lip service to the four X's (Xplore, Xpand, Xploit, Xterminate). This game is really dedicated to the 4X's evil cousin, the VOID, Varying Only In Degree. VOID games are games that do not offer actual exploration and discovery or even new challenges; instead, they give you an initial battle involving one or two enemy pieces. Now, this is a great learning scenario, but you begin to get suspicious when the next battle has three of the same basic foe, and the next has four and so on and so on. No surprises, no variation in play; you need only craft a strategy for an ever growing number of identical enemy units.

CAS boils down, with barely any heat at all, to this premise: Capture all 50 worlds on the map. You have a space combat system similar to the arcade action of **Accolade**'s *Star Control II,* and a ground combat/boarding party combat system refined somewhat from **Mindcraft**'s *Tegel's Mercenaries/Strike Squad.* Your mission is exactly that of another Mindcraft release, *Star Legions,* except that you are expected to conquer worlds not with fleets and troops, but with a handful of good ol' aliens with sidearms.

You travel across vast distances of space using a grand starmap, which is blank to begin with. As you travel from point to point in hyperspace, portions of the map are revealed to uncover planets or starbases. Starbases are all identical, and planets come in five basic graphic types that seems to have no effect on gameplay other than varying the obstructive terrain. When you are on top of your map target you exit the starmap and enter the bridge of the ship. Here, you must switch to the tactical map that displays your ship and allows you to maneuver and fight in action-intesive battles as in *Star Control II.* All action on the space and ground tactical maps proceeds in real-time. Starbases, planets and derelict ships appear on this screen as well and may be boarded or landed on with personnel once your ship matches speed and bearing with the target.

Propaganda Alert

Before you disembark, however, your tactical area must be cleared of hostile ships. Note that, contrary to the manual's propaganda about the types of ships you will encounter and their likely behavior, *all* of them will attack you without parley, no matter *what* your race or behavior is. If you cripple an alien ship, it becomes a derelict; you may board it with personnel and use the ground combat system to kill the remaining crew and take the weapons they leave lying on the floor.

All ship scenes are featureless, a maze of fairly random hallways and rooms about half the size of the planetary battle map. Once depopulared you receive a dollar-value reward for the enemy ship (from whom or what, I have no idea) and your prize disappears.

Command Adventures: Starship

TITLE:	Command Adventures: Starship
PRICE:	$69.95
SYSTEM:	IBM
REQUIREMENTS:	386SX or better, 2MB RAM, 25MB hard drive space; supports AdLib (Gold), Sound Blaster (Pro), PAS-16, Roland MT-32 and Sound Canvas sound cards
PROTECTION:	Code look up on non-reproducable paper
DESIGNER:	Tom Lima
PUBLISHER:	Merit Software Dallas, TX (214) 385-2353

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You are given over 30 ship weapons to choose from, but don't expect a cornucopia of graphic affects and damage characteristics. All weapons, be they lasers, missiles, or mines, fire a little colored ball that travels across the screen and explodes where you had the cursor target placed when you pressed the mouse button. There is no variation in speed, and the only difference is in the damage they cause; and you can only tell this is true because the enemy blows up with fewer hits. Sadly, the thirty-odd exotic ground weapons work exactly the same generic way.

When space is clear of enemy vessels, you may shuttle your landing party to the surface of the neutral world and conquer it. There are two objectives: eliminate all enemy troops, and use your engineers to build and activate "Isolation Grid Units" in all four corners of the tactical map. If you satisfy both requirements, an energy fence springs up, sealing you off from the 99.98 percent of the planetary surface left unconquered, and the world is declared yours. Once again, a monetary reward wings your way from the ether and you can go on to another world or back to a starbase for repairs, ship upgrades and new personnel.

As I said previously, personal combat is handled by an engine almost identical to the one used by **Mindcraft** in their *Tegel's Mercs/Strike Squad* series. Except for slightly slicker graphics in its few details, it is executed even more poorly in *CAS*. You can only control one player at a time using basic fire, move, and pickup commands, and you can leave an individual with basic attack/defend instructions when you switch to another figure, but when these units are under computer control, they are *painfully* stupid. They're fully capable of shooting an ally standing in the way of an enemy trooper and, in defense mode, will empty a clip at a wall while the enemy on the other side also blazes away at the very same wall.

A Universe of Illusion

Usually, the marketing of a piece of software is beyond the scope of a reviewer, but in this case an exception has to be made. First, a couple of clarifications: *Command Adventure: Starship*, regardless of the strong impression given by the documentation and the box, is *not* a role-playing game. There are no characters, skills, or names involved. Also, the only "Adventure" going on here is in the title. There is no plot line to be followed, no mystery to be uncovered—just simple, repetitious action gaming. Vague allowances are made for these aspects, but they are nothing more than camouflage for a bare-boned game.

Now, it is true that sometimes a game's reach is beyond its grasp and falls short. These things happen, and a disappointing game is just a fact of life—at least the effort has been made to make the game the best it could be. But here, I suspect, is a game at least six months short on development time that has been hurriedly thrown into a glossy package to catch the holiday buying frenzy.

The number of "inconsistencies" between the manual and the actual game are amazing. For example, the manual refers to some danger involved in the hiring of crew members, hinting that there were assassins about. Wrong! The crew you hire don't even have names, never mind personalities or divergent loyalties! There are also references to the four different kind of missions you will find other ships performing, giving you the idea that there is some kind of coherent backdrop for this game. Wrong again. There is no context for the action in this game, no beings to talk to, nothing to interact with.

The box's picture of reality is even further skewed. Careful consumers have learned to spot screen shots on a box that are probably just animation sequences, not really a play shot. However, on the *CAS* box, Merit has spliced control panels along the bottom of the animation screen shots to give the impression that you actually play against that kind of graphic splendor. While crowing about the number of weapons you can use, the box fails to mention they can only be distinguished

from each other with a calculator. The term "strategic" is bandied about to give you an impression of a big space game, even though all your decisions are purely tactical. Perhaps we can attribute these inconsistencies to boyish enthusiasm, perhaps to intentions less innocent, but either way I was left with a very sour taste in my mouth.

Sadly enough, I haven't hit on half the things badly done or omitted in this game There were times when I was truly convinced that I had gotten hold of some half-finished pre-release version by accident, or that a blood vessel had burst in my brain and I was somehow missing the point. A long list of disgruntlements would be brutal and pointless. Let it stand at this: the graphics are great and the sounds are stunning, but even the moderately experienced gamer will experience disappointment on a galactic scale. **CGW**

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NR-13 This game is not for the faint-hearted. Contains violence and some material inappropriate for minors.

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Circle Reader Service #88

Letters from Paradise

Digital Deja Vu

I live about 200 miles away from the nearest city with a population of more than 30,000 and *CGW* is basically my primary source of information on the gaming world. It is for this reason, and that of your close association with game developers, that I write to you. My question concerns games on CD.

Like all addicted, sorry, *dedicated* gamers, you know that when a hot new game is released you can't wait to get stuck into it and with truly challenging games you play it to death, until there are no surprises left and all the puzzles have been solved. When this game is a success, the producers may then decide that with the right voices and possibly some better graphics, they could release the game on CD. Sounds great—NOT!

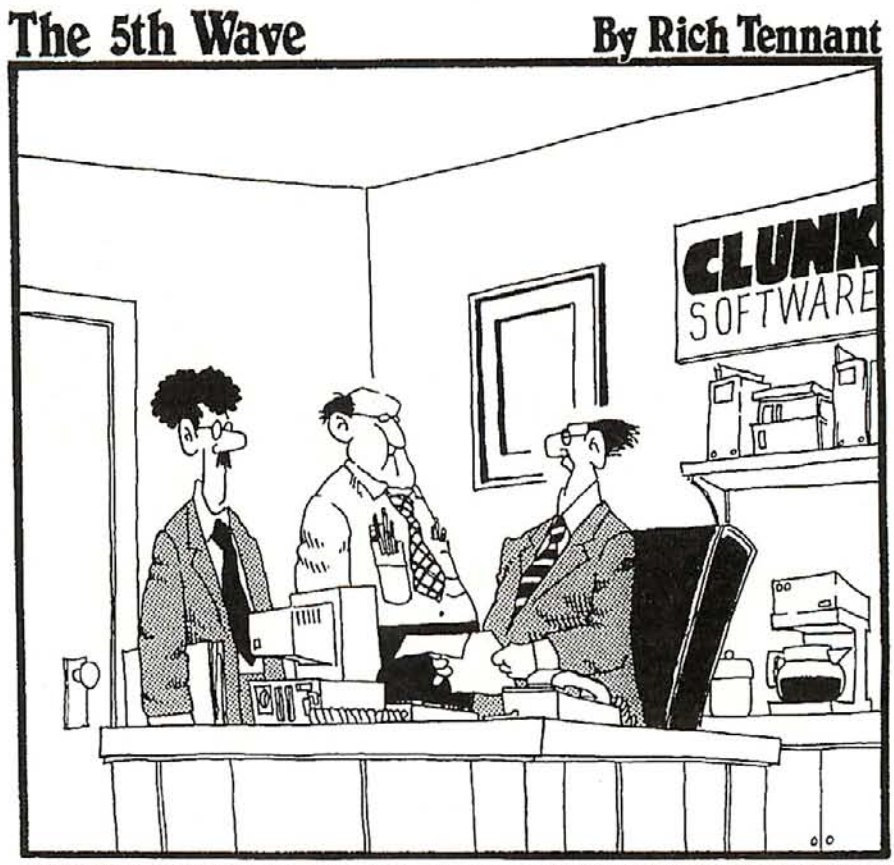
How many people are going to turn around and pay an even higher price for the same game with the same objectives and puzzles? There is no anticipation (which is) a big part of CRPGs and adventure games. There is also no sense of accomplishment in solving any puzzles.

One example which comes to mind is *Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis.* My wife and I enjoyed the game immensely and would have snapped up the CD version in a minute, but having played the floppy disk version of the game, there is no point, even if the voices are great.

From what I have read in your magazine, I can appreciate the financial constraints placed on some software companies which would restrict them from producing first-run games on CD as opposed to or as well as on floppies, given the relatively small number of CD-ROM owners, the extra expense and the fact that the game may be a turkey on any format. But, is it at all possible for the software companies to announce at the time the floppy version of a game is released that a CD version of the same game MAY follow?

David Bisman
Bathurst, NSW, AUSTRALIA

In the earliest days of CD games, the re-releases of floppy-disk games were primarily a laboratory for developing and refining the production skills and technological capacity for creating solid CD entertainment software. In order to lose the least amount of money on said experiments, it was necessary to have a game prove itself in the market first and try to market an enhanced version later. Now, the economics of scale are shifting. It is becoming more and more feasible



to have stand-alone CD titles because of the expansion of the installed base of CD-ROM drives. Hence, more and more titles are being released simultaneously (or near simultaneously) in floppy disk and CD formats. As the installed base of CD-equipped computers increases, we believe that CDs will become the dominant shipping medium of computer game software. In fact, we predict that this shift will have occurred by the Spring of 1995 and that it will require the same type of disk exchange then to get 3.5" disk versions of games as it currently requires to get 5.25" disk versions of games. In short, the answer to your question is that companies will not only announce their CD products at an earlier time, but CD products are beginning to take the point in their marketing plans. Within six months, it is likely that your question will become moot.

Agent Orange

I am writing to say that I am happy with the recent acquisition of *CGW* by Ziff-Davis. The additional pages of articles and advertisements are greatly appreciated (and your magazine is the only media outlet where I appreciate *more* advertisements). However, I have run into a problem with the magazine.

While reading *CGW* and eating an orange, I noticed the print smearing. I cleaned my hands and ran a test on the ink. The print did not smear with dry skin or with water, but it came right off with juice from the orange. I am enclosing the page for your reference. Obviously, I will be avoiding citrus fruit while reading your fine magazine.

Robert M. McLearen, Jr.
Des Moines, IA

Does this mean we should print a disclaimer? Maybe it could read, "While CGW *readers are advised not to eat citrus fruit while reading the magazine, we are not liable for cases of scurvy or insufficient vitamin protection against the common cold." Seriously, we pass along the word about citric acid and our ink in order for others to avoid both damage to the magazine and accidental ingestion.*

Hall Of Blame

I believe that your magazine, while certainly the finest in the industry, consistently makes one mistake. You admit too mange games into the *CGW* Hall of Fame.

When I first began to read your magazine, there were very few games in the Hall of Fame—certainly not more than 10 or 12. However, in the December 1993 issue, it was announced that *The Secret of Monkey Island* was being added, for a total of 31 games. How could the number of games in the Hall of Fame have doubled in the three years since I had started reading the magazine, if it originally took eight years to get the first 12 or so in?

I believe that your magazine has become much too lenient in which games it admits to the Hall of Fame. The Hall of Fame should be a great honor, and not made so easily available. It seems to me that most of the games were inducted for either their popularity or the fact that the members of the *CGW* staff inducted them as *their* favorite games. I do not understand this! Of the 31 games on the list, only three or four have made what I consider to be a worthwhile contribution to the industry, with three to four others as possible second choices. That's a total of six-to-eight games. Where did the other 22 games come from?

While I realize that the primary judge of a game being entered into the Hall of Fame is how popular the game is among *CGW* readers, that is not a fair criterion. Don't assume that just because a game is popular means it deserves to be in the Hall of Fame. Sure, *King's Quest V: Absence Makes The Heart Go Yonder!* was a popular game, but I doubt very much that it had a positive impact on the industry. I have only seen it have a negative impact. Every game created after it has required ridiculous hardware requirements, and while most have sported VGA graphics and stereo sound, very few of them have been worthwhile to play, because they are so easy and not catered to anyone with real gaming experience. And Zork, perhaps the most influential game ever was left off the list until the Prodigy Infocomrades *[Ed: led by Mr. Murray]* got it on in the summer of 1992, because of a mistake. When you started the Hall of Fame, it wasn't rated high enough.

I really believe that you need to rethink and reorganize the criteria and entry requirements for the games in the Hall of Fame. It should be reserved for the most influential and important games in the industry, and not just the ones that have been highly rated by the readers. Set an example for the rest of the industry and admit only the most worthy games. You used to do that and I hope you will again.

Matthew Murray
Bellingham, WA

The original CGW *Hall of Fame was unveiled in* CGW *#45 (March, 1988). The charter inductees were:* Ultima III, Ultima IV, Wizardry, The Bard's Tale, Chessmaster 2000, Kampfgruppe, Mech Brigade, M.U.L.E., *and the original* War in Russia. *Of the original nine, only* Mech Brigade *seems a*

questionable choice, even in light of today's games. Mech Brigade *was included because it fixed some design flaws in* Kampfgruppe, *a tactical game of WWII armored combat that still brings flutters to the hearts of dedicated wargamers, today. We felt that it would be inconsistant to induct* Kampfgruppe *into the Hall of Fame without inducting its successor and superior design. Unfortunately,* Mech Brigade *was never actually as popular as* Kampfgruppe *and it is the most difficult of the charter members to defend.*

At its inception, the criteria for inclusion in the Hall of Fame were: 1) quality of the game as perceived by the editorial staff; 2) quality of the game as demonstrated in reader ratings; and 3) contribution of the game to the computer gaming hobby as a whole and the genre to which the game was specific. We still hold to those criteria. Indeed, the rotating descriptions of Hall of Fame members which we print in the magazine each month are intended to highlight those reasons which we believe meet requirements #1 and #3.

We relaxed the criteria to induct Zork. Zork *was never rated high enough to meet qualification #2, but there is no doubt that it was worthy of inclusion. As for the two specific games whose inclusion you considered unworthy, let me remind you that* KQV *was inducted because it represented: a) new technology in using the scanning process to make backgrounds and animation look more fluid and realistic; b) the entire series as a whole (the most commercially successful adventure game series in history); and c) a watershed in the work of a designer who defined the graphic adventure genre (Roberta Williams has worked with co-authors and co-designers since that point.) from its inception. Further,* The Secret of Monkey Island *may well have been the apex of the SCUMM system at LucasArts (nee' Lucasfilm) Games. The system has evolved in some areas and devolved in others, BUT it is rare to find anyone who hasn't played and enjoyed* Monkey Island *to the extent that they treat it as a reference point in the genre.*

Finally, another reason for the proliferation of titles in the Hall of Fame is that the number of genres represented have expanded. Simulation games, as represented in this issue, have advanced gigantic leaps past the technology that was in play when the charter members were inducted. Indeed, the number of titles available have increased. Remember, the number of athletes represented in their respective Hall of Fame museums and the number of films listed in the National Registry of Film increases with each calendar year. We have averaged less than five additions to the Hall of Fame per year. We believe that is responsible growth.

Heavy Duty Crimefighter

I felt compelled to forward this letter in response to a comment made by Johnny Wilson in the December issue's editorial regarding the new "record size" of your magazine. The following is an absolutely, positively, unquestionably true story (well...just a few minor liberties were taken).

I was out buying some clothes one cold and windy evening in late November at an area shopping mall. Following a couple of hours of unbridled spending, I exited the establishment and began walking towards my car. It was at this time that a hoodlum came literally out of nowhere to grab the largest bag that I was carrying. He immediately proceeded to run off with his new prize, which included a pair of pants, a shirt, some socks and, as fortune would have it, the latest copy of *CGW* that I had happened to purchase at my favorite bookstore on the way out of the mall. Against better judgment and not wanting to throw away my hard won currency in these tough times, I gave chase. He bolted across the parking lot and down an adjoining street. Though it was quite dark out and the robber wore similarly dark clothing, I man-

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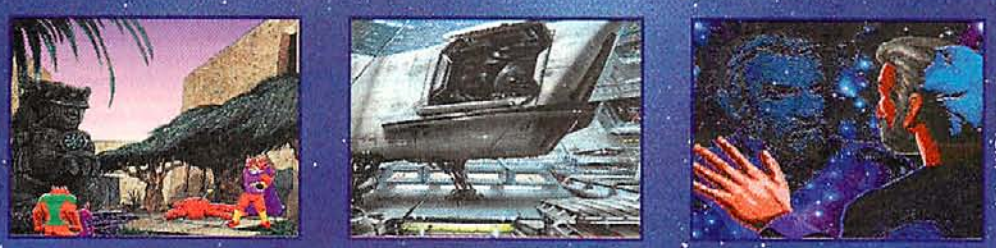

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aged to maintain the pursuit beneath a trail of dim street lamps. The remembrance of years of high school track surely carried me relentlessly forward.

After a few minutes of running, an unbelievable thing happened—the thief started to slow down! I couldn't believe it. I began to rapidly gain ground. By the time he'd reached Webster Square, some half mile away from the scene of the crime, the crook had slowed to a complete stop and ultimately collapsed in a heap on the sidewalk against a wrought iron railing.

I came up beside him and, before I could say or do anything, the breathless burglar thrust the bag containing the stolen goods in my direction and, with face flushed and chest heaving, bellowed, "Go ahead and take it back!" At that precise moment, I realized that it wasn't the pants, shirt or socks—it was the near telephone book-like magnitude of *CGW* that had completely and utterly worn down this svelte and doubtless seasoned pilferer. The pages upon pages of advertisements, the *Holiday Buyer's Guide*, the truly incarcerating interview with Daryl Gates, the *Kids & Computers* section and the additional pages and pages of advertisements had all concerted and, indeed, conspired to weight down and ultimately defeat this mighty purloiner! Who would've imagined that such new-found bulk would have served so lofty a purpose?

Well done, *CGW*! Well done!

Jim Corbin
Lowell, MA

*Not only do we need the screen rights to this story for a Made-For-*CGW *movie, but this may cause us to open up a new division to sell "The Sub" as an anti-theft device.*

Why is there no news of Sierra's first CD-only game, *Phantasmagoria*? What has happened to it? How come we never get a look at this, presumably technological, breakthrough of a game?

Raymond Port
Santa Rosa, CA

CGW *has not published any material on this game because it is too early to even publish a "Behind The Screens" on the product. Roberta Williams is following a "closed set" philosophy on the product because they are trying a lot of new techniques in this huge game, and they don't want competitors technologically stealing a march on them by using such techniques in smaller projects. Hence, security is tighter than usual. We will cooperate with Sierra in publishing a "Behind The Screens" as soon as it is practical from both their perspective and ours.*

CGW

Holiday Carols for Computer Gamers

We received a lot of interesting verses for our computer caroling competition. The two best were from Charlton Sun in Amherst, OH, and Bill DiMartino in Newbern, NC. We will be sending a one-year subscription to both Bill and Charlton.

Ultima Hailed

(To be sung to the tune of "Jingle Bells")

Brandishing my bow,
On a hot Britanian day.
O'er the lands we know,
Going out to slay.
Champions of our king,
On a quest that never ceased.
Making peace by vanquishing,
Every horrid, evil beast.

Oh!

Ultima! Ultima!
That's my favorite game.
Underworld or Serpent Isle,
I like it just the same.

Oh!

Ultima! Ultima!
That's my favorite game.
I think Richard Garriot
Deserves all of his fame.

Charlton Sun
Amherst, OH

God Rest Ye Merry Aeroplanes

(to the tune of "God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen")

Does anybody want to buy my copy of S.C.?
I wish I hadn't gone and wasted all of my money!
To make it worse I also bought the speech pack,
Disks all three.
Oh why, didn't I wait for the review, wait for the review!
Oh why, didn't I wait for the review?

Bill DiMartino
Newburn, NC

The 12 Ks of Christmas

(to the tune of "The Twelve Days of Christmas")

On the twelfth day of Christmas,
my true love gave to me:
Twelve hard drives humming,
Eleven networks linking,
Ten monitors gleaming,
Nine modems calling,
Eight K a caching,
Seven fan cards cooling,
Six sound cards blasting,
Five multimedia games!
Four Meg of RAM,
Three new mice,
Two local bus,
And a Pentium chip that doesn't melt down.

David McGirth
Las Vegas, NV

D & D
(with apologies to SSI and TSR)

(to the tune of "Jingle Bells")

Dashing through Myth Drannor,
With Dark Sun in a sack,
Wish I was at home right now,
Playing Dungeon Hack.
Dark Moon and Hillsfar
Make my spirits bright.
What fun it is to sit and play
D and D tonight!

D & D! D & D!
I'll play it all the day!
And I'll continue into the night,
then say:
D & D! D & D!

I'll play it all the day!
Oh, what fun it is to scream and shout,
"I won the game in only a day!"

Ted Dawes
Melrose, MA

Winter Underground

(to the tune of "Winter Wonderland")

Grues are howling, are your listening?
That gold's appealing, that is glistening!
But can you figure out the room that is round
While walking in the winter underground?
Clinkity-clankity go the falling Zorkmids
As into a trophy case they go.
Then it's back through the trap door for more treasure
As back into the G.U.E. we go.
Can you get, past the ba-at?

Can you fix the Flood Control Dam?
Or can you figure out the room that is round
While walking in the winter underground?

Matthew Murray
Bellingham, WA

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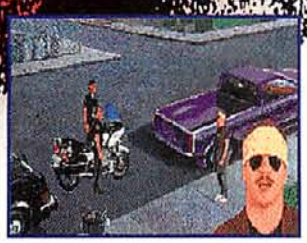

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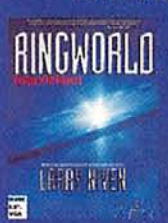

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Anime Mine

MegaTech's *Metal & Lace: The Battle of the Robo Babes*

by Charles Ardai

Warning: The following review is a frank discussion of a game that features elements which may be offensive to some readers. Hence, even the review may include references which could be offensive. Let the reader beware.

It is easy to pick on a game like *Metal & Lace*. Anything that willingly subtitles itself "The Battle of the Robo Babes" is asking to have fun poked at it. I assume the designers know that (although since English is obviously not their first language, we can't be sure), and I also assume they don't mind.

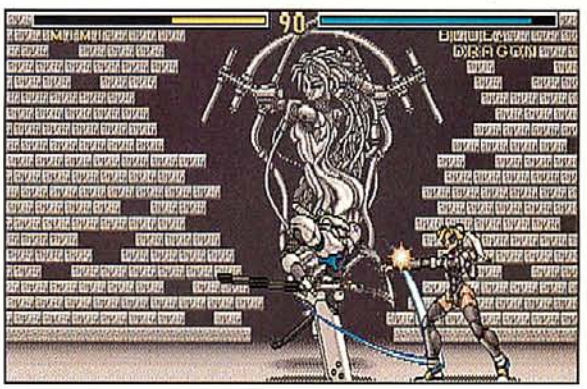
If that's so, I say, "Bravo!" It's nice, once in a while, to see a game that is what it is and makes no bones about it. *Pac-Man* was a game about munching dots in a maze. *Lemmings* is a game about moving critters from one end of the screen to the other. *Metal & Lace* is a game about beating people up and seeing pretty, naked girls. That's all it is. If nobody wants what it has to offer, it won't sell. But since (to paraphrase H.L. Mencken) no one has ever gone broke overestimating the bloodlust or libido of the American public, if I were **MegaTech** I wouldn't worry. It will sell. People may blush when they bring it to the cash register, but that's never stopped *Playboy* from selling a million copies of every issue.

No, the problem with *Metal & Lace* is not that it's embarrassing or silly, or, for that matter, excessively prurient. The problem with *Metal & Lace* is that the game, merely a side-view human-punching-bag extravaganza modeled after games like *Street Fighter* and *Mortal Kombat* at its core, is not particularly good. There is nothing wrong, in my opinion, with a little wholesome T&A, but the T&A is only a small (indeed, optional) part of the game. Since the player spends more time clobbering the mech-suited babes than ogling once he's beaten the pants off them, MegaTech ought to have put more effort into making sure that their combat sequences compared favorably with those designed by their competitors.

Mano-a-Womano

T&A games have a history of misguidedly emphasizing the T&A factor over the game factor. **Artworx**, one of the earliest purveyors, forced gamers to go through endless rounds of so-so poker to unwrap their opponents in *Strip Poker* and endless rounds of *Othello* to uncover an ankle here and an elbow there in *Centerfold Squares*, where it could take up to a dozen games to get to the good stuff. (The year *Squares* came out, I learned to play *Othello* really well—but, by God, I never want to play *Othello* again as long as I live.)

Metal & Lace suffers from the same flaws. The full-screen Anime graphics of scantily clad women are doled out as rewards for beating the same women two times apiece in the combat sessions. There are seven different



women, each depicted in four graphics that degrade in order from L.L. Bean to Victoria's Secret, to (if one installs the "NR-18" upgrade files) demurely topless, to "Sure, my panties are dangling, but are you ready for the ultimate challenge?" That makes 56 battles, plus the fights between rounds with the "super champions" who have to be beaten three times each—almost 70 fights in all, and that's assuming that the player wins every battle, which he won't.

Anything a player has to do 100 times or more had better be spectacular fun in order not to become boring quickly and then maddening as time drags on. The combat in *Metal & Lace* is, alas, a far cry from spectacular fun. The designers try to spice things up by giving the player seven different types of armor to choose from, a half dozen bits of machinery (shields, boosters, neural amplifiers) to upgrade the armor, and a handful of different background scenes against which to fight, but while this does help keep the player interested, it only does so for an extra dozen fights or so. In the end it all cancels out since most players will spend the first dozen fights being beaten to a pulp while simply trying to learn the controls.

The player starts with too little money to buy the really good hardware and too little experience to use the hardware he does buy proficiently. By contrast, the robo-babes are proficient from the start, in addition to which they don't have to deal with a set of inscrutable keyboard commands. (Not to mention the paralyzing fear that banging the appropriate keys rapidly and frequently enough to vanquish a foe will shortly necessitate the purchase of a new keyboard.) First-order punches and kicks are easy enough for the player to accomplish, but the more complex moves, which are the only techniques that can win a fight, take a great deal of practice to pull off. Wise players will go into two-player mode and try all the moves out on a stationary opponent; even so, the complex combinations of key-presses are likely to flee one's mind in the heat of battle.

The game does have its share of secret tricks which, once discovered, make the game much easier. Poke around on the barroom screen to which one returns between fights and you find that all the room's objects, when clicked on, can disgorge valuable treasures as well as snide remarks. Click on the floor often enough and it will let you have a suit of armor it has been hiding; click on the Schwarzeneg-

Metal & Lace: The Battle of the Robo Babes

TITLE:	Metal & Lace: The Battle of the Robo Babes
PRICE:	$49.95
SYSTEM:	IBM
REQUIREMENTS:	386 or better, VGA graphics, 16MB hard drive space; supports Adlib (Gold), PAS, Sound Blaster (Pro)
PROTECTION:	Code wheel
DESIGNERS:	Erwin Mab, Hideki Masuko, David S. Moskowitz, Kenny Wu
PUBLISHER:	MegaTech Torrance, CA (310) 539-9177

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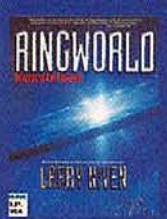

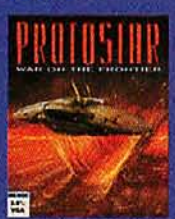

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gerian bouncer a dozen times and he'll give you some batteries.

Each source of goodies will also, occasionally, dispense a malediction—an armor-damaging kidney punch, a pocket picked of $1000—but the clever player will use a simple scheme of saving the game immediately after receiving each blessing and restoring the game after each curse to eliminate all risk. By carrying out this scheme for a few hours (since the barroom never runs out of treasures to dispense), the player can rack up enough bucks to buy all the hardware he needs, including unlimited supplies of "AI chips" which, when called upon in battle, turn the player's character over to computer control.

AI autopilot is, I found, the best way to play the game—insofar as it can be called "playing"—since it gets one past all the interminable battles with minimal damage to one's keyboard or temper. However, playing the game in this fashion is utterly mechanical: one goes to the barroom; one clicks on everything, saving and restoring as necessary; one buys up enough machinery to guarantee a win; and then one has the computer fight itself. It's not the worst way I can think of to spend some time, but when the minutes start turning into hours and you've just heard the barroom ashtray say "Oy!" for the thousandth time, you start to feel that you are wasting your life.

Add in combat graphics that are hardly better than Epyx's *World Karate Championship* for the Commodore 64, sluggish keyboard response, and the endless, painful repetition of everything (for instance, there is no way to shut off the useless "Mia the towel girl has a tip for you" feature that delays the beginning of each fight), and you end up with a game that starts out weak and ends up unbearable.

What About the Babes?

After all is said and done, *Metal & Lace* does have a saving grace. The odds are that more people will buy it for its sex than for its violence, and it is here that the game performs best. Though there are some slovenly moments—one babe calls herself "Kathleen" though the text on the screen identifies her as "Cristina"; another says, "There's not a drop of silicon in these," referring to body parts that are sometimes augmented by silicone—most players will be too pleased with the quality of the art to care.

Anyone new to Japanese Anime art will need to get used to the odd and somewhat disturbing combination of doe-eyed little girl faces and sexy, adult bodies. Anime fans, however, are in for a treat. The thirty-or-so images the game contains (half as many without the nudity upgrade) are prime examples of the style.

In deliciously Japanese-flavored English, the package promises "flashy eyes, fine noses, and spunky hair colors" and there's no denying that's what it provides. The noses are fine, the hair is spunky, there is a nice variety of body types and voices, and there is even some animation, though nothing to get too excited about (a finger moves, eyes blink, hot oil drips). Typical Japanese avoidance of all things pubic means that the artists carefully selected poses which keep the babes, even at their barest, a notch more modest than Sharon Stone. Though this feels like a bit of a cheat—like those old skin flicks where the naked women were always carrying a purse, or a plant, or something at crotch level—gamers so inclined will find sufficient fodder for no end of licentious fantasy.

Hits & Misogyny

I regret that the game is also typically Japanese in some rather less charming ways: the backstory in the manual is bloodier and crueler than anything an American publisher would release, for instance, and the game often invokes uncomfortable stereotypes. The final villain is a caricature Jewish American Princess named Rachel Saperstein ("the only one in her Bar (sic) Mitzvah class that has not gone under the knife...Rachel loves to listen to Wagner"). As a Jew, I find this mildly offensive. If I were black, I might bridle at the "Jamaal Wilkerson" character; if Scottish, at the designers giving a Scots burr to the drunken, burping beer barrel.

There is also the more pervasive problem of misogyny: the babes constantly taunt the player, impugning his manhood, until he beats them soundly, kicks them out of the fighting business, and makes them strip and pose for his pleasure. ("You can spank me," one says, underwear around her knees.) Poorly adjusted adolescent males who play this game will not exactly come away from the experience with a healthier attitude toward women.

Sensitivity, of course, is more than one should expect from a game called "The Battle of the Robo Babes," so there may be no point in complaining; but good gameplay is not, and there is equally little of that to be found. The babes are hot—true enough—but all in, if that's what you want, you'd be better off buying a CD wrapped in plain brown paper. CGW

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JUST GOT LUCKY

Gamblers May Hit The Jackpot In QQP's *Lucky's Casino Adventure*

by Chris Lombardi

There are certain categories of computer games that make a rush-hour elevator seem spacious by comparision. Chess is the most notorious example. You could build a court-yard monument to The Unknown Programmer with all of the chess game boxes created over the last ten years. Gambling games, too, enjoy this overpopulous distinction. You can almost bet on a dozen new gambling games being created every year.

These categories spawn so many off-spring because they have the broadest possible appeal, and they are relatively easy to produce. The difficult part for publishers has been boosting their games above the throng so that gamers take notice. The push in Chess has been toward more multi-media eye-candy, but with gambling it's not so easy. You can only do so much graphically with a deck of cards.

QQP's solution is too add...brace yourselves...added play value! It's a concept foreign to some marketeers, but one that is very familiar to the gamers at QQP. Witness their card game *Solitaire's Journey*. Solitaire is another flooded area of gaming, but QQP made their product a success (made it a Top 10 game for godsake!) by adding an incredible number of play options (100 different types of Solitaire!) and inventing clever ways to make the package add up to more than the sum of its individual games. *Lucky's Casino Adventure*, QQP's new gambling game, finds them applying the same technique.

Full House, Options High

It's no empty marketing hyperbole to say that *Lucky's Casino Adventure* offers the largest selection of gambling games ever collected under one roof—18 games of chance, including five styles of Poker. Gamblers can now sample like hors d'oeuvres the less popular and less accessible games like Red Dog, Pai Gow Poker, and Carribean Stud, in addition to dining comfortably on the staples of the gamblers diet: Blackjack, Craps, Roulette and Poker. (For a description of each game in *Lucky's*, see the sidebar, QQP's Book of Games.)

Before placing their first bets, gamblers will have to choose a persona to represent them in *Lucky's* world. The stock in *Lucky's* stable of cartoonish faces includes a dozen or so characters with a healthy variety of racial and facial types. Mixed with the mostly middle aged ladies and gents are a broad-lapeled and -sideburned cat that pays homage to The King, and a couple of characters that are dead-ringers for Jerry Garcia of The Grateful Dead. Once characters are assigned names and faces, the game will keep track of their performance, rank them according to a rating system, and display the rankings for multiple players. Though it does support multiple characters, the game can only be played by one player at a time.

Lucky's can be played three different ways. While Single Game mode offers no surprises (pick any of the 18 games and have at it), Tournament mode is a classic touch of QQP charm. There are seven tournaments available, each a collection of games arranged in a branching structure. In each game of the tournament, the player is given a certain number of hands, or dice rolls, or slot machine pulls to rack up the bucks. When the turns are over, the player moves on to the next node of the tourney and chooses the next game to play. In the end, the player is given a score based upon the cash won or lost and the average size of the bet. Each Tournament is designed to have its own flavor, from Short & Sweet to the Poker Player's Delight and the Strategist's Holiday. These tourneys are a great way for friends to compete, and offer a challenge unavailable anywhere else.

If It's Tuesday, It Must Be Quantum City

The Three Week Vacation mode is the true test of gambling skill and endurance. The player arrives at the Quantum City limits with a wad of cash totaling 2500 bucks, a book of gambling coupons, and a nasty case of the gambler's itch. The goal is to make it through a three week gambling frenzy without going broke.

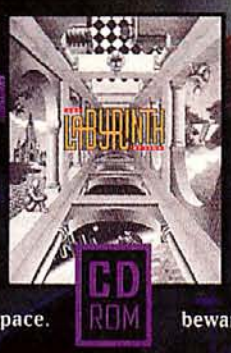
QQP has done a great job in developing the character of Quantum City. It is a city of 14 casinos (and one pawn shop), each with its own style. Each has a unique selection of games, betting limits, and prices for rooms and eats. They even attract different types of gamblers. As in reality, the Poker rooms of

Lucky's Casino Adventure

TITLE:	Lucky's Casino Adventure
PRICE:	$64.95
SYSTEM:	IBM
REQUIREMENTS:	386 or better, VESA compatible SVGA graphics card, 5MB hard drive space, mouse
PROTECTION:	None
DESIGNERS:	Destiny Software
PUBLISHER:	Quantum Quality Productions Flemington, NJ (908) 788-2799

The Labyrinth of Time

(on c.d.)



The Labyrinth of Time. An epic fantasy of time travel and adventure, possible only on CD-ROM. The legendary King Minos has commissioned a labyrinth bridging time and space. You must overcome the power of Minos and destroy the labyrinth by manipulating the very fabric of history. But beware, the future may not unfold in quite the way you planned.

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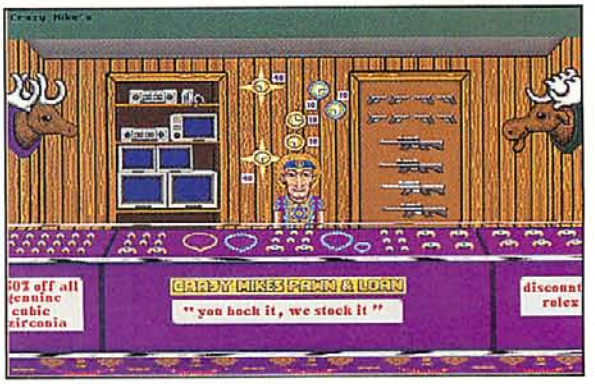
some clubs will have a preponderance of casual gamblers who play sloppy and unpredictable hands; others will draw old timers who play very tight, disciplined hands. In *Lucky's* you can tell the difference from one club to the next.

In addition to money, a character's energy level is an important consideration while Vacationing. An energy indicator bar will slowly tick down as the player whiles away the hours on the casino floor. The player can walk from casino to casino, using up energy and time, but saving cash, or he can take a cab and spare the legs but spoil the wallet. Energy depletion can be slowed by eating regularly at nicer restaurants and sleeping at more expensive hotels. A coupon book offers several hundred dollars in free stakes, and free steaks may come to the high-stakes gambler in the form of food "comps" from generous pit bosses. In addition, silly random events will occur, temporarily closing a club and forcing the player to seek out other stomping grounds. Like the "Bus Trips" in *Solitaire's Journey*, the Vacation mode adds a unique dimension to the staid conventions of computer card games.

Sights & Sounds

The world of *Lucky's*, as far as its graphics, sound, and interface go, is of an erratic consistency. The game requires a VESA compatible video card and makes good use of it in the beautiful digitized photos of the Vegas neon jungle that lie behind the main menus. In jolting contrast, the rest of the game is depicted in cartoonish simplicity, and in a resolution reminiscent of the EGA graphics days. The interface, too, has its quirks. The resolution of the mouse control is chunky, giving the cursor a noticeable jerkiness. To its credit, the game has keyboard equivalents for most of the commands, but not all. I found myself using an uncomfortable combination of both mouse and keyboard.



Lucky's also plays a full hand of music and sound effects, though they didn't do a whole lot for me. Aside from one mild rock tune, it plays a half-dozen or so insipid melodies that tend to bore into the brain and lodge themselves there for the rest of the day. The game also has a full complement of spoken dialogue for the dealers and players. Most of the voices are pleasant enough, but the main male voice for the player's character, with his "Ah, man!" and exclamations of joy, sounds more like a college kid on a Spring Break junket than a wizened veteran of the felt.

Aside from small problems with the look and feel of the package, the only major problem is the documentation. It's clear that it was done in a rush. It fails to explain how to use the Blackjack card counting feature and the vacation coupons, makes reference to tables that aren't there, and while it fails to discuss even the slightest bit of gambling strategy (the on-line docs give *some*), it insists on printing the rankings of poker hands six times.

Let The Chips Fall

Still, in spite of its lack of polish, *Lucky's Casino Adventure* is, without doubt, the best, most complete gambling package available. While other programs will entice gamers with more eye candy, and others will offer the serious student better instruction and play analysis tools, none can surpass *Lucky's Casino Adventure* in its selection of games and its clever ways of uniting these games into competitive tournaments and adventures.

QQP's Book Of Games

Baccarat: Baccarat is usually played at the finest casinos in special rooms where the players are waited upon by a retinue of tuxedoed attendants. The environs create an air of elegance and exclusivity that allows the mistresses of tycoons to lose their money in style, away from the unwashed masses. The game itself isn't a very interesting one. The players and the dealer are dealt a hand of two cards. Before the hands are dealt, the players choose to bet on either their hand, the dealer's, or a tie. The hand that is nearest a total of 9, after a third card is dealt in certain situations, wins. The odds and the level of skill involved are equivalent to choosing red or black at the roulette table.

Big Six Wheel: Wheel of Fortune fans, and those who enjoy flushing money down the loo, might get a thrill out of this. It's essentially a dumbed-down version of roulette, with a wheel marked with six different numbers. Plunk your money down on a number, watch the animated wheel spin, and, more often than not, watch your money go away. Probably included by QQP for the sake of completeness—certainly not as a selling point.

Bingo: That's the name-o of this game-o. Not exactly what you think of when you think gambling; nonetheless, Bingo has its following, and those followers will find a nice simulation here. You can play one to six cards with all of the Bingo game variations: Postage Stamp, Letter-T, -H, -U, -L, -X, Large and Small Picture Frame, and the granddaddy of them all—Blackout. The chunky mouse interface really shows its weakness here, as you have to use precise movements to mark your numbers.

Blackjack: All of the standard conventions are here: Splits, Double-Downs, Insurance, and the choice to play with 1, 2, 4 or 6 decks. The Help file contains a small chart of Doubling and Splitting strategies, which is nice, but a chart for basic Hit-Stand decisions would have served the novice gambler better. The game does have a card counting feature that will track the number of Aces, Face Cards, and Other cards that have been played from the current deck, and will even give you a Hit-Stand Index. Sadly, the documentation—both on-line and hard copy—doesn't explain how to use it.

Caribbean Stud: This combination of Blackjack and Poker is coming into vogue at certain casinos. The player places an initial bet and is dealt five cards which are treated as a poker hand. If the player chooses to play the hand, he must match the initial bet. If the dealer's hand is not an Ace-King high

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hand or better, the dealer can't play, and the player is given even money on the initial bet. If the dealer can play, and the player's hand is a better poker hand than the dealer's, then the player is paid on a scale according to the value of his hand (3 of a Kind pays 3 to 1, Full House pays 7 to 1, up to a Royal Flush which pays 100 to 1).

Casino: A trip to a gambling encyclopedia informed me that Casino was once a popular 2-4 player gambling game. It never made it into modern gambling institutions because it is a game of more skill than chance, and a good player can consistently win with or without Lady Luck on his arm. Explaining the rules of this unfamiliar game would take too long, so suffice it to say that it is a simple, moderately interesting game. With the low betting limits enforced by *Lucky's*, even the most skillful player won't earn much money playing it.

Craps: In the real clubs, the Craps table is the most exciting place to be. While QQP's version doesn't capture that high energy, it does have all of the standard betting options and odds (there are no odds on craps). An animated hand shakes the dice and lets 'em roll.

Keno: Keno is like a mini-state lottery held every 15 minutes, with similarly bleak odds and a terrible pay-off. Mark one to fifteen numbers on a card, and keep your eyes peeled on the board. While it might be fun to fill in a card while eating a buffet dinner in Vegas, I can't see anyone spending more than a few minutes with this game.

Pai Gow Poker: The money tends to move slowly in this game due to frequent "pushes." The player is dealt seven cards with which he must make two poker hands: a five card hand and a two card hand, with the only restriction being that the five-card hand must be higher than the two-card. If both of the player's hands beat the dealer's hand (according to standard poker conventions), the player wins even money. If only one hand wins, the hand is a push. Otherwise, the player loses.

Poker: Poker is the meat of any gambling package, and the hardest to program correctly. QQP has done a fairly good job with its five poker variants: straight Seven- and Five-Card Stud, Jacks or Better and Lowball Five-Card Draw, and Texas Hold'em. The betting system struck me as being rigid at first, since you can only bet a pre-set amount each round, but the limitation serves to speed up the game.

Poker is, of course, the only game where you play against fellow gamblers, and not the house, and it is very much a game of psychology as much as luck. QQP has captured something of this psychological aspect in the computer players' individual personalities. You'll find your basic types around this table: timorous gamblers who will only play when they've "got the nuts," "chasers" who will throw their money away running after an improbable hand, and testosterone-fueled players who will try to scare people away with an early raise, and who will continue to raise in a fit of machismo when challenged. And, as in real life, each of the casinos in Vacation mode has its own character. There are some tables that don't know the word "check," while others play as tight as a cocktail waitress's bodice.

The computer players play solid poker for the most part, though they are predictable in a few situations. For instance, in Seven-Card Draw, I've never seen a computer player that has four spades showing try to bluff a flush; if he bets the hand, you can be sure he's got the goods. The same seems to hold true when the computer player is showing four cards to a straight.

Red Dog: Two cards are dealt in this simplistic game. The player can bet on whether or not the third card dealt will lie between the two previous cards. If the player bets and wins, he is paid-off according to an odds table. In the case that the first two cards are of the same value and the third card matches them (3 of a Kind), then the player is paid 11 to 1 on his bet.

Roulette: The upscale gambler's game of choice before such games as Baccarat came along. Place your bet and let the spinning wheel spin.

Slot Machines: The bandits of yore are simulated here in all their glory. *Lucky's* recreates eight different machines of three to five reels and with 1 to 3 pay-off lines. Their silly themes are an appropriate parody of the real McCoy. There's Diablo Dollars, where three 6's reap a nice reward, and Buggy Bucks with its insectoid characters, and so on. Some machines even claim to have a progressive jackpot, but there's no way of knowing how things are progressing. On the whole, it seems that *Lucky's* machines are much looser than most.

Video Poker: A vile and addictive invention, the Video Poker machine has become the bread and butter for most modern casinos. *Lucky's* has three varieties of machines: standard Jacks or Better, Deuces Wild, and Jokers Wild. All of the standard devices are supported, all with keyboard equivalents.

CGW

The Gamers' Guide To Quantum City

Quantum City is a big place with a lot to offer the simulated gambler. Here is a quick chart to help you find the gaming environment you're looking for, and at the right price.

Casino	Room Rate	Meals	Baccarat	Big 6	Bingo	Blackjack	Caribbean	Casino	Craps	Keno	Pai Gow	Poker	Red Dog	Roulette
Arms	$175	$12/24/32	—	—	8-10pm	$5-1000	$5-1000	—	$1-500	—	—	$20-40	$5-500	$1-500
Bump's	$122	$14/22/32	$20-10K	$1-500	—	$5-1000	—	$5-200	$1-500	Yes	$5-200	$20-40	$5-500	$1-500
Coral Reef	$24	$8/12/18	—	$1-100	—	$2-50	—	—	—	Yes	—	$5-10	—	—
Destiny	$68	$5/12/15	$10-5000	$1-500	—	$4-1000	$4-1000	—	—	—	$5-200	$15-30	—	—
Empress	$73	$6/10/12	$10-5000	—	—	$4-500	—	—	$1-500	—	—	$10-20	—	$1-500
Flamingo	$138	$5/9/13	—	—	—	$25-5000	—	—	$5-1000	—	$10-500	$25-50	$5-500	$5-1000
Hassle's	$22	$8/12/118	—	$1-100	—	$2-50	—	—	$1-100	—	—	$5-10	—	$1-100
Jester's	$82	$6/8/12	$10-5000	$1-500	—	$4-1000	—	—	$1-500	—	$5-200	$15-30	$5-500	$1-500
Cactus Klub	$38	$5/9/14	—	$1-100	—	$2-20	—	—	$1-100	—	—	$10-20	—	—
The King	$78	$3/7/20	$10-5000	$1-500	—	$4-500	—	—	$1-500	Yes	$5-200	$10-20	$5-500	$1-500
Nero's	$154	$12/16/25	$20-10K	$1-500	10-12pm	$25-5000	—	—	$5-1000	Yes	$10-500	$25-50	$5-500	$5-1000
The Pits	$18	$3/9/11	—	—	12-2am	$1-25	—	$1-25	—	—	—	—	—	—
Quantum	$30	$5/10/15	$5-500	$1-100	4-6pm	$2-200	—	$3.50	$1-100	—	$2-50	$10-20	$2-50	$1-100
The Ranch	$42	$5/10/15	$5-500	—	—	$2-200	—	—	$1-100	—	$2-50	$10-20	—	$1-100

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Circle Reader Service #31

BEST OF THE REST

Shaking Those Winter Blues

Shareware Action To Combat The Season's Chill

by Chuck Miller

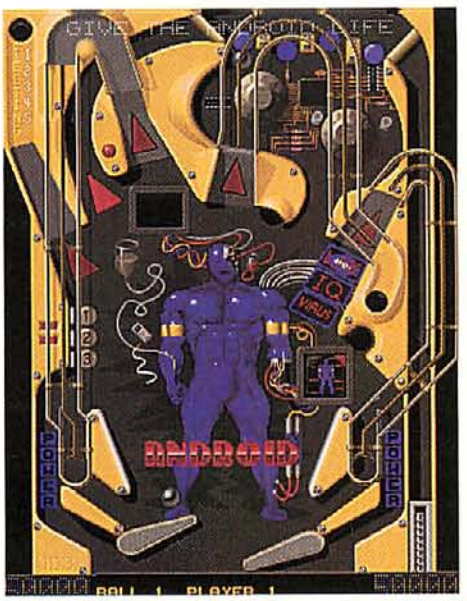
February is usually accompanied by the Winter doldrums, a time when most people need a little pick-me-up to carry them through until Spring. While this is especially true in the more frigid climates, the cool temperatures and slower pace of the season seems to affect almost everyone—even those in more temperate locales. Well, not to let Winter get the best of us, here are some shareware games guaranteed to shake the icicles from your eyelids and get your reflexes out of hibernation.

Due For A Good Paddling

The first of two games examined this month is *Epic Pinball* from **Epic MegaGames**, a compilation of eight different pinball machines available in two separate packs of four tables each. Those familiar with *Silverball* from **MicroLeague Interactive** will know the quality to expect from *Epic Pinball*. Programmed by the same team, this collection of pinball tables is even better than that offered in the previously released commercial package.

Sporting VGA graphics and support for Sound Blaster, Sound Blaster Pro and Gravis Ultrasound sound boards, *Epic Pinball* requires a 386 or faster processor. Installation is quick and easy; overall quality is very high. Graphics are attractively rendered and smoothly animated. Screen scrolling (each table is approximately two screens high) is smooth as glass. The only major failing I detected concerned audio quality. When played with regular Sound Blaster emulation on a Sound Blaster 16, the digitized effects and music sound a little muffled. Apart from this shortcoming, I can find little else to fault in the game's design or execution.

As mentioned, eight boards are available. "Android" offers fast action as you strive to activate a robot. It's the only playable table provided in the shareware version of the game. The rest of the first Pinball Pack is comprised of "Pot of Gold," a machine of shamrocks, leprechauns, and bonus points at the end of its rainbow; "Excalibur," an Arthurian table based on the famous sword; and "Crash and Burn," shifting gears on a grand prix playfield, pit stops and all. The second Pinball Pack contains "Magic," slight of hand pinball style in a 1950's magic shop; "Pinball Jungle," a trip through the Amazon with Epic's *Jill of the Jungle*; "Deep Sea," an underwater aquatic challenge with reefs, sink holes, and sunken ships; and "Enigma," an empty table where the action continually changes as objects materialize as you play.



Save your quarters and warm your fingers on the commercial-quality Epic Pinball *(two screens shown).*

With registration, you receive printed documentation that includes a description of game options, plus a complete explanation of each pinball table. Target values, awarded points, skill shots, powerups, bonuses, timed events, ramps and jackpots are all clearly explained. In addition, individual table menus provide on-line assistance in the form of a brief synopsis of each table's rules. Additionally, you can select the number of balls to play (either 3, 5 or 6), the table angle (the degree of table slope) and whether sound effects and music are on or off. Shift keys activate the flippers, the space bar acts as plunger and "nudger" (when a ball is in play), "Z" and "/" nudge the table left and right respectively, "P" pauses the game, and "M" and "S" toggle music and sound.

Overall, *Epic Pinball* comes with enough bells and whistles to make play an enjoyable proposition and an addictive pleasure. Ball action is realistic, and the options allow sufficient configurability to tune play to your own liking. At a shareware registration fee of $29 per pack or $45 for all eight boards, *Epic Pinball* rings up a high score. Very few commercial alternatives offer as much without causing your wallet to Tilt! *Epic Pinball* is available from Epic MegaGames, 10406 Holbrook Drive, Potomac MD 20854, (800) 972-7434. On CompuServe just type GO EPIC.

Not Quite Spinal Extraction

For those who would rather tilt their opponent than a pinball machine, **Panda Entertainment** and **Accend Inc.** has a body basher guaranteed to provide hours of bone crushing, spine jarring, visceral action—*Sango Fighter*. Though the scenes have changed from that of city streets to the hills and valleys of ancient China, it is apparent that *Sango Fighter* is a clone of the ever popular *Street Fighter*. It makes no pretense at being anything else. In many ways, *Sango Fighter* does parallel its role model, but the change of local to a China of the past somehow makes this game more interesting, at least to this novice street warrior.

The story goes something like this.... The frail and incompetent emperor of the Eastern Han Dynasty, Han-Ling, has left his country in a state of disarray, managed by a group of corrupt eunuchs. The result? Rebellion has spread throughout the country. After a great period of unrest and fighting, Dong Zhuo

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rose to military power and usurped the throne. Though he was quickly defeated, the eunuchs, ten allied generals, continued to fight among themselves for power. Finally, after ten years of bitter struggle, Cao Cao eliminated his opponents and took control. Now, many years later, Liu Bei, the legitimate heir to the throne, and his forces must regain power from Cao Cao. You are enlisted for this battle.

Game play in *Sango Fighter* is very good, on par with the PC version of *Street Fighter*. While the shareware version offers two fighting characters for trial purposes, the registered version includes 12 warriors, each with their own special attacks. Three modes of play are supported: Story, Battle and Two Player. In Story mode, the events of the conflict are told between fighting segments, weaving combat into the chronicle of territorial reclamation. You represent the five top generals in this scenario. Selecting Battle mode pits you as a single fighter throughout the conflict as you face the opposition's 11 top generals. Finally, Two Player mode, lets you and a friend bash, smash and slash it out against each other.

Sango Fighter *weaves an illustrated storyline between fighting segments.*

All the traditional fighting moves are provided from jumping to kicking, and punching to slamming. In addition, each fighter has his own special moves: Fatal Palm, Fling, Lethal Fist, Tornado, Whirling Sweep, and a slew of other physical and mental attacks. Fighter control is provided through keyboard and joystick. Those wanting to use a joystick should choose one of the gamepad variety (flightsticks are out). Otherwise, the keyboard is preferred.

Street Fighter-*esque action is the core of game play in* Sango Fighter.

From a presentation viewpoint, *Sango Fighter* is a quality product. Graphics, VGA only, are pleasing. Animated combat actions are smooth and reasonably lifelike in movement. Audio, if you have MIDI or Roland compatibility, is excellent, though AdLib, Sound Blaster and compatible cards are supported. Music and sound effects (mostly grunts, groans, and the sound of body parts being mashed) are reproduced well. The overall quality of this release is equivalent to any commercial offering.

Though I don't usually find myself drawn to this genre of action titles, I discovered *Sango Fighter* to be an entertaining and addictive game. *Street Fighter* fans are bound to battle over it. At a registration fee of $30, plus $5 postage and handling, *Sango Fighter* is a good value, and comes recommended. To order your copy direct, contact: Accend Inc., PO Box 23958, Suite 289, Milwaukee WI 53223-0958, (414) 354-6038.

Well, once again this concludes our look at the best in shareware entertainment. Of late, both the quality and quantity of shareware games have been escalating at a rapid pace, roughly matching that of the commercial marketplace and making the job here all the more difficult due to space restraints. As such, only the highest quality titles have made it into this column. However, there are many more worthy games out there. So, be sure to check for additional titles from the companies represented here, and watch the bulletin boards for the latest releases.

Games reviewed in this column are available through numerous distributors of shareware and public domain software, as well as on many national and private on-line services. If you do not have access to these services, you can usually write or call the game developer for an evaluation copy. And remember, if you find a shareware program enjoyable, please register it with the author.

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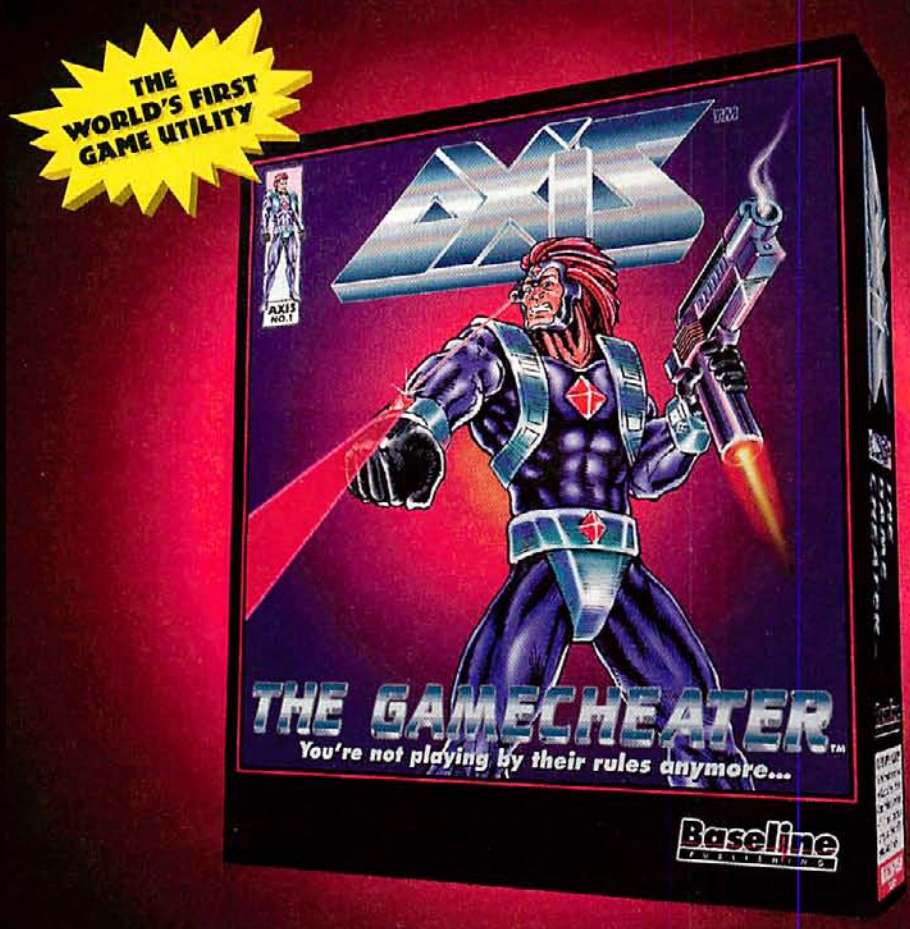

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Over There

How To Make Dinosaurs And Jet Fighters In Three Easy Steps

by Robin Matthews

This month is very much a best-of-British show, with a closer than normal look at two PC products from **Ocean Software** destined to do pretty well. One is their cracking flight sim *T.F.X.*, the other is based on a best-selling book, that became a very, very big film, and has resulted in an even bigger marketing opportunity! Thanks to the revival caused by young Spielberg, almost every conceivable dinosaur product has been fed into the insatiable mass-market appetite for our prehistoric friends. **Ocean**, a Manchester-based UK software house, launches another of their film tie-ins with the PC version of *Jurassic Park*, loosely based on the plot of the book.

All too often, a successful film, TV or cartoon character has been an excuse to loosely associate a weak product that is sold purely on the basis of its marketable "label." The history of such relationships are often tenuous and mostly insulting. We are still waiting for a decent Disney tie-in, and games like *Moonwalker*, *Platoon* and some of the James Bond games have been absolutely awful. **Ocean** has released its share of turkeys, Platoon in particular, but seems nowadays to be a well-focused company, determined to establish a more quality-driven product range.

Jurassic Park (JP) is probably the most expensive license purchased by Ocean, and is a combat-oriented adventure divided into two differently presented environments. The basic game plot follows Michael Crichton's best-selling book, as a combination of cloning and palaeontology brings dinosaurs to life. The island of Isla Nublar, a tiny islet off the coast of Central America, is home to a custom-built dinosaur "safari park," and you as a world-renowned '-assaurus' expert have been invited to examine the cloned inhabitants.

Jurassic Park

The dinosaurs are monitored and controlled by a huge super computer (probably a 486DX66 with local bus, VESA and Roland soundcard and a 5.25" floppy disk drive) that maintains discreet enclosures, paddocks and all the island's security and feeding systems. Dennis Nedry, the park's computer guru, has sabotaged the security systems. With the electrified fences down, hundreds of prehistoric predators, including Vicious Velociraptors (raptors), Dangerous Dilophosaurs (spitters) and Terrifying T-Rex's are marauding around and you are on the menu!

Part one of *JP* is an exterior shoot-em-up with very high quality graphics and limited sound support. You start off in the Tyrannosaur paddock and nearby are the two grandchildren of the owner, John Hammond (played by Dickie Attenborough in the film, dahlings...). Combat is fast, furious and frequent. You must find the kids and then lead them to the visitors centre, negotiating a large game world in the process. The interface is smooth, with the only occasional difficulty being lining up exactly right to hit your opponent. Initial weapons include a re-chargeable 'phaser' which throws out bolts of electricity and a submachine gun.

More ammo and first aid kits that restore health points are found in caches over the landscape, almost in *Operation Wolf* style. Picking things up is easy and inventory management is nice and basic. The graphic display is always busy, but not overly so, and the screen update and scrolling is smooth and quick.

Having found the children and escaped successfully, *JP* then moves into its second reel, a completely different first-person perspective 3-D adventure where you come across the raptors and other dinosaurs literally face to face. Looking a bit like **Bethesda's** *Terminator 3-D* games, the second half is still combat-oriented but there are some straightforward object-manipulation puzzles.

The graphics are very good and the speed of screen update and sound effects all contribute to a product that is atmospheric and full of pace. The objective here is to get to the generator and turn on the power. Once accomplished, the final chapter requires a trip through the caves, meeting up with the other survivors and escaping via helicopter.

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Jurassic Park

Overall, **Ocean** has done an excellent job with *Jurassic Park*. Even though the game only picks up on one or two aspects of the film (which didn't have the deepest plot in the world anyway), this is a respectable film tie-in. As it says on the packaging, are you ready to play in the park?

Hardware-wise, *JP* requires an IBM-compatible system running an 80386 or 80486 processor. VGA graphics with at least 256k ram, 2 MB of system memory with at least 588k free and 800k EMS and 9Mb of hard disk space. Controls are joystick, mouse, keyboard or combinations thereof. While Soundblaster, AdLib and Roland sound cards are supported, *JP's* appetite was incompatible with Gravis Ultrasound.

On a higher plane, **Ocean**'s long awaited flight sim *Tactical Fighter Experiment* features three hi-tech aircraft. One is already a veteran of the Gulf War, the Lockheed F117A Stealth fighter and two are yet to enter active service, the Lockheed F-22 Superstar and the will-it-fly, won't-it-fly European Fighter Aircraft, the EFA. Designed by **Digital Image Design**, *T.F.X.* claims to combine the technical accuracy of **Spectrum HoloByte**'s *Falcon* with some genuine arcade performance. Four basic flight models vary from the simple arcade model, through simple, realistic and finally the military simulator.

The arcade model is forgiving and lets you hurtle across the skies ignoring most of the basic rules of advanced flight. The military simulator could be the most advanced flight model yet—it takes into account weather, temperature and weapon/wing distribution. This is the real purist's sim and involves so many calculations a second that a 486 is minimum spec. The other two flight models fall between the extremes and give a good learning curve.

You take the role of a pilot for a United Nations air force acting as the world's police force. *T.F.X.* has five separate scenarios, the first set in Libya against a bonkers Arab general (almost history), the second in Yugoslavia during a civil war (could be the present), the third in Columbia versus a drug baron (next year?) and finally a real hypothetical in the south atlantic and the islands of South Georgia (very close to the bone, as the British Press has been reporting the possibility of a huge oil find there!).

A full and detailed review of *T.F.X.* is being prepared by fellow 'limey' and ace pilot Paul Rigby, but suffice it to say that just for a change *T.F.X.* might live up to the hype....

Tactical Fighter Experiment

So life on the **Ocean** wave looks rosy at the moment. That's all for this month, next time **Gremlin**'s *Litil Divil* and a look at what's happening this side of the pond.

The above games and any of the other games mentioned in past "Over There"s can be obtained from:

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Computer Adventure World has now moved (it took a reader from Canada to spot it—whoops and sorry!). Their correct address details are:

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

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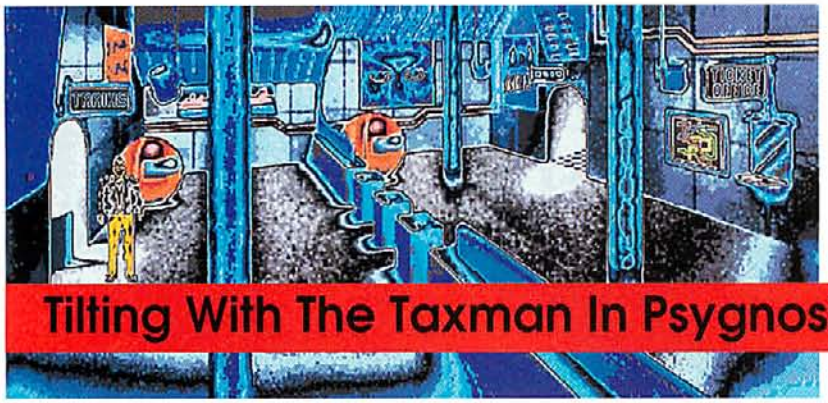

Tilting With The Taxman In Psygnosis' *Innocent Until Caught*

by Charles Ardai

If it is indeed true that nothing in life is certain except death and taxes, then *Innocent Until Caught*, which puts the player in the position of having to evade both, is best described as a fantasy game. Yet this is fantasy of a uniquely adult sort. Combine a steady stream of sly sexual references, a casual attitude toward crime, scenes and suggestions of graphic violence, and some small and grainy, but nevertheless full-frontal, nudity, and "uniquely adult fantasy" emerges as perhaps the only apt description for this sometimes disappointing but never dull import from the U.K.

Before the morally upright among you run screaming from the room, let me note that the risqué material is presented in the context of a science fiction plot and with all the good, elbow-in-the-ribs humor of (and many tips of the hat to) classic science fiction comedies such as Harry Harrison's *Stainless Steel Rat* and Douglas Adams' *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. Does this make it more palatable? As a rule, yes. Bare breasts are bare breasts whatever the century, but at least a fatal shot with a death ray spills less gore on the screen than the equivalent shot with a bullet would.

Still, you should know what you're getting into. Though hardly "R-rated," *Innocent Until Caught* easily merits a PG-13. Anyone expecting it to be *Space Quest VI* is in for a rude awakening.

Presumptions Of Innocence

Innocent casts your character as a small-time adventurer with a big-time ego, an intergalactic thief who owes most of his attitude and not a little of his backstory to Harry Harrison's famous "Slippery Jim" DiGriz. Jack T. Ladd—self-styled connoisseur, raconteur, and all around bad egg—will gladly heist any property he can get his hot little hands on, evading the corrupt and lazy cops of the 21st century through ingenuity, resourcefulness, and (in a pinch) running really fast.

As the game starts, Jack comes up against

the one nemesis he can neither out-talk nor out-run: the Interstellar Revenue Decimation Service. It seems that our high-flying (anti)hero has neglected to pay taxes on a lifetime of ill-gotten gains. The IRDS gives him 28 days to come up with the cash. The penalty for failure is what you might call severe: torture, execution, the sale of Jack's internal organs, and the seizure of all property owned by Jack's descendants for the next 15 generations.

Making matters worse, Jack currently has no money to his name and no way to earn any, except by going back to his life of crime. So, go back he does, first carrying out a minor act of pilfering for the owner of a house of prostitution, then undertaking several increasingly larcenous assignments for a crime syndicate. Completing three of these assignments successfully gets Jack off the backwater planet where he starts out, but that's a far cry from solving his problems. In all, he has to steal his way across two more planets and a spaceship before settling matters to his satisfaction.

You put Jack through his paces with a point-and-click interface that is less conventional than it appears at first glance. All the commonplaces of the genre are there—the large graphic window in which the action takes place, the menu of command icons (Walk, Talk, Look At, Get, Use), the inventory window crammed with sundry junk—but there are also a number of features we don't generally see.

Some are minor but nice: the inventory window is a free-form space in which objects can be manipulated, combined and overlapped, rather than a set of discrete compartments; all text appears in shaded speech bubbles, ensuring that legibility is never a problem; the game allows up to 99 saved games and automatically labels each with the percentage of the game that you have com-

Innocent Until Caught

TITLE:	Innocent Until Caught
PRICE:	$59.99
SYSTEMS:	Amiga, IBM (IBM reviewed)
REQUIREMENTS:	386 or better, VGA graphics, 18MB hard drive space; supports Ad Lib, Sound Blaster, and Roland sound cards
PROTECTION:	Documentation look up
DESIGNERS:	Divide By Zero
PUBLISHER:	Psygnosis Cambridge, MA (617) 497-7794

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pleted. Other features are more substantial—for instance, the lower left corner of the screen is devoted to an overhead map of your current surroundings and, as a navigational convenience, you can click on exits on the map as well as those shown in the graphic window. (Since many screens in the game scroll, one or more exits often get pushed off-screen. Being able to use the map for navigation saves a lot of time.)

Also convenient is the distinction the game draws between the "Look At" icon, which produces a description when clicked on a particular item, and the "Scan" icon, which you can sweep around the screen to search for items you might otherwise have missed. Since several of the key objects in the game are roughly the size of a parentheses and a few are the size of a comma (this is one of the game's main weaknesses, actually), the "Scan" function makes the difference between nerve-wracking gameplay and gameplay that gives minimal cause for complaint.

Where the gameplay does fall down, in fact, it is rarely because of poor design and usually because of what appears to be poor coding. I have played few final versions of games that have displayed more bugs per hour than *Innocent Until Caught*. Starting with an installation procedure I had to run twice before it "took" and a sound card configuration procedure that is less than user friendly, *Innocent* broke down at least once every half dozen screens.

At one point a quarter of the screen went black, only to return, bit by bit, when I brushed the cursor over it repeatedly. At another point, after saving the game, I found myself unable to change icons. At still another, I encountered a more traditional error message: "ILL Error 29/(Item)/Room 2." In fairness, none of the bugs caused a total system crash—I was always able to fiddle around until the game came back on-line. However, there is no reason I should have had to.

Innocence And Experience

I suppose it is a good sign that even with all the bugs, I never felt inclined to stop playing. Jack's story is interesting enough (the stage is set by a startlingly well-written 27-page personal history included with the game), the puzzles clever enough, and most of the graphics and sound good enough to make up for the undeniable shortcomings the game has in other respects.

For instance, though the package art and some of the close-ups used during dialogue sequences are truly awful, most of the visuals are great. This does not necessarily mean they are attractive: the look is generally quite seedy. However, assuming that seedy is the look the artists were after, *Innocent* succeeds marvelously at conveying a future caught somewhere between cyberpunk and New York City circa 1994. The bars still have neon signs, but the subways let out into a spaceport—it is a tense and atmospheric near-future mix.

Punchy, peculiar music does its part in supporting this atmosphere. Synthesizer rags, low-down blues, and spicy adventure melodies play side by side with outer-space themes that echo John Williams. More sound effects would have been nice, as would voices to go with the crackling repartee between Jack and the various lowlifes he meets, but seven floppy disks can only hold so much. (One of the particularly impressive things they hold is an opening sequence so slick that it could be an outtake from *Wing Commander*.)

The game's puzzles are a mixed bag: all are well conceived, but a few have the disadvantage of not making a lot of sense. Why exactly would a circuit board from a waiter droid, when combined with a boombox, create a remote control that would allow you to steer a different robot away from a ship? Why would Jack be allowed to keep the fake subway token he makes after he has used it once? Why would a pawnshop owner notice if Jack takes a vase and walks out with it, but not notice if Jack takes the vase (still right under his nose), puts it in a bag, and then walks out?

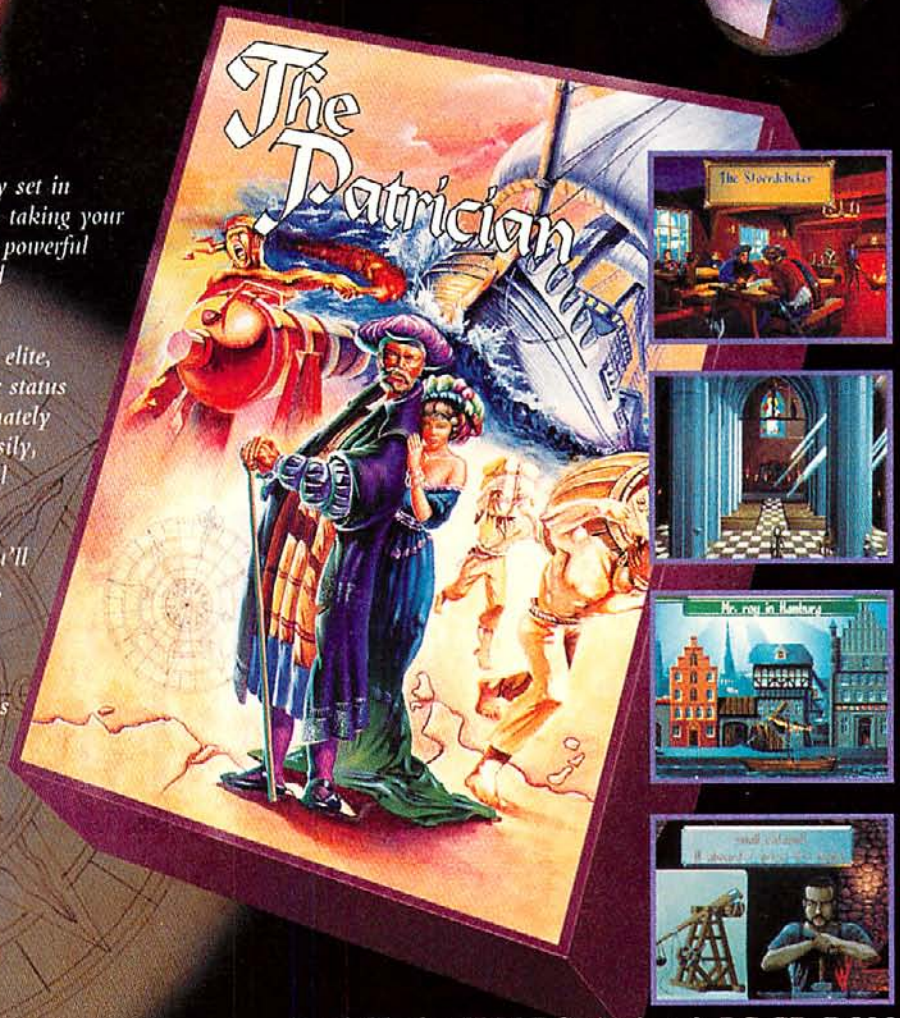
Other puzzles depend on your noticing objects so minuscule—a ticket stub poking out of a character's back pocket, a "power point" hidden in a junkyard, a pellet in an art gallery—that they might easily escape the attention even of a player who uses the Scan function religiously. As a reviewer, I had the benefit of a cheat-sheet provided by **Psygnosis**; without it, I am not sure I would have found all the microscopic objects you need to finish the game.

Innocent Verdict

Good designers take care of their players, making sure that all puzzles, however difficult to solve, are logical and that all events, however strange, are explicable—also that their game makes no unreasonable demands on the player in terms of eyesight, manual precision or the like. *Innocent Until Caught* displays too little of that sort of TLC. Like the world it depicts, *Innocent* is a little more cold and unfriendly than I either am accustomed to or enjoy.

Still, it is rare that a game startles me in the way this one did, because of both the quality of its writing and the unusual candor of some of its grittier and raunchier sequences. ("Hi," Jack says to a hooker. "No," she replies, "but I can be if you want.") Unusual games earn points in my book, as do daring ones, and *Innocent* is both. It's not for all tastes, heaven knows, but for those who like their adventures a little raw—in more senses than one—*Innocent Until Caught* delivers. CGW

The Patrician



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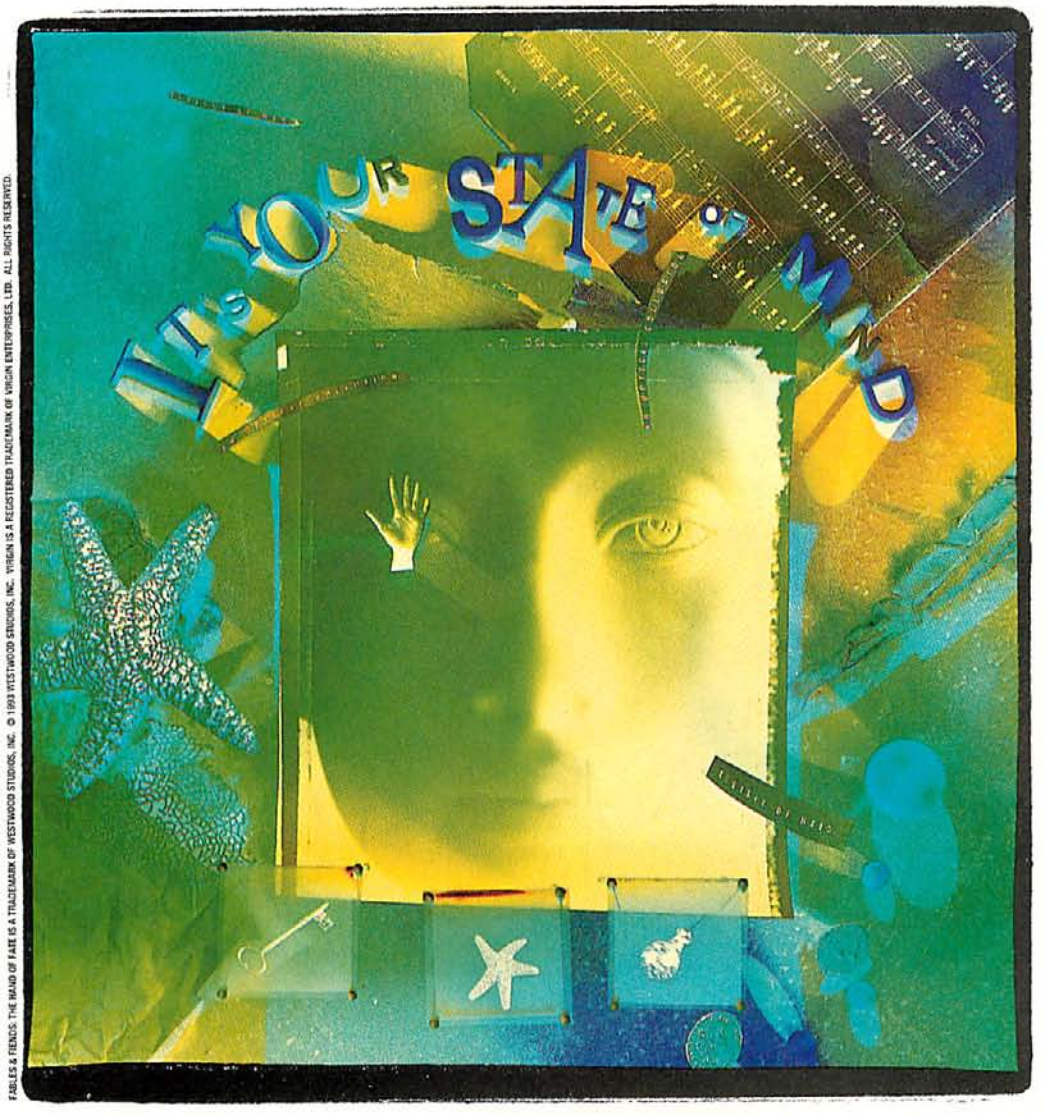

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ROLE-PLAYING REVERSAL

Yserbius and *Fates of Twinion* Go From On-Line Games To Boxed Set

by Bernie Yee

When **Sierra On-line**'s subsidiary, **Dynamix**, published what is perhaps the best fantasy role-playing game of the year in *Betrayal at Krondor*, it seemed that the stalwart adventure gamers at Sierra might be interested in testing the role-playing waters. With the *Quest for Glory (QFG)* series, Sierra was clearly no stranger to the conventions of the genre, but *QFG* has grown to be less of a pure hybrid adventure/role-playing game than an adventure game with role-playing elements. Sierra conservatively opted to stick a toe in the pool rather than jump in with their new role-playing releases, *Shadow of Yserbius* and the *Fates of Twinion*. If these names sound familiar to you, that's because they are, far and away, the most popular gaming areas on **The Imagination Network**, formerly The Sierra Network, which is now run by Sierra and AT&T.

Shadow of Yserbius

The game engine for *Yserbius* originally appeared on TSN installation disks, and the game was written specifically for multiplayer, on-line play. In a little role-reversal, the TIN interface now comes with the stand-alone versions of *Yserbius* and *Twinion*. *Twinion*, a recently opened section in TIN's Medieval Land, is not so much a sequel to *Yserbius* as a parallel game. There appears to be no plot relation between the two, except for the fact that both will suck up your on-line dollars and time. As for the stand-alone versions, that's a different story altogether.

The "boxed set" is a solo version of the on-line success. While TIN's *Yserbius* showed excellent on-line gameplay, with some puzzles solvable only by group cooperation, the boxed set is a hollow shell of its vibrant on-line self. Both *Yserbius* and *Twinion* are essentially the same games with different dungeon layouts and different monsters. Playing *Yserbius* without fellow on-line gamers is like being in an amusement park after hours, one in which the rides aren't all that fun to begin with.

Yserbius is no technological achievement in game design. In many ways, it is a throwback to the original *Bard's Tale* game, with a first-person view on your display and character statistics taking up your VGA screen, which is understandable since Joe Ybarra, a *Bard's Tale* implementor, contributed to the *Yserbius* design. Aside from the VGA niceties and the point-and-click interface, there really is nothing that truly distinguishes *Yserbius* from its 8-bit predecessor, other than the TIN gateway.

The appealing part of *Yserbius* is that you can start developing your hero or heroine off-line, then take him or her on-line where *Yserbius* really shines. This feature saves on-line time and dollars by allowing you to become familiar with the environs, interface, and game mechanics before your modem gets that "ATDT" code and starts dialing your local TIN access number. As if to reinforce this off-line "proving grounds" marketing plan, *Yserbius* boxed sets come with 30 hours of free on-line time to TIN. That alone may make *Yserbius* stand-alone worth the price of admission for gamers who want to venture on-line.

Guide to Dining Alone

Yserbius and *Twinion* are examples of minimalistic game design. The perspective is a simple, first person view that moves you through the dungeon in discrete 10' steps and 90 degree turns; it's the same system first done in *Wizardry I*, brought into color by *Bard's Tale*, and institutionalized by *Dungeonmaster* and *Eye of the Beholder*. The graphics are nice, though not up to par of the intricate walls found in *Eye of the Beholder*. Like *Eye of the Beholder*, you are limited to exploring underground settings, but unlike *Eye*, *Yserbius* has a very nice little auto-mapping function that keeps tabs on where you've been and where you should be going. Sound is adequate, and while there is a running musical score, the repetition can become tedious. As in *Ultima Underworld*, you play a

Shadow of Yserbius

TITLE:	Shadow of Yserbius
PRICE:	$59.95
SYSTEM:	IBM
REQUIREMENTS:	386-16MHz or better, VGA graphics, mouse; supports AdLib, PAS, Roland and Sound Blaster sound cards; Yserbius-9MB HD space Twinion-4.5MB HD space
PROTECTION:	None
DESIGNER:	Ybarra Productions
PUBLISHER:	Sierra On-line Coarsegold, CA (800) SIERRA1

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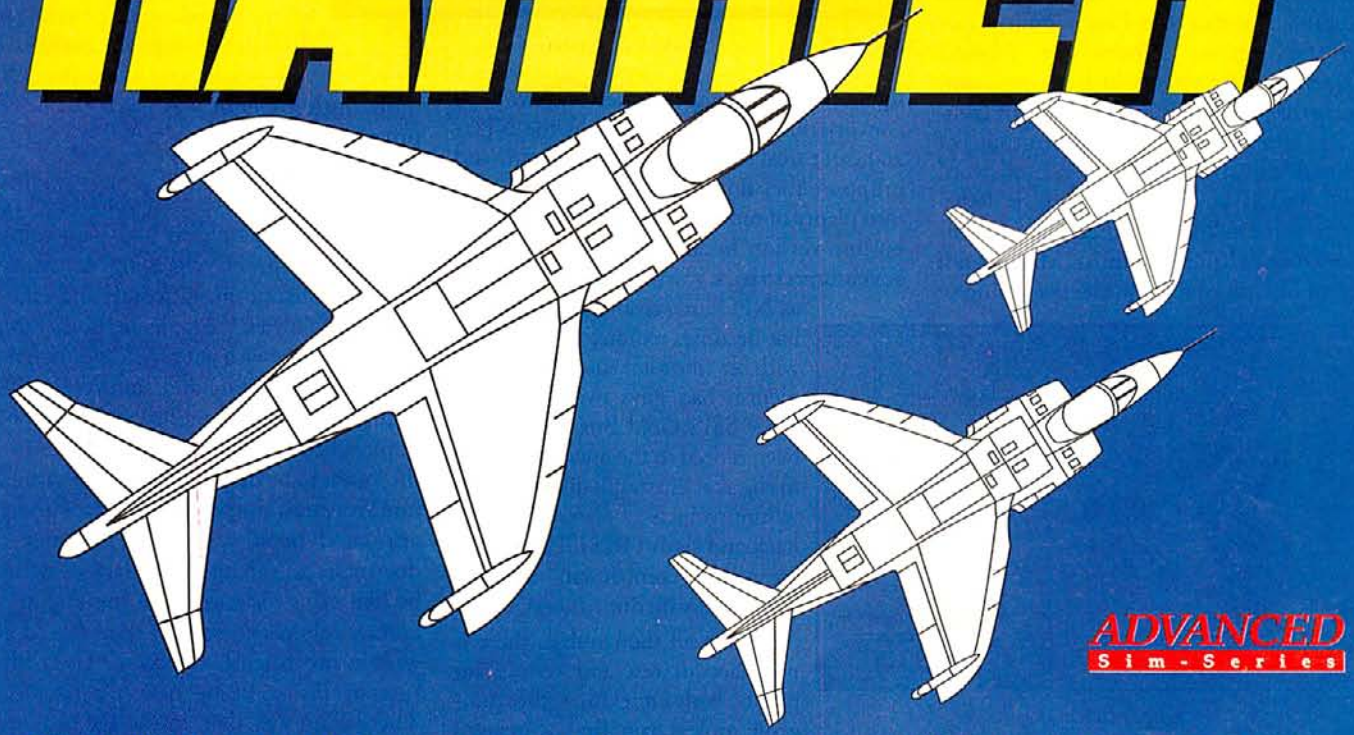

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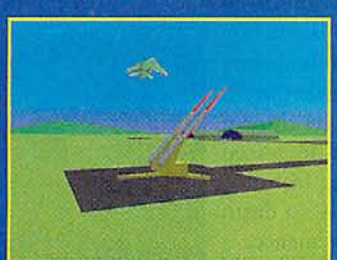
— *Strategy Plus Magazine*



Screens shown: 640 x 480 256-color SVGA resolution.

IBM PC/Compatibles: *Available October 1993*

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solo adventurer with no one lending a hand or a sword. In the TIN version of *Yserbius* and *Twinion*, the whole point is to join a party of adventurers to recreate the feeling of sitting around the dining room table with a group of friends, rolling dice and mapping your latest adventure in the pen-and-paper variety of role-playing games.

Combat is also simple and straightforward, resembling the system used in *Dungeonmaster* or *Eye of the Beholder*. It lacks some of the tactical nuances in the SSI Gold Box series (including America On-Line's multiplayer Gold Box game, *Neverwinter Nights*), *Darklands* and *Riftwar*—which is a pity, considering that *Yserbius* is really a game of combat. You face off with one or more groups of baddies (some of which can be out of sword range), and if your sword swipe is lethal enough, you can kill two, three or four monsters with one round of combat. Magic is not really an offensive factor in the beginning of

Fates of Twinion

the game, though certain scrolls (like the Scroll of Protection) and potions (the Elixir of Healing) are necessary for surviving the tougher encounters. Luckily, you can also buy these items in the local store.

The magic system is also familiar. Your character is allotted a certain amount of Mana, or spell points, which increases with experience to enable you to cast more spells with greater effectiveness. Offensive spells, such as lightning, and defensive spells like Energy Field, are matched with information spells that find secret doors, reveal set monster encounters (but not random ones), and more. *Twinion* starts the adventurer off with no spells, while *Yserbius* gives you a starter set of enchantments.

In between casting spells and killing creatures, don't expect much conversation. There is no non-player character interaction in the boxed set of *Yserbius*. Nor is there any in the on-line version, but people are too busy talking with each other and having fun to notice. The NPC interaction is of the "step on the

Shadow of Yserbius

square, get a message" variety. There's no conversation, and you can't fight the NPCs and can't steal from them; for all intents and purposes, they don't exist. Although you run into plenty of monsters (scaled back from the on-line version because there are no other adventurers to back you up), they don't count as NPC interaction. In fact, combat becomes tedious after a while, with set "monster squares" that replenish bad guys over and over. Since SSI's Gold Box games have been retired to the great hard drive in the sky, the stand-alone *Yserbius* is sure to take its place as the big hack and slash FRPG. Unless you are a pure combat fan, this is a dubious distinction, at best.

Despite all the combat, there is no place to rest and restore hit points without exiting the dungeon, unless you find a magical fountain. Luckily, Mana and Heal potions are often found as booty, and you will use them up quickly. And in a bit of idiosyncrasy left over from on-line play, adventurers can leave the dungeon and head back to the "inn" while in the middle of exploring a level. There are two entrances into the dungeon, the main entrance and the "resume" entrance. The "resume" entrance puts you back where you left, and the main entrance puts you at the beginning. But you can still go to the store, sell off items and buy more potions and scrolls, before "resuming" your last adventure. If you die, however, you get thrown back to the inn and you are forced to start your spelunking from the main entrance. There is no death in *Yserbius*, only inconvenience.

Everlasting God Stompers

Character development lacks the subtlety of other great FRPGs like *Riftwar*, *Darklands* or *Ultima*. Pretty soon, your *Yserbius* or *Twinion* hero will have hundreds, if not thousands of hit points, and he or she will be tossing around spells that not only reduce your opponents to cinders, but should be covered by the latest nuclear non-proliferation agreement. Much as the *Bard's Tale* series was reduced to megalomaniacal idiocy with characters and villains that resembled gods more than Merlin or Arthur, *Yserbius* will give you that feeling of gods among men, as your character stomps on enemies like you would crush an ant. Obviously, little thought was given to character progression and development.

Despite these flaws, there is something to be said for *Yserbius* as a stand-alone game. It is refreshingly simple to play—no complex notes to keep, no changing conversation branches, just go in, kick butt and take the treasure. With a few puzzles in the diet to give you some fiber with your hack and slash meal, you have a diverting and amusing FRPG to occupy your time for a little while. Problem is, most FRPGers don't want to be amused—they want to be thrown into a real world, with rare treasures, unspeakable horrors and, like any good book, a gripping storyline that doesn't let go. That's a good RPG—it should be like *being there*. If Sierra is going to do a fantasy role-playing game, they should do it with as much relish as a *King's Quest* adventure or the stunning new *Gabriel Knight*. There is no way that, in the age of *Lands of Lore*, *Riftwar*, and *Ultima VIII: Pagan*, you can take an FRPG like *Yserbius* seriously as a stand-along game. As an introduction to TIN, *The Shadows of Yserbius* and *The Fates of Twinion* succeed nicely. No doubt that it will gently introduce many gamers to the joys of multi-player gaming. But if you want to be captivated and lose track of time while playing a stand-alone game, pass by the *Yserbius* and *Twinion* for greener pastures. There's a lot of them. **CGW**

Fates of Twinion

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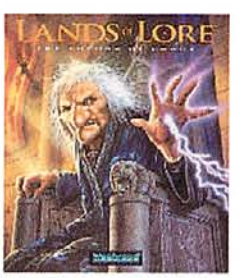

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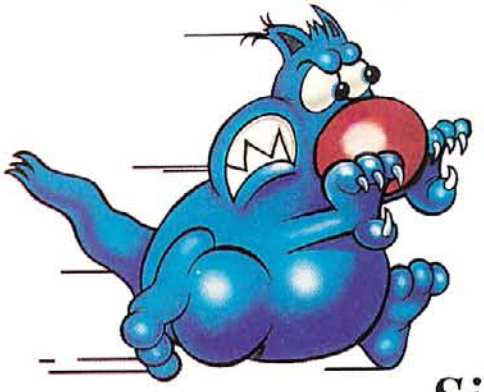
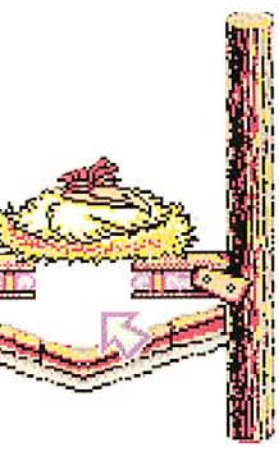


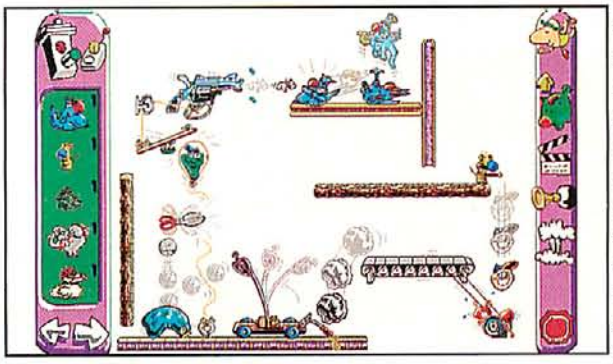
Sid & Al's Incredible Toons Will Drive You Looney Tunes

by Neil Harris

Back in the early part of the century, artist Rube Goldberg created newspaper cartoons diagramming machines of fantastic complexity. His machines were typically "time-saving devices" that accomplished their goals through an outlandishly circuitous chain of events. It might start with an anvil dropping on a seesaw which propelled a mouse through the air onto a platform with some cheese which released a balloon which triggered a switch...all ending in the completion of a menial household task. Rube Goldberg's machines became part of American folklore, leading to one of the stereotypes of the mad inventor—the father in "Honey, I Shrunk the Kids," for example.

In Dynamix' recent puzzle game, *The Incredible Machine*, the goal was to create incredible machines in the Goldbergien vein and to solve mechanical puzzles. In the puzzles, an item or group of items was missing from a machine, and it was the player's task to figure out which item was missing from where. I showed this game to an engineer friend who immediately became addicted. He bought a copy and showed it to all his friends, leading to a chain reaction that brought productive work to a halt at a major naval yard. I wouldn't be a bit surprised if the next propulsion system for battleships is just a wee bit more complex than it might have been otherwise.





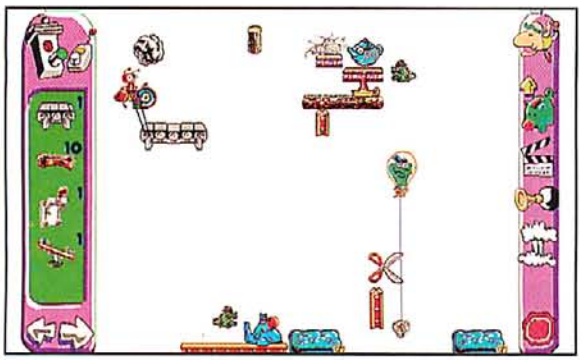
Sid & Al's Incredible Toons is the sequel to the *Incredible Machine*—and boy what a sequel! I'll be up front and admit my unabashed love for this game. It's exactly what I wanted from a sequel to *The Incredible Machine*. The puzzles are more challenging, the animation and sound effects are hysterically funny, and there are a host of small improvements.

A Game With Character

Like *The Incredible Machine*, *Sid & Al* is a series of puzzles that begins with a goal and with some of the parts needed to complete the goal. The object is to choose from the pieces available and produce the desired result. The difference is that the machine "parts" are wonderfully drawn and animated cartoon characters. Whereas we were dealing with mostly inanimate and mundane machine parts in *The Incredible Machine*, we are now working with Sid Mouse and Al E. Cat, two animated creatures who look like washed up rejects of a by-gone cartoon era, each having the stereotyped animosity for the other's species. In the puzzles, perhaps Al will have to catch Sid, or Sid will have to destroy Al. By placing the pieces together just so and pushing the "on" switch, a series of animated steps play out on the screen until the goal is reached, in its action looking like something Wile E. Coyote had ordered from ACME, though hopefully performing more effectively.

So where *Sid & Al's Incredible Toons* bounds past the original game is in its character, or rather, its characters. Along with the titular stars, Sid and Al, is a supporting cast of toons including Bik Dragon, Eunice Elephant, and Hildegard Hen. Each character has a set of actions him, her, or it will take under different circumstances. If Al sees a dead fish, he'll lurch his overfed self over to it and scarf it down and spit out the bones. Al will also eat bananas and bubble gum. If he sees Sid, he'll chase him. Dropping things on Al's head get different reactions. Something heavy will make a small flock of birds circle his head, tweeting merrily. An egg will crack and he'll do a slow burn, frying the egg. The variety of

reactions and animations is a real treat. I'm sure there are many animations still lurking in this game that I haven't seen yet because I haven't put together the right combination of circumstances so far.



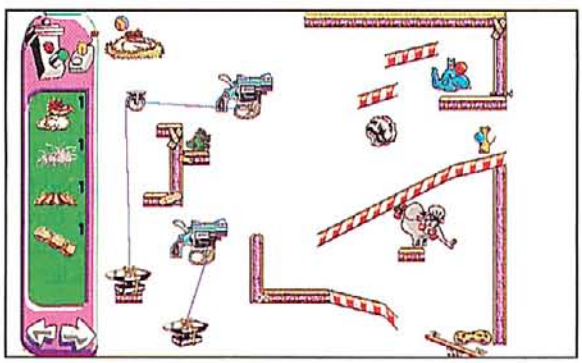
The supporting characters have a lot simpler reactions than Sid and Al. Bik Dragon spews fire when bumped, useful in lighting bomb fuses, heating teapots, or toasting one of the other characters. Eunice the Elephant vacuums up peanuts and anything else in the vicinity of her favorite snack, and she also tosses objects and, of course, runs away from Sid the Mouse in terror. Hildegard Hen lays an egg if she's bumped, and the egg drops down onto something or someone.

Most of the reactions are logical and internally consistent within the game, and will be familiar to those of us reared on Saturday morning cartoon shows. There are a few that I have trouble with, mainly the fact that some characters and objects are

arbitrarily immune to the effects of gravity. I mean really, an *elephant* is not affected by gravity but a mouse is? It's only a quibble really, because you get used to the rules in a hurry. If you care to read the manual, it's all there, but most of us will learn more from trial and error. It's more fun that way.

More Objects Than Carter Has Liver Pills

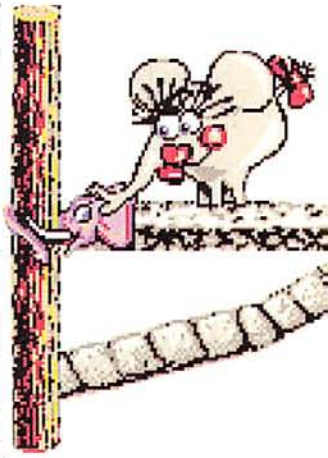
One major improvement over *The Incredible Machine* is in the variety of the objects you have available. I counted 66 different objects, not counting the characters already discussed. Some of them are only slight variations of each other, like the five types of



inclines and six types of walls, which vary in appearance and in how slick they are when something is sliding along them. Some items are unique. And some, like the gears, pulleys, conveyor belts, rope, electric switch and outlet, and teeter-totter are pretty much identical to the parts available in *The Incredible Machine.*

Some of the objects have interesting properties that can be adjusted. The Ratapult can be set to fire off one or multiple boulders. The timer can be set to go off immediately or to delay until a later time. Generally you have to adjust these just right in order to bring off the desired result. One of my favorite new objects is the Chow-Man Motor. If some food drops into his tray, the Chow-Man scarfs it up, his chest puffs out, and he jogs along his treadmill. Sid ought to consider getting this kind of exercise.

The tunnel is another handy item. It comes in two identical parts, and a character going in one part will come out the other before long. I keep expecting a train to come out of one of them. Maybe I haven't hit a high enough level yet, or maybe the designers are saving that for the next sequel. A nice touch is that Sid puts on a mining helmet before going into the tunnel, and when he comes out the first thing that becomes visible is the beam of light from the helmet.



Nobody Said This Would Be Easy

While the previous game was a challenge, with a little perseverance (and maybe a few friends kibitzing over a few shoulders) it could be solved completely. I find this game to be *much* tougher.

It's divided into levels. The first is called Cake Walk, and it's very simple, designed to demonstrate the basics of the different parts and get you used to the game. The next section, called All Brawn, No Brains, are about at the level of the puzzles in the prior game, requiring a lot of trial and error along with a good dose of inspiration.

From then on, it's time to sweat. The third level is called Really, Really Hard, and it's not named that way to make you feel good. On the earlier levels I had the stamina to solve many puzzles in each sitting. On this level, it's all I can do to get through one, after which it's time for a hot toddy and a good night's rest.

That's not all. There is an even tougher level—Looney Bin!, which might just send me there. After a while I get the feeling that this level was created just so Dynamix can sell hint books. Ten of the puzzles in this level can't even be attempted until all 90 of the other puzzles in all the levels have been solved. At the end of all 100 puzzles there is some kind of spectacular show, or so the documentation says. I may never see it myself.

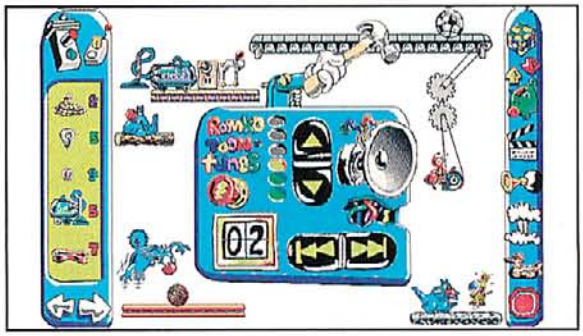
Toon It Yourself Kit

The designers would have been severely remiss if they didn't let players design their own puzzles using all these wonderful characters and gizmos. Of course they knew better. The HomeToons section gives you a blank slate and a full selection of all the pieces to play with. You can even save your puzzles to disk and trade them with your friends or, as the manual suggests, upload them to your favorite on-line service for the rest of us to try—especially those of us still stuck on the Looney Bin! level.

The only shortcoming in the HomeToons section is that the game can't be programmed to understand when the puzzle has been completed successfully. That's a shame. Perhaps the designers can take this on as their own puzzle for the inevitable next generation game.

More Improvements

I mentioned earlier that there are many small improvements to *Sid & Al's Incredible Toons* compared to its predecessor. This game automatically saves your progress and eliminates the strange set of codes that saved your score in the older game. A score system with points based on speed of solving the puzzles was apparently judged superfluous—solving the puzzles is certainly reward enough for me.



The other improvement I'm very fond of is the screen dump feature. The game creates a disk file containing a screen dump when you hit the ALT-S key combination: a handy feature if you want to analyze a screen away from the computer. This would be very handy from inside a padded cell, although the psychiatrist might frown on it. On the other hand, solving the puzzle that sent me there might be therapeutic.

Finally, a special mention should go to the folks who put together the manual, Michael Waite and Richard Tunnell. The manual is well organized, fun to read and, with its cover parody of TV Guide and frenetic layout, in the spirit of the game.

Kudos Deserved

Jeff Tunnell and his co-designers, Chris Cole and Brian Hahn, have pulled off a winner here. *Sid & Al's Incredible Toons* deserves a place on your computer and will certainly show up on best game of the year lists. It's challenging to solve, fun to play, and great to just watch the animations and listen to the sounds. **CGW**

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Palm Reading The Hand of Fate

Hands On Experience With Westwood's Latest Adventure

by Scorpia, Adventure Games Editor

The Hand of Fate is the second in Westwood Studio's *Fables & Fiends* series, a sort-of sequel to *Legend of Kyrandia.* Sort-of, since the main character is Zanthia the alchemist, a supporting character in the first game, rather than Brandon.

The land of Kyrandia, as usual, is in trouble, but this time the trouble is more than a megalomaniac jester: slowly, piece by piece, Kyrandia is disappearing. If this goes on much longer, there won't be any Kyrandia left at all. Not a pleasant prospect to contemplate.

Naturally, all the mages and sages paw frantically through musty old volumes hoping to find a solution. Naturally, they don't find anything. The outlook is pretty grim until Marko (a wannabe mage) shows up with his new assistant, a hand. The hand, through diagrams, explains that they need an anchor stone from the center of the world to keep Kyrandia together. Zanthia is unanimously chosen to go get it. Lucky Zanthia!

The task would seem to be a simple one, until Zanthia returns home to find all her equipment smashed and supplies stolen. Obviously, someone doesn't want her fixing up the problem, and now she has to get to the center of the world the hard way. This is where the game actually begins.

Hand of Fate is a linear adventure, divided into sections, that begins with the swamplands around Zanthia's house. Each time a section is completed, you move on to the next one, and there is no going back to a previous area. Usually, this makes players nervous, as linear games often require that some obscure item from the beginning be used at the end.

Happily, this is not the case here. Every time Zanthia moves on, she tends to lose most or all of her inventory. Thus, each new section provides everything necessary to solve the puzzles in it, and there is no need to worry about having overlooked some crucial item back in the swamps, or anywhere else for that matter.

Graphically, and in terms of the interface, the game is similar to *Legend of Kyrandia.* So *Hand of Fate* is visually pretty and the point-and-click system easy to use. Clicking on an item picks it up to become the cursor; the item can then be placed in the inventory or clicked on something or someone else to "use" it.

Conversations are handled in a similar manner, but they are automatic sequences. Clicking on people usually starts them talking, with Zanthia making pre-determined responses; there are no choices to make as to what she will say. Then again, conversations are not a main item here, although it is important to talk to everyone you meet at least once.

It was nice to see a female lead character for a change. Too many adventures these days are still male-oriented as far as the main character is concerned. Featuring Zanthia in this one earns Westwood a point on my scorecard.

There has been a definite improvement in puzzle construction over *Kyrandia,* where too many solutions depended solely on trial-and-error. You can, of course, solve almost any puzzle in any adventure with that method, but it is often time-consuming and tedious. Most players prefer situations where there is a logical connection between the item(s) and the solution, even if it takes them a while to figure out what it is.

So it's good to see that many of the puzzles in *Hand of Fate* can be thought out, if you take the time to think about what needs to be done. Naturally, some answers are going to be a little obscure, but games that are too easy usually aren't all that satisfying.

However, Westwood is still a little too fond of red herrings (misleading items), which can be found all over the place. One or two are traditional in adventures, but *Hand of Fate* has more than its share of them. This can become frustrating, with players wasting time over things that really aren't

The Hand of Fate

TITLE:	The Hand of Fate
PRICE:	$62.99
SYSTEM:	IBM
REQUIREMENTS:	386-20MHz or better, DOS 5.0 or higher, 2MB RAM (1MB XMS or EMS), VGA/MCGA graphics, 20MB hard drive space, 3.5" HD floppy drive, Mouse; supports AdLib, AdLib Gold, Sound Blaster (SB Pro), Roland MT-32/LAPC-1 and General MIDI
PROTECTION:	None
DESIGNERS:	Westwood Studios
PUBLISHER:	Virgin Games Irvine, CA (800)874-4607

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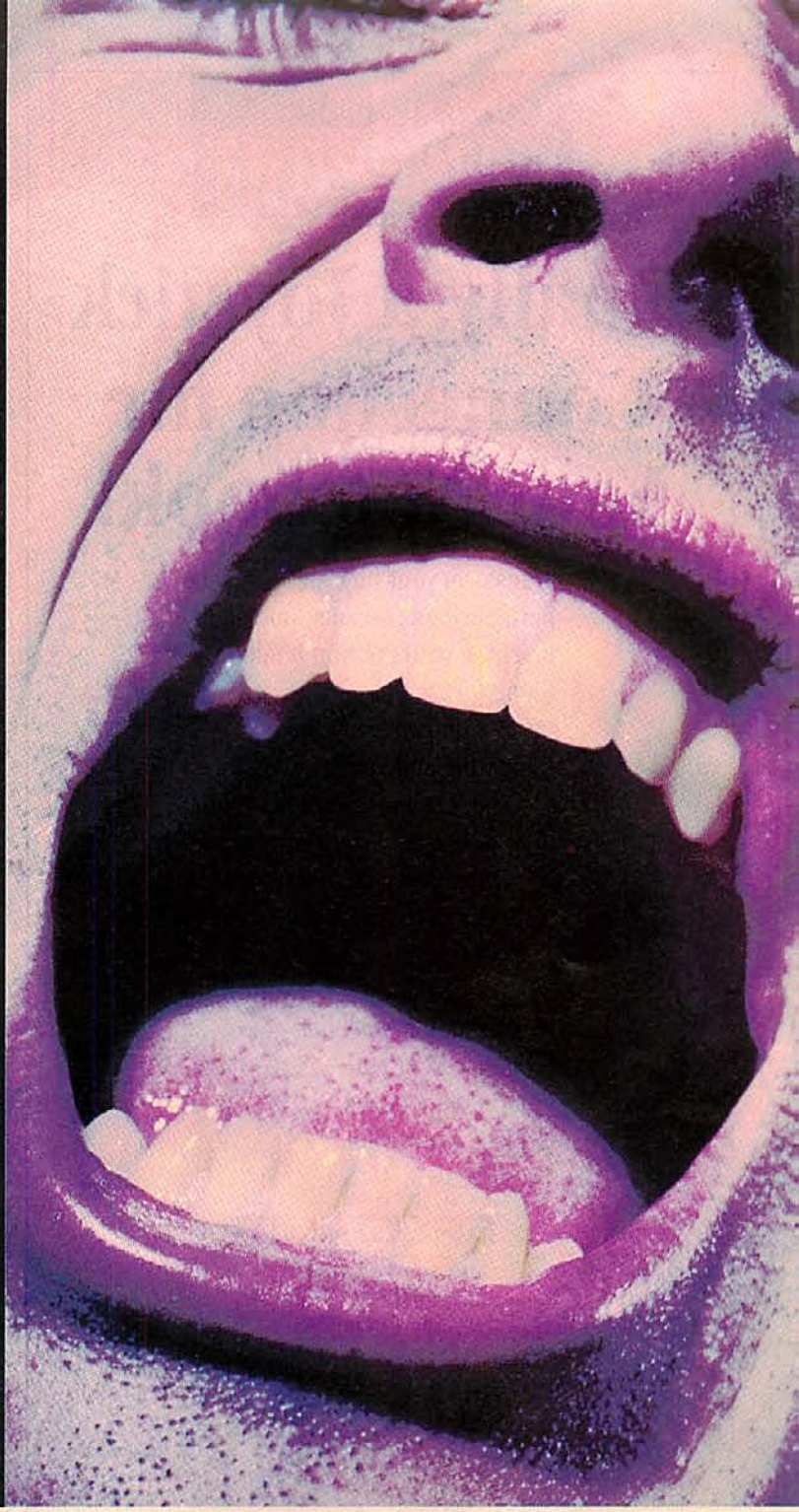

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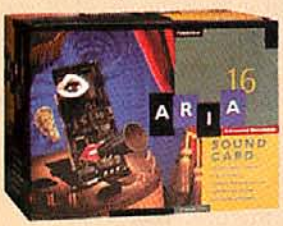

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important at all. Mustard Island is a case in point. You can easily spend hours trying to deal with the cannibals, when in fact the real puzzle is to avoid the island completely in the first place.

There is also a certain amount of subtle misdirection that can lead you down the garden path if you aren't careful. For instance, throughout the game Zanthia concocts little potions to help in different situations. The trick is that she won't be making *all* the potions listed in her recipe book. So it's easy to get caught in a mindset that looks to magic instead of logic for a solution to a particular problem.

The best way to approach *Hand of Fate* is to keep in mind that everything you need in a section of the game can be found in that section. If one or more ingredients for a potion can't be found, it's a good bet that magic isn't the answer to the puzzle you're trying to solve. Look for another way of doing it.

One of the surprising things about *Hand of Fate* is that it's really a rather short adventure. There are only about seven sections to it, all of them fairly small. Some areas may be more difficult than others, but in general experienced gamers are likely to finish this one quickly.

If the game has one really sore point, it's the ending. Having gone through the game using your head, you are suddenly thrust into what is a type of mini action sequence, which is done in real time. The only "puzzle" here is figuring out which ways Zanthia should jump to avoid an unpleasant demise. The use of what is basically an arcade sequence is a jarring note, and really doesn't fit in with the rest of the game as a whole. A less active, and more puzzle-oriented, endgame would have been better.

Overall, *Hand of Fate* is a humorous, moderate-level adventure game. Much of what was wrong with *Legend of Kyrandia* has been cleaned up, although Westwood's technique still needs a little more polish (and a few less red herrings). Anyone looking for a short-term adventure workout is likely to enjoy this one. **CGW**

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Can Larry Keep It Up?

Leisure Suit Larry Lands His Sixth Sexy Sequel

by Allen L. Greenberg

As ludicrous as it may seem, there was once a time when leisure suits were not only regarded as fashionable, but even quite attractive. Leisure Suit Larry, on the other hand, has never been considered either fashionable or attractive. In fact, this sex-conscious fictional character (along with his creator, Al Lowe) may have even contributed to the justifiable death of leisure suit popularity. Larry, whom one might describe as a Saturday morning cartoon character let loose in a whorehouse, appears to have

learned all about life either in a schoolyard alcove, or by repeated viewings of teen hormone movies.

To know Larry is to become familiar with a wealth of sexual puns and double entendres previously unworthy of human awareness. To date, Larry has appeared in five adventures, only four of which have been published. (Al Lowe has casually stated that he has no intention of issuing Larry's fourth adventure, and we can only assume that it was just too vulgar for public viewing.) *Leisure Suit Larry 6: Shape Up Or Slip Out! (LSL6)* has now been released by Sierra, and it manages to live down to the same seamy moral standards set by the previous four.

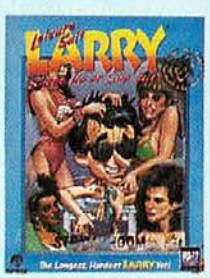
Gone, for this outing, is Larry's former partner Passionate Patti, with whom Larry was forced to share equal screen time in his previous adventure. In what may be a "back-to-the-roots" move for Larry, (if one can honestly call "the Land of the Lounge Lizards" one's roots) the hero is once again alone and desperate for female companionship. This time, however, Larry has stumbled onto the palatial facilities of "La Costa Lotta" health spa. In one of Sierra's famous mega-introductory sequences, we discover that Larry has won two weeks at the place as consolation prize after appearing on a television dating show. (First prize winners, according to one staff member, need only remain for a single weekend.) From the moment he steps up to the reception window, Larry finds himself facing some of the most beautiful women he could ever hope for. To bed even one of them, Larry would fulfill any quest or satisfy any need. In order to succeed in *LSL6*, Larry finds himself striving to fulfill the requests of nine different women, so that they, in turn, might satisfy his.

The alluring inmates at "La Costa Lotta" include a thunder-thighed receptionist whose only hope is that Larry will manage to repair the facility's liposuction apparatus—a machine that, when functional, appears capable of draining Lake Michigan. A sadistic exercise trainer named "Thunderbird" tries to entice the hero with the joys of leather, chains and handcuffs. Rose, who specializes in colonic treatments, wants only a small gift (certainly within Larry's capabilities). The lilting Burgundy might notice Larry if she could only set aside her guitar for a moment. Merrily is in the mood for love only when she is bungee jumping, and Char claims to be in desperate need of batteries for her "friend." The hard-bodied Cav would be willing to double date, while Shablee wishes only for a new dress, yet hides a secret behind her romantic eyes. Finally, Shamara keeps herself, as well as her inner thoughts, hidden from the rest of the spa.

As is usual with Larry, though he works hard to meet the needs of women, he rarely receives what he has earned, and moments of romantic climax quickly turn to painfully comical punch-lines. It is easy to imagine yourself sitting on a stool in Lefty's bar, listening to Al Lowe as he tells Larry's funny, sad story, punctuated by frequent elbow-jabs to the rib cage. It is only through Larry's luck, as well as your perseverance, that the hero will finally experience the night of his dreams. There are additional game points to be earned, provided you are willing to endure several of Larry's less glamorous bodily functions.

In addition to Larry's prospective conquests, there are several innocent bystanders with whom he will have to deal. One of the spa's employees carries a wrench, without

Leisure Suit Larry 6: Shape Up Or Slip Out!



TITLE:	Leisure Suit Larry 6: Shape Up Or Slip Out!
PRICE:	$69.95
SYSTEM:	IBM (DOS and Windows)
REQUIREMENTS:	DOS Version—286-16MHz or better, 10MB hard drive space, mouse. Windows Version—386SX or better, 2MB RAM, Windows 3.1; supports AdLib, General MIDI, PAS-16, Roland, Sound Blaster and Ultrasound sound cards
PROTECTION:	None
DESIGNER:	Al Lowe
PUBLISHER:	Sierra On-Line Coarsegold, CA (800) SIERRA1

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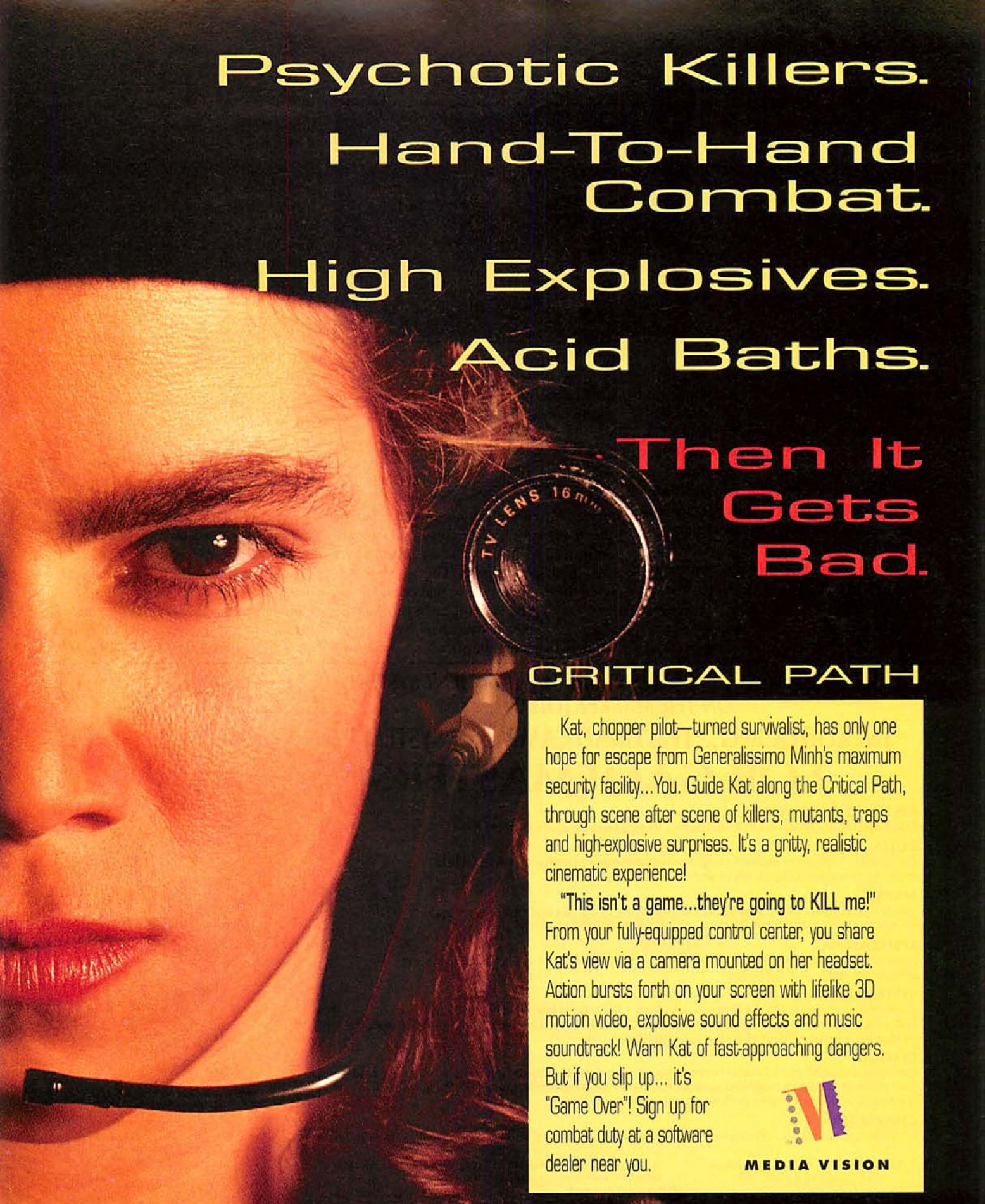

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Circle Reader Service #150

which all is lost. The most unusual tram service ever devised becomes the source of some important items and will require the hero to provide some quick, on the spot distraction in order to obtain them. A "secret agent" security guard keeps a careful eye on the spa, unless Larry can provide him with an even greater eyeful. Finally, a mercenary lifeguard must be made to look in another direction at precisely the right moment.

Like Larry's earlier adventures, *LSL6* is not particularly difficult, and experienced players might be disappointed to find that they can complete it within two or three evenings. Larry, whose lust-crazed mind would probably not be able to focus on a more challenging adventure, should have few problems uncovering most of the items that are necessary to complete his tasks. Certain key objects, however, are only to be acquired through trickery and theft. Often, the game's sly, cynical narration will provide a nudge in the right direction. Managing the large number of objects that Larry eventually must carry around with him is not a problem in *LSL6*. There seems to be no limit to the number of objects he is able to stuff into his multi-pocketed leisure suit, and nearly every item he discovers in the spa is worth some points with the typical Sierra scoring system, not to mention the women.

The Clicker Picker-Upper

In addition to puzzles, which are appropriate for the beginning player, *LSL6* also features an adventure gaming interface that is remarkably easy to use. Larry's actions are confined to six icons: walk, see, manipulate, take, speak and...zipper. The zipper is reserved for special occasions that occur far less often than Larry would like. In general, the cursor becomes whichever icon has been selected, so that it may be placed somewhere on the graphic screen. This way, you can construct commands like "take key," "move door," or "have intimate relations with Char" with a single mouse-click.

Once Larry has acquired an object, there is no risk that it will be lost through incorrect usage. The spa provides its guests with certain amenities, including towels, soap and matches, which may be replaced as needed; Larry need only learn how to summon room service. A scrolling pictorial list of objects held in inventory is always displayed along the bottom of the screen. Once selected, an object may be examined, put to use or combined with another of the objects in inventory.

In the continuing effort to "idiot-proof" games (which makes one wonder how Larry has lasted so long), each action icon is now equipped with a "hot spot," which is, appropriately, a small red dot on some part of the icon. The dot represents the active, or sensitive part of the icon and allows you to more accurately place that icon on an object. This is a valuable device for any graphic adventure, and particularly appropriate for a game featuring Leisure Suit Larry—who is always looking for the hot spot. Also, this will be helpful to those who will consume large quantities of alcohol in an attempt to improve

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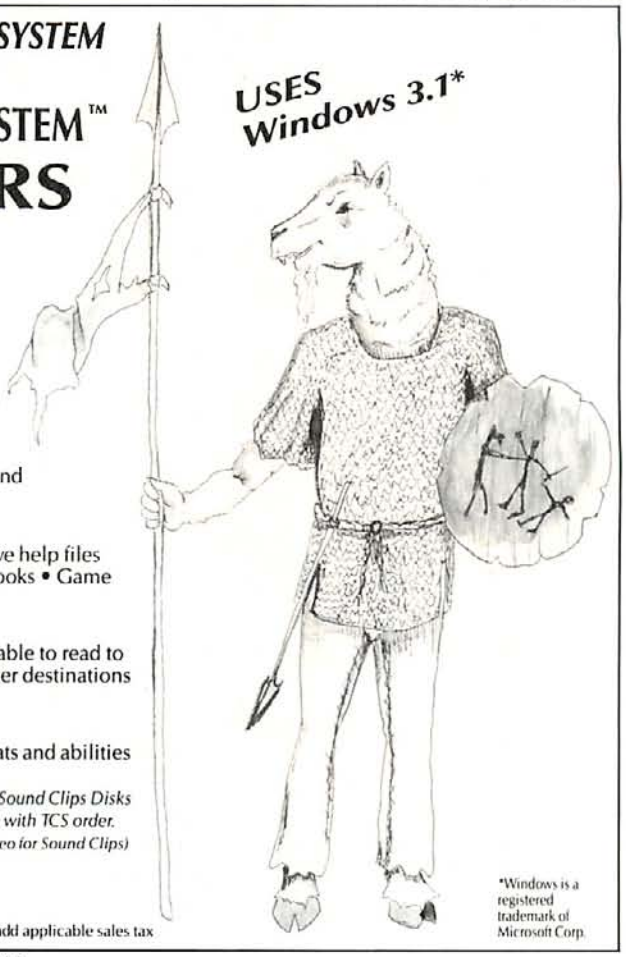

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NR-18 This game is not for the faint-hearted. Contains violence and some material inappropriate for minors.

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the game's jokes, and will need as much help as possible with their motor and visual coordination.

Larry is able to move, without hindrance, from one portion of the screen to another. He need no longer be brought to a complete halt due to some pixel-sized impediment. Further, there is no longer any confusion as to which pathways on the screen lead to dead ends, as opposed to those which lead to other locations. Larry may be made to travel to any door or object simply by clicking on his objective.

Players will also appreciate the presence of two game-saving aids. The first, when selected, reminds you to save after each major game sequence. The second allows you to set up a system that periodically reminds you to save the game.

Pixelated Playmates

While many adventure games have attempted to use graphics that appear painted or even photographed, *LSL6* is still very much a cartoon. The pictures are still highly detailed, however, and Larry's hideous features have never been more obvious. His "babes," of course, have all been rendered in achingly

seductive detail, although some players might wish for some revealing photographs rather than drawings. The game's finale is, quite naturally, a "climactic" sequence that involves some very impressive video sequences and makes the game well worth finishing.

The sound effects and background music are very enjoyable, with the possible exception of Larry's flatulence. Music ranges from Larry's familiar honky-tonk theme to the Bolero-like music that accompanies the game's most romantic moments. Each room and its occupants are colored by their own musical theme.

As though it were some kinky sex product, a particularly modest or shy purchaser can only hope that no one in line at the software store notices that *LSL6*'s package promises a product which is "longer and harder." This is clearly labeled as a game not for minors. The program uses some mildly offensive language, although it stops short of what is euphemistically referred to by thousands of radio stations across the United States as the "s-word" and the "f-word." However, players with young children nearby should also be aware that the program will cause their computer to scream in feminine ecstasy each time a point is scored. The program also includes several non-interactive sequences which, through references to unconventional sex, may also be considered offensive by some users. These may be "fast-forwarded" without loss of points or game-play.

The obvious conclusion regarding *LSL6* is that it is a very clever game that will easily offend the puritan-minded, just as it might offend the experienced gamer looking for a serious puzzle challenge. For the novice who enjoys a touch of risqué entertainment and good, off-color jokes, *LSL6* is a very novel and enjoyable source of Titillation and Amusement. **CGW**

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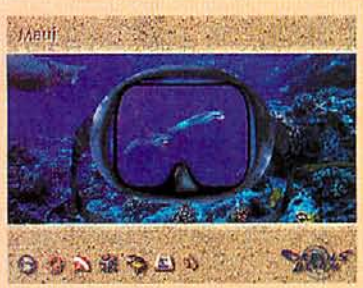
Oceans Below

Suspended weightless, floating between the bottom of the ocean and the door to the other world populated with air breathers, the diver observes, through the crystal clear liquid, the vast variety of multicolored marine creatures. While shadows of the surface waves pass across the reef landscape filled with many forms of multicolored life, the diver now belongs to the world of water. If your kids want to follow in the wake of Jacques Cousteau, *Oceans Below* will take them diving without the risk.



Oceans Below

Price: $49.95

In Brief: An undersea nature show-type program that will take adults and children to 17 world-famous dive sites

Requirements: IBM compatible 386SX/25 or better with 4MB RAM, hard disk with 5MB free space; SVGA display with VESA driver; mouse; CD-ROM drive; DOS 5.0 or higher; Windows 3.1 or higher, MS-, MSCDEX Version 2.21 or higher.

Audio Support: Sound Blaster compatible cards; MPC-compliant audio cards.

Other Versions: DOS CD-ROM ($49.95); Macintosh CD-ROM ($49.95)

The Software Toolworks
60 Leveroni Court
Novato, CA 94949
(415) 883-3000
Circle Inquiry #170

Use the program to simulate a dive along Australia's Great Barrier Reef, or in Hawaii, the Red Sea, the South Pacific, the Sea of Cortez, the Galapagos, or 11 other dive sites. Kids and parents can learn about undersea plane wrecks in Truk Lagoon, shipwrecks, underwater animal and plant life. More than 68 sunken treasures hidden in the game help to reproduce the sensation of diving.

This isn't a virtual reality program, where a simulated dive would take one through three-dimensional ocean settings. At each of the 17 dive sites, a description of the location, the diving conditions, the water conditions, and the most notable sea life can be obtained from the icons along the bottom of the screen. During the dive, the only option one has is to swim down to a digitized scene of the reef area containing the indigenous animal life. Clicking on the features shown in the picture will pop-up a full-motion video describing the fish, crustaceans, coral, and other interesting objects, accompanied by a short speech segment describing the item selected.

For the best results, the computer's video card will have to support the VESA standard. Parents should check the manual that accompanies the computer at home to make sure this won't be a problem. Standard VGA boards without VESA drivers result in muddy displays. A double-spin CD-ROM drive would also help, but at the least the CD-ROM drive on the computer should have a speed of 150KB/second. Again, check the manual.

Oceans Below simulates the diving experience, which is pretty unique among software programs. It can be quite informative and entertaining, but it is not able to give the feeling of weightlessness, excitement, and pressure that comes with a real diving experience. As an interactive educational program, it is similar to watching a documentary about scuba diving — with the added benefit of moving through the material at will.

— Alfred C. Giovetti

My Paint

Crayons have saved more than one Mom and Dad from the loony bin during foul weather. With *My Paint*, your children won't wait for stormy weather to break out the colors. They get the same chance to nurture their artistic talents, but their fingers will be on the mouse instead of on the crayons.

My Paint

Price: $49.95

In Brief: An electronic coloring book with sound and animated icons.

Requirements: IBM PC or compatible with 512K RAM; EGA or VGA display; mouse; hard disk.

Audio Support: Sound Blaster, Sound Blaster Pro, Ad Lib, Disney Sound Source, ProAudio Spectrum, Echo II, and Tandy.

For ages: 2 to 12

Saddleback Graphics
12812 Garden Grove Blvd. Unit P
Garden Grove, CA 92643
(714) 741-7093
Circle Inquiry #171

The program's animated paint palette springs to life, unlike the stagnant icons

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found in traditional paint programs. In *My Paint*, icons dance, flash, and move side to side. Kids will be held in rapt attention.

Although children can create and color their own pictures, an assortment of 28 coloring book pictures, or templates, are also included. The idea here is for kids to master the advanced tools of the paint program. Each one of the coloring book pictures comes to life with its own sound effect, such as dinosaurs roaring, trains chug-chugging, and cats meowing.

As a bonus, the publisher bundles an additional Video Coloring Book Disk called *Alphabet Fun* with *My Paint*. It's the first in a planned series of five add-on disks that can be installed by way of a special Parent Menu. Each add-on disk brings more than 25 new drawings and sounds into the *My Paint* program. It's refreshing to see a software company back up such a quality effort by adding so much to the original product. Rain or shine, *My Paint* is sure to brighten up any child's day.

— Jeff Kingston

Scary Poems For Rotten Kids

You don't have to be rotten or a kid to enjoy this interactive CD-ROM storybook. Eerie sights and sounds abound on this program designed to enhance reading skills.

Scary Poems for Rotten Kids opens with a screen that looks like a real book. In its simplest form, this electronic book can narrate any or all of its 13 poems. Even the youngest kids can sit back and enjoy the language, without having to read it — a real plus when it comes to the art of poetry.

But the publisher has adapted the program for the different skills and abilities of its users. With a click of the mouse button, the program can be configured to read each poem sentence by sentence, word by word, syllable by syllable, in English and/or Spanish, and with or without sound effects or narration. It will provide definitions and explanations for every word and phrase contained in the poems.

Using the Bookmark option, parents or teachers can modify each of these settings to match each child's particular reading skills and/or deficiencies. For example, one child might click on a word and hear it pronounced first in Spanish, then in English. Another child might click on a word; hear the word pronounced, hear a definition of the word, and then hear the word pronounced again. Each word is highlighted as it is read by the narrator so users can follow along word for word. A unique Recall tool allows teachers or parents to print or display words that a child selected for extra help. These lists can then be used to develop future review or vocabulary lists.

The poems, based on the original text by Sean O Huigin, range from the lighthearted "The Day the Mosquitoes Ate Angela Jane" to the rappin' "The Munchies," to the skin-crawling "The Body." Each work is accompanied by unearthly sound effects and clear narration in character-appropriate voices. Lines like *It slips beneath your doors at night... and sucks up everything in its sight* (from "The Body"), are sure to capture and hold the reader's attention. Each text is accompanied by original, interactive illustrations. Words pop up and are pronounced when clicked on and hidden sound effects are triggered by clicking on certain objects. Many of the illustrations are multi-layered — a first click on a hand will produce the word *hand* while a second click might produce *palm*.

Because of its ability to be so tightly customized, this program would be especially suited to children with special reading needs, although any child aged seven on up will enjoy hearing these ghoulish tales. *Scary Poems for Rotten Kids* is just one of many excellent offerings in the publisher's Kids Can Read program series.

— Felicia Donovan

Scary Poems for Rotten Kids

Price: $29.95

In Brief: An interactive CD-ROM storybook filled with hair-raising reading adventures.

Requirements: IBM compatible with 2MB RAM; VGA display; hard disk; CD-ROM drive; DOS 5.0 or higher; Windows 3.1 or higher.

Audio Support: Sound Blaster compatible

For Ages: 7 and up

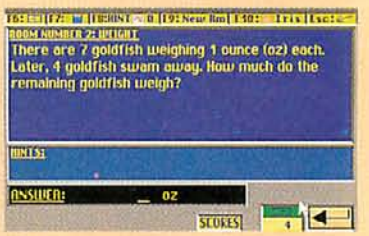
Other Versions: Macintosh CD-ROM ($29.95)

Discis Knowledge Research
PO Box 66
Buffalo, NY 14223-0066
(800) 567-4321
Circle Inquiry #172

Mathology

This bit of edutainment presents math concepts within the storybook world of Greek mythological figures. New games begin with an overview of ancient Greccia and its people's thirst for knowledge. Zeus asks the players' help in regaining lost skills with numbers. Players can save unfinished games and can bypass the legend. One or two can play. The game will keep track of each player's turn. Players can select warrier type and the degree of game difficulty.

As a warrior, kids move around the screen by pressing various keys. Before solving number problems, players must find their way through the city. They can gain bonus points by being a skilled fighter. The warrior only fights those opposed to knowledge. Concerned par-



Mathology

Price: $59.95

In Brief: An arcade-action math adventure game set in Greek mythology.

Requirements: IBM compatible with 640K RAM; VGA display; hard disk with 4MB free space; DOS 3.3 or higher.

Audio Support: Adlib and Sound Blaster compatible sound devices.

For Ages: 8 and up

Lawrence Productions
1800 South 35th St.
Galesburg, MI 49053-9687
(616) 665-7075
Circle Inquiry #173

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Due to a freak accident at the Fireworks Factory, Putt-Putt is blasted to the moon. There he meets Rover, a lonely little lunar terrain vehicle left behind by the astronauts. Putt-Putt and Rover must work together to rebuild a rocket, and accomplish a few good deeds for the Moon People before they meet the Man in the Moon and are homeward bound. Putt-Putt Goes to the Moon teaches the benefits of cooperation and the lasting value of friendship.

ents should know that this is not a heavy battle action game. No guns and knives here — the weapons of choice are rocks and spears. Kids gain rewards from skillfully moving about the screen, not by performing combat heroics.

Kids first master addition and subtraction skills. Then they advance to multiplication and division skills through 24 levels of difficulty. The highest levels involve using decimals in all four of these math functions. Students progress from solving word problems that require only one computation to problems needing multiple steps.

Some problems require that students separate key facts from extra information in the problem. For example, a question may state that a person drinks four ounces of milk, then go on to list other menu items. But the question to answer only concerns the amount of milk consumed. Defining useful information from unnecessary facts is key to building comprehensive math knowledge, and for shaping critical thinking skills.

The game presents 240 separate math problems randomly. Each one is seen within its own picture. Players can opt to see up to six hits, depending on the question. The game includes a calculator and list of formulas.

Although the reason for setting the game within the historical context of ancient Greece remains vague, *Mathology* provides basic instruction in math concepts and practice in computation.

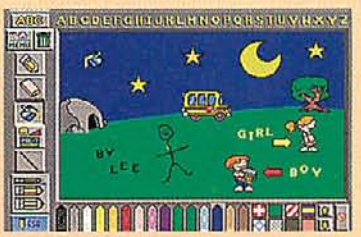
— Jack M. Germain

Rusty and Rosy Read With Me

Finally, here's a series of programs that address the many complicated processes involved in learning to read. *Rusty and Rosy Read to Me (Volumes 1 and 2)* have a wealth of sophisticated features enhanced by an excellent design that keeps the game concepts simple. Through it all it maintains a depth that's hard to find in early-reader programs.

Kids start *Rusty and Rosy Read With Me* by selecting their names from a preassigned list created during installation. Parents use the installation process to configure the program to their child's skill level.

Catch-A-Match, one of two deceptively simple activities in Volume 1, provides three scenes: Sea Match, Space Match and Sky Match; in which kids fight through fish, space aliens or air balloons to match a chosen letter, number, color or shape before their air tanks run empty. Other learning concepts include Big versus Little, Same versus Different, Order of the Alphabet, Number Sets or All Concepts. Each concept is pronounced as the cursor passes over it, so pre-readers can make their own choices. Parents can set which concepts will appear for kids to choose from; so, if parents want to reinforce only letter recognition for example, they simply select *Letters* — no other game concepts will appear.



Rusty & Rosy, Read With Me (Volumes 1 & 2)

Price: $49.95 for each volume

In Brief: Excellent pre-reading programs that focus on letter and letter sound recognition.

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

Audio Support: SoundBlaster, Disney Sound Source, Adlib, Covox

For Ages: 3 to 7

Waterford Institute
1590 East 9400 South
Sandy, UT 84093
800-767-9976
Circle Inquiry #174

Keeping the program open, however, keeps the many learning opportunities this program provides available at all times. One of the nicest features of this program is that it is self-adjusting in difficulty levels according to the performance. For example, if a child begins at Level Two and misses several matches, the program will automatically drop to Level One. Once the child demonstrates proficiency at that level, the program returns to Level Two. This ensures that kids truly understand each concept before moving on to new material.

Occasionally, an ear will be displayed in the Item-to-be-Matched box, but no visual cue is given; kids must listen to hear the cue — a wonderful way to reinforce listening skills. Electronic bookmarks can mark the concepts a child has already mastered and place them at the next level each time they play the program. Catch A Match offers lots of rewards each time a child succeeds and is varied enough to keep kids interested for a long time.

Volume 1's Coloring Box is a full-featured paint program with freeform or pre-designed scenes that provide an unstructured environment in which children can explore lines, colors, shapes and letters. Parents can set some of the mechanical options, such as mouse control, to make it easier for kids to use. This allows even very young children with undeveloped motor skills to play. The background scenes, objects, patterns and letters provide for a wealth of creativity which can easily be printed out to create storybooks.

Volume Two of *Rusty and Rosy's Read With Me* is equally rich. It also contains two deceptively simple games: Treasure Hunt and The Word Traveler.

Treasure Hunt is a matching game that reinforces shapes, upper- and lower-case letters, simple words and rhymes. Other concepts include colors, word-to-picture, letters-to-picture and signs. Signs is a wonderful introduction to real-life signs like Stop and Handicapped. Kids can play Treasure Hunt alone, with a friend, or against the computer. Each item or object is clearly pronounced as it is flipped. For very young players, cards can be placed face up. Kids earn treasures for every correctly matched pair, and each set of matched cards reveals more and more of an interactive island scene with hot spots that trigger animation and reveal the next set of cards. The number of cards used in the game can be set ahead of time by parents, adjusted by kids during the game, or be automatically increased by the program every three games.

Perhaps the most interesting and unique game of all is The Word Traveler, which allows children to explore words, letters and individual letter sounds (*phonemes*). The use of phonics is considered by many educators to be the second major step (after letter recognition) in mastering reading. The Word Traveler can be played in Easy, Medium or Hard mode. Using text-to-speech technology, an animated robot pro-

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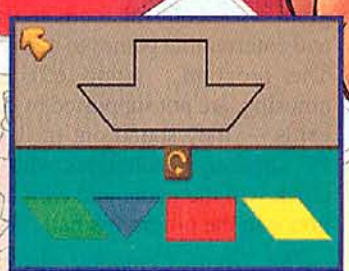

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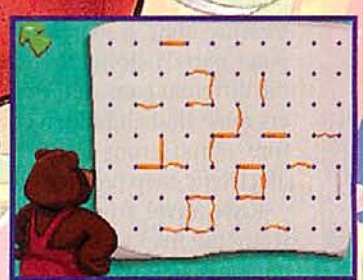

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Circle Reader Service #148

nounces any word the child makes, real or invented. Real words are encouraged through pictures and a pop-up Word Zapper that lets children know they've created a real word. (The program's 60,000-word dictionary ensures many hits and can be customized.) Kids get rewards for creating real words, which can then be sent into a child's personal dictionary to be recalled, reviewed or printed out.

Each of these volumes comes with a companion videocassette that reinforces letter recognition, letter formation (Volume 1); and vocabulary and print concepts (Volume 2) through songs, animation and nursery rhymes. Another handy feature is the KidMode option, which prevents kids from leaving Read With Me to get to other programs. On-screen help, sound effects, and instructional sound may be toggled on or off.

Rusty and Rosy Read With Me should be on the shelf of every home learning center. Parents will find it extremely useful in helping to develop the basic concepts that create new readers.

— Felicia Donovan

The Great Computer Adventure

Computer proficiency in many schools means knowing the parts of a computer and how they work. This computer adventure sends children on a treasure hunt in search of missing computer parts, helping them to learn about the different parts of the computer. Players must find all hidden components before time runs out. An encoded electronic map provides location clues.

Kids travel from one site to another using the map as a guide. Each location contains an envelope. Once kids locate the envelope, they receive a clue in the form of a riddle or rhyme. If they unravel the identity of the computer part referenced in the clue, a door opens onto a puzzle.

Contestants must solve the puzzle before they can take the uncovered part. Some puzzles involve memory skills. Others build vocabulary and reading skills. A few involve math. All exercises draw on critical thinking skills.

The look of *The Great Computer Adventure* will be familiar to any kid or parent who has played the games in the Carmen Sandiego series. Kids use buttons to manipulate a high-tech gadget to obtain information about missing computer parts. A small video window, called the VolcanoMeter, keeps players posted on the game's elapsed time. Information on sites visited, parts found, and parts taken display on screen when players press a Notes button.

The Great Computer Adventure

Price: $39.95

In Brief: This adventure game introduces and explains the components that make up a computer.

Requirements: IBM compatible with 640K RAM; VGA display; hard disk with 3MB free space; mouse.

For Ages: 7 to 12

American Training International
12638 Beatrice St.
Los Angeles, CA 90066
(800) 955-5284; (310) 823-1129
Circle Inquiry #175

Only a limited amount of time is allowed to solve puzzles and retrieve parts. This makes the adventure more exciting. As challengers play, they learn interesting facts about eight computer components, including: disk drives, keyboard, memory, modem, monitor, mouse, printer, and processor. The program uses colorful animated graphics and entertaining games to motivate play. The program's sound effects, while amusing, are not supported by any audio cards — they sound out of date on the PC speaker. Challengers who beat the clock win the game and earn a place of honor in the program's hall of fame.

The Great Computer Adventure is both entertaining and educational. However, some children will have only a limited interest in the program. Challengers who go on the treasure hunt a second time may encounter different clues, but occasionally they will discover identical game puzzles and clue locations. Nevertheless, for a first time player, this package does a wonderful job of teaching computer literacy in a very engaging way.

— Carol Holzberg, PhD

Thinkin' Things

To help your child develop problem solving and analytical skills, Edmark brings another winner to the computer. *Thinkin' Things* joins *Millie's Math House* and *Kid Desk* as an excellent example of educational software. But this isn't dry stuff — there's plenty of room for youngsters to display their creative side.

Children as young as four years old should be able to jump right into this program. The publisher has designed a difficulty scale, called a Grow Slide, into the program. Parents can easily change the settings to provide a challenge appropriate for their child's abilities.

Thinkin' Things

Price: $59.95

In Brief: Six modules stimulate creativity and analytical skills.

Requirements: IBM compatible with 640K RAM; VGA display; hard disk; mouse.

Audio Support: Sound Blaster and other sound devices.

For Ages: 4 to 8

Other Versions: Macintosh ($59.95)

Edmark
P.O. Box 3218
Redmond, WA 98073-3218
(206) 556-8484
Circle Inquiry #176

Kids learn comparison and problem-solving skills in the Fripple Shop as they fill orders for delightfully wacky pets. Requests arrive by phone, fax, or in person. Fripple customers are very specific about what they want. The young Fripple merchant will need to evaluate his or her inventory with a careful eye. When a customer says she likes "straight hair, big eyes, but no spots" the child must pick the right Fripple from the shelf. A correct answer sends the Fripple bouncing happily out the door to its new owner. Should a child stumble, the pro-

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gram provides gentle hints to help reach the goal.

Two music-oriented modules stimulate pattern recognition, as well as visual and auditory discrimination skills. Kids will get a kick jamming along with a funky ape named Oranga Banga on drums, or tapping out melodies on a xylophone with a tuneful chicken named Toony Loon.

Add to this a pair of visually-stunning segments that let young artists create futuristic images on their own digital canvas. Kids can drag spheres or geometric shapes onto a workspace with a background design they have selected. They can even set the objects in motion, accompanied by the music of their choice. The effect is really quite impressive, especially to adults watching a preschooler create original designs within a short time. The only skill required for success is an ability to use a mouse, which most youngsters pick up readily.

Parents will appreciate the clever devices *Thinkin' Things*' uses to stimulate their child's thinking. It's a well-designed and creative program that really enhances learning. And the kids? They'll be having too much fun learning to be thinking of such things.

— Dennis McCauley

Americans in Space

Boasting over 500 photographic images and an hour plus of video with narration, *Americans in Space* comprehensively traces the history of America's manned space flights. Kids who only know the space shuttle will marvel at how we came so far, so fast.

At its beginning, the program presents what looks like the foyer of space center. To the left is an elevator marked Express Tours. Straight ahead is a door marked Mission Control, and to the right is the Exit. In the center of the room is a podium with a book on it labeled Pilot's Manual.

The Express Tours icon opens up a narrated slide show. The topics covered are Race to the Moon, Turning Points, Disasters, Living in Space, and Cruising the Planets. The slide show can be run in a window or take advantage of the entire screen. (The show runs faster when displayed in a window.) The publisher made a good selection of pictures, although some of the detail and contrast is not up to photographic quality. The narration accompanying the pictures is interesting and well paced.

The Mission Control door opens up explorations in various American space projects. Beginning with a Prologue, it moves through Mercury, Gemini, Apollo, Sky Lab, Apollo-Soyuz, Space Shuttle, and Space Station. Each project is further divided into missions, most of which include specific text entries, video clips and narrated slide shows. Kids can also get information about the goal of each mission and examine crew photos.

Americans in Space

Price: $69.95 (Macintosh and Windows version ship in same package.)

In Brief:

Requirements: Macintosh with 3.5MB RAM; 256-color display; CD-ROM drive; System 6.05 or higher. IBM PC (386SX or better) with 2MB RAM; SVGA display; hard drive; CD-ROM drive; Windows 3.1 or higher.

Audio Support: Sound Blaster compatible

Multicom Publishing
1100 Olive Way Suite 1250
Seattle, WA 98101
(206) 622-5530
Circle Inquiry #177

Double clicking on the Pilots Manual opens the program's help feature. This feature helps parents and kids navigate smoothly through the program. Overall, this program is highly recommended for families interested in exploring America's role in the exploration of space, particularly manned space flight.

— Joel Schwartz, M.D.

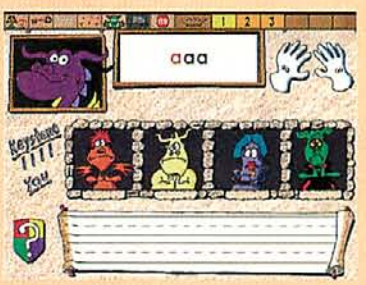
Kid Keys

This musical typing tutor combines keyboarding and early reading skills with speech and song. It's an effective combination. The program has just enough animation to keep preschoolers and elementary school kids interested, and its entertaining approach makes learning to type easier to take.

Kid Keys offers three variations on the typing theme. All three have various options easily set through a picture menu bar across the top of the screen. The learning modules can be selected from the menu bar and by pressing a large symbol on the wall of Keystone's Playroom. Keystone is a friendly dragon who greets youngsters at the opening screen.

With the Magic Keyboard, children become familiar with key and letter locations. Keys make sounds and music when pressed. Letter combinations make sounds when pressed, and a group of lively characters repeat the letters and the words they form.

The second variation, Dragon Tunes, combines the teaching of finger position with music. Each letter plays a note to a familiar song. When the letter sequence is finished, the tune plays back. For advanced learning, children create their own songs in timed practice sessions. There are 26 tunes, one for each letter in the alphabet. Players select the song they want to use from the Dragon Songbook.



Kid Keys

Price: $49.95

In Brief: Children build keyboarding and early reading skills.

Requirements: IBM compatible with 640K RAM; VGA display; hard disk with 6MB free space; mouse; audio device; DOS 3.3 or higher.

Audio Support: Sound Blaster compatible sound devices; Disney Sound Source; Covox Speech Thing; IBM PS1 Audio; others.

For Ages: 4 to 8

Davidson & Associates
P.O. Box 2961
Torrance, CA 90509
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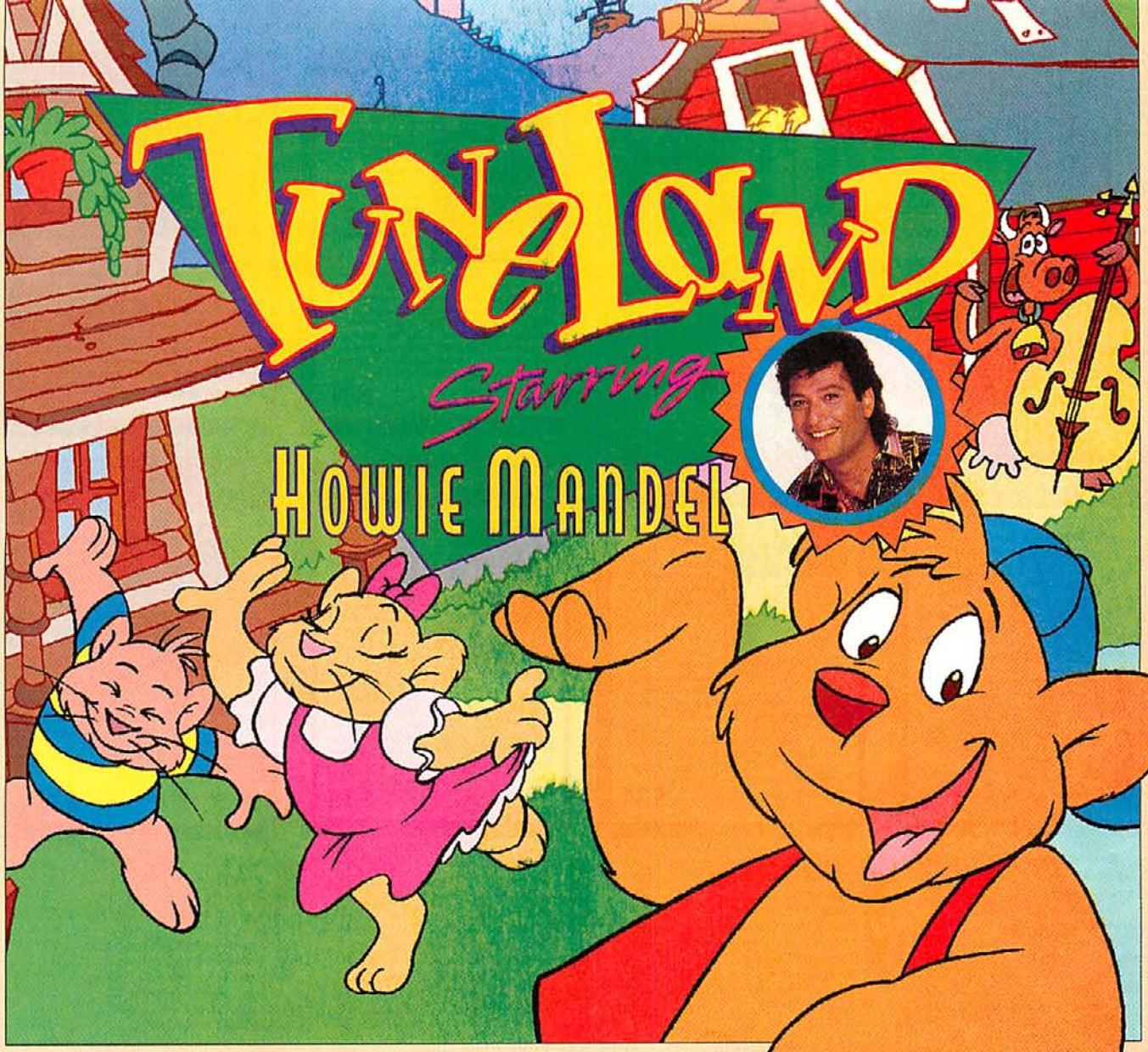
Monster Rescue, the third game in the program, challenges players to use keyboarding skills to help the keyboard monsters get out of Keystone's castle. A



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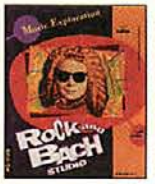

Ages 7-14. Produce your own action-packed music video! Assemble a band from a large cast of outrageous characters with their own individual music styles. Teach them your songs, or choose from a funky collection of programmed selections. Conduct, lead the jam, or let them go wild on their own. You control the sound and light mixer. Put it all together and create videos for your friends to play! See how sound is related to music. Try out the instruments in a symphony orchestra. Travel through music history with Bach, Mozart and others. Features SVGA graphics and digitized sound.

PUBLISHER: Binary Zoo **$21**

KID KEYS

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

PUBLISHER: Davidson **$28**

BODYWORKS 3.0

All new 1994 edition! The human body is the ultimate machine. Explore its systems, structures, and functions in fascinating detail. An adventure in anatomy. Colorful, comprehensive graphics guide you on a journey through the body. Advanced "speech back" sound lets you hear the correct pronunciation. Detailed animation bring the intricate functions of the body to life. Includes both DOS and Windows versions. Discover the miracle of the human machine!

PUBLISHER: Software Marketing **DOS/WIN** **$38**

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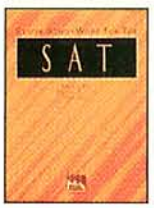

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PUBLISHER: Cliffs **$34**

THINKIN THINGS

Six thought-provoking activities build problem solving, creativity, critical thinking and memory skills that will give your child a solid foundation for a lifetime of successful learning. Varying levels of difficulty to allow for different ages and abilities to learn and be challenged. Instructions are spoken or graphical, so even pre-readers can build their thinking skills. Gives kids the tools they need to think analytically, solve problems creatively, and have fun learning to learn!

PUBLISHER: Edmark **DOS, MAC** **$34**

MATH ACE

Ages 8-14. Turns your kids on to math. Includes captivating arcade-style game, essential skill-building exercises, and an introduction to 70 major math concepts. Features engaging graphics, MIDI music, and sound effects. Hundreds of real-world challenges with Bit-Bot, your animated math navigator. More than 3000 math problems with a visual math function generator. Also features Smart Lab, an interactive math workshop.

PUBLISHER: Magic Quest **DOS, MAC** **$28**

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PUBLISHER: Sierra **$28**

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PUBLISHER: Sony Imagesoft **$55**
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PUBLISHER: Davidson **$33**
WIN

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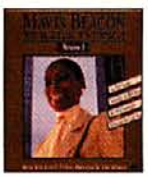
Join the Mario Brothers on a wild ride through time as they re-live great moments in history in this new series. Take a romp with the dinosaurs during the Jurassic period, stop off in ancient Egypt to meet Cleopatra, and arrive just in time to witness the first successful powered flight of the 20th Century—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

PUBLISHER: Software Toolworks **$28**

MAVIS BEACON TEACHES TYPING 3.0



Learn to type with the world's best-selling program. Now it's better than ever! Provides all the features of version 2, like personalized practice lessons and witty conversational explanations. New exciting features include practice text from the New Grolier's Multimedia Encyclopedia and Newsweek Magazine, lesson tracking ability, and amazing games that take a fresh approach to making learning even more fun. Features 256-color graphics and new MIDI music. Mavis will have you typing like an expert in no time. For users of all ages.

PUBLISHER: Software Toolworks **$27**

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PUBLISHER: Tune 1000 **$26**
DOS, MAC

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Match wits with the world's smartest junior detectives! Jake and Jennifer Eagle run the hottest detective agency, and they are looking for 8-14 year-old volunteers to help them solve their latest series of cases. Solve over 50 new progressively challenging cases. Use your deductive reasoning and reading comprehension skills. FREE poster size map of London included. Use the map for clues to solve the cases. Keeps children enthralled while strengthening their deductive reasoning skills. MAC version:$35.

PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts **$30**

AMAZON TRAIL

Journey through time from the mouth of the Amazon to its lofty sources in the Andes high country. Find the medicinal plant that will save the ancient Incas from extinction and deliver it to the Inca king. Meet as many as 30 other historic explorers, naturalists, scientists, and natives. Exercise problem-solving and reading-comprehension skills. Develop navigational abilities. Introduces ecosystems and provides insights into South American history from the time of the Spanish Conquistadors to present.

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set of hands with moving fingers shows which fingers to press as letters pop onto the screen. This game introduces the use of uppercase and lowercase letters.

The program's print option activates when players reach various score ranges based on accurate typing. This feature prints thank you notes from the various friendly monsters with the player's name on it. That's a great incentive for young kids learning the essential keyboarding skills that will help them with their future computer instruction.

— Jack M. Germain

The Complete Annotated Alice

Lewis Carroll's classic children's books *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* come alive in *The Complete Annotated Alice*, a multimedia CD-ROM from Voyager. This well-produced Hypercard stack contains the full text and pictures from both books. In addition, the program includes extensive annotations, comments, and analysis of the stories and, as a bonus for Carroll fans, "The Wasp In a Wig," a lost chapter that didn't make it to print in either book.

The Complete Annotated Alice

Price: $19.95

In Brief: A captivating, multimedia romp through the looking glass and beyond.

Requirements: Macintosh LC or better with 2MB RAM; hard disk; System 6.0.7 or higher; Hypercard 2.1.

The Voyager Company
578 Broadway, Suite 460
New York, NY 10027
(800) 446-2001; (212) 431-5199
Circle Inquiry #180

Using *The Annotated Alice* is very much like thumbing through a traditional book. Readers can page back and forth, skip ahead or back, mark favorite passages, even make notes in the margin. However, the software offers tools a traditional book does not, allowing the reader to instantly find text, export passages, and jump to annotations on a whim.

The book is simple for a child to navigate, the mouse isn't even necessary to turn the page. Adults will enjoy Alice for its extensive annotations, which give new insights to the book (the annotations make a book all by themselves).

To keep it simple for the little ones, parents can switch off the annotations, the toolbar and other gimmickry. Throughout, the book includes familiar drawings of Alice on her underground escapades. As a nice touch, a click of the mouse switches between normal text and large print.

The Complete Annotated Alice is a joy to peruse, or read from cover to cover. Despite a few minor cosmetic problems, this program provides a rewarding experience for both young children and adults.

— Kevin Savetz

European Racer

Every kid wishes for the chance to jump behind the wheel of a Porsche 911 S, but most of them settle for building the model. Revell-Monogram turns model building into model driving. Young model makers receive a 1/24th scale model Porsche 911 Slant Nose and a CD-ROM disk in this program bundle. The software assists in the construction of the model with step-by-step instructions, and three-dimensional views over which kids have control. Video clips show model-making tips — how to glue, paint, and detail the model Porsche. A painting option lets modelers see how each car looks in different colors before painting. An on-line glossary of automotive terms enhances the program's educational aspects.

The driving simulation begins on the showroom floor, where a female voice describes the model and its capabilities. From here, the game accelerates through the backroads of Europe. Young drivers must dodge obstacles, outrun the police, and sustain as little damage as possible (and finish with fuel in the tank). If successful, drivers will arrive at one of four tracks: the Zurich Switchback, the Sicilian Jackknife, the Barcelona Corkscrew, or the Stuttgart Screamer. Here they will go against five computer competitors in a five-lap race.

European Racer

Price: $70

In Brief: A plastic car model and CD-ROM disk combination allows youngsters to build and drive an authentic European sports car.

Requirements: IBM PC or compatible (386SX or better) with 4 MB RAM; hard disk with 13MB free space; Super VGA display : CD-ROM drive; mouse; DOS 5.0 or higher.

Audio Support: Sound Blaster compatible

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Morton Grove, IL 60053
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Random road and weather conditions means players must modify their cars before or during each race. Drivers may choose from a selection of five different wing spoilers, three tire options, and between an automatic or manual transmission. This sophisticated software product brings with it sophisticated hardware requirements. One major warning: The installation program modifies the system's CONFIG.SYS file without first saving the original file.

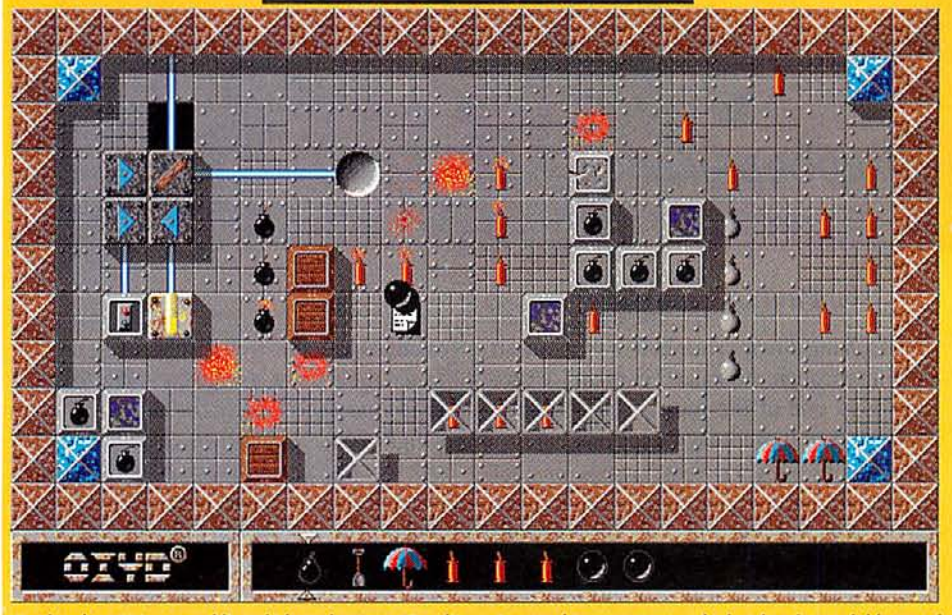
The multimedia effects of interactive 3-D graphics, digitized sound effects, and video will have kids glued to the computer screen for hours. Model building has come to the MTV generation.

— Jeff Kingston

CGW

My son and I love this game!!! Great work!!

Robert Strauss, Burbank



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

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

Outstanding program!!!! John Bernauer, Los Gatos

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

This game is highly addictive. Stuart Ritchie, Canada

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

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

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

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

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

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

OK so we got hooked!

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

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

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

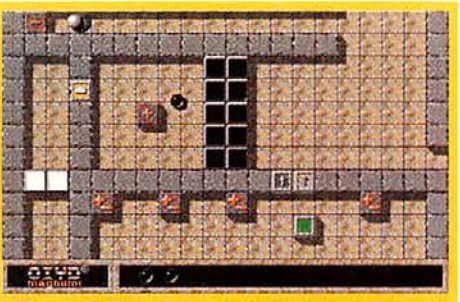
Even our 3yr old enjoys the game.

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

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

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

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



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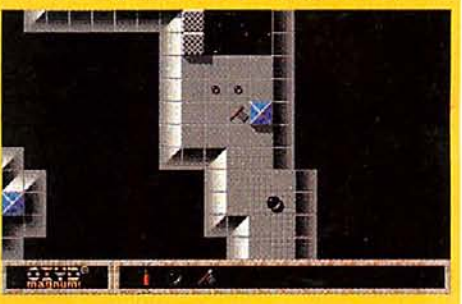

Oxyd Credits:

Best Brain Game
MacWorld Game Hall of Fame 1993

Game of the Year
Computer & Pädagogik 06/93

Score this game a solid 10
Current Notes 06/93

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

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Beggar's Canyon, Anyone?

LucasArts' *Rebel Alliance* Wants You

by Paul C. Schuytema

Don on your blaster helmet and prick up your synapses to receive the all-encompassing waves of the Force. Once again, it's time to jump back in time, back to a galaxy far, far away to do battle against the evil Empire and their dreaded Death Star. **Lucas Arts** has brought the struggle of *Star Wars* to life in an arcade shooter entitled *Rebel Assault*, a game that takes full advantage of a CD-ROM disc to cram into its 15 chapters all the pomp and circumstance we've come to expect from the pulp science fiction saga. It is a fresh experience, a melding of arcade action and cinema that showcases the possibilities of a CD-ROM game. In some ways, *Rebel Assault* is a breathtaking game, yet it comes up a few light sabers short in some key areas.

The game is composed of a series of 15 chapters, beginning with basic flight training, screaming down the infamous Beggar's Canyon on Tatooine (the subject of many of Luke Skywalker's boasts) and ending with the archetypal assault on the Death Star. The central character is not Luke Skywalker, but an amazing facsimile, a rebel rookie who must prove himself (or herself, since the game can represent either gender) through a hail of fire.

The chapters consist of "mini games" all threaded together in a linear, cinematic plot. While the goal and presentation of each chapter is varied, the basic skill—hand-eye coordination—is all that's needed. Most chapters are "aim and shoot" games, while a few others test your flight and maneuvering skills. It should be noted that *Rebel Assault* is in no way a flight simulator, or in any way remotely related to Lucas Arts' *X-wing*.

The two qualities that stand out in *Rebel Assault* are the media experience (the video, animations and sound) and the hyper-intense level of action. Make no mistake, the quality of the graphics and the cut scenes is the best yet delivered in a PC action game. Screaming your X-Wing down a river bed or weaving an A-Wing through the stalactites of an ice cave add up to one of the most visually intense experiences you can imagine.

In the cut scenes between chapters, the plot unfolds through a blending of video clips (taken from the first two *Star Wars* movies) and computer-generated animations. The video segments are full screen, although the video quality has been compromised to allow for the screen size, a decent frame rate, and a CD-quality soundtrack.

The action level in *Rebel Assault* is unrelenting. You must blast, swerve and aim constantly, testing the mettle of your trigger finger and the endurance of your joystick control skills. At times, it seems like luck (or perhaps the Force) is the only thing keeping you from tumbling into a ball of flames at the bottom of some godforsaken riverbed. "Fast" and "frantic" are keywords in *Rebel Assault*, and you should be prepared to lean on the fire button constantly.

The graphics are an interesting blend of traditional graphics and video clips. Some levels, such as the ice cave shoot-out and the asteroid field, feature video scenery flying past, and you are allowed limited movement with which to dodge and fly through the obstacles. It is an interesting way to present a game, since the level of detail can far surpass any "calculate on the fly" technology, and the limited movement is very acceptable for game play purposes. It creates the effective illusion of flight control. In other levels, such as the Imperial Walker shoot-outs, the flight path is pre-recorded. In these levels you may manipulate the aiming reticule and achieve a very minor level of left-right/up-down variation, but you are constrained to the established flight path.

Although the game does not offer a disk-based save-game feature, *Rebel Assault* will provide a password to use when you return to the more advanced levels. The only problem is that the passwords are granted only after the completion of several levels of play, and not after each level. This can add up to frustration when you have to battle through three levels just to get back to where you lost the game the last time.

The plot seems to fold certain elements of *The Empire Strikes Back* (such as the Imperial raid on the snowbound Rebel base) into the plot to destroy the Death Star. As an exercise in story telling, I can't help feeling slightly disappointed in the game, as it essentially replays several scenes from the movie, adding precious little fresh substance. The plot is flimsy enough in that it requires a knowledge of the movies to make sense of it, and so it seems foolish to replay some of the scenes exactly (such as the briefing of the stolen Death Star plans). I wish that Lucas Arts had taken a little more creative license with the game and offered up a fresh plot thread to make it a new cinematic experience, not just a point and shoot replay of the original movie.

Rebel Assault

TITLE:	Rebel Assault
PRICE:	$69.95
SYSTEM:	IBM
REQUIREMENTS:	386-33MHz, 4MB RAM, VGA graphics, MPC Level 1 CD-ROM drive; supports Pro Audio Spectrum, Sound Blaster, and Ultrasound sound cards
PROTECTION:	None
DESIGNER:	Vince Lee
PUBLISHER:	LucasArts San Rafael, CA (800) 782-7927

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Beyond the plot, though, how does it play? In some areas, excellently and in others, very weakly. Certain chapters, such as one consisting of taking out Imperial recon droids in an ice cave, are wonderfully challenging, exciting and frustrating, while in another, shooting two-legged Imperial walkers by the dozen becomes a mindless exercise in rapid shooting. Taking out the Star Destroyer is a white knuckle experience at first, but after several runs, the patterns are easily anticipated, and you can talk or drink a pop while playing. Chasing TIE fighters through an asteroid field, however, is an exercise in shooting and flying mania that I thought I would never survive; the game made me calculate the trajectories of so many objects that I thought my brain would overheat.

In all, I would say that *Rebel Assault* is an odd mix of challenging and mindless levels, offering very little continuity in the difficulty scale. If I had one overarching bone to pick with the game, it would be the "sameness" of the levels. Each replay of any chapter offers the same fare, with TIE fighters approaching in exactly the same patterns and Imperial Storm Troopers showing up in the same places. With the exception of a very few levels, where so much is going on that an entire pattern is hard to grasp (such as the asteroid field dogfight), a level is fairly easy to memorize, making the repeated-play challenge diminish logarithmically. In one level, where your alter-ego has to blast Imperial Storm Troopers in a series of ice-cave locales, the patterns were so easy to anticipate that I had figured it out on my first run through, and actually came out of the encounter undamaged. If one could "record" the joystick and trigger actions of a successful game, then that recording could win the game time after time.

Rebel Assault is also peppered with more than a few bugs, the most irritating of which is the constantly decaying calibration of the joystick. It is not uncommon to have to recalibrate the joystick up to a dozen times during a single game. Also, some of the branching paths in the Beggar's Canyon and cave scenarios are implemented very poorly, with visual jerks, frozen screens, and movement to the left when you want to go right.

One thing that *Rebel Assault* does do is to herald in a new era of CD-ROM games. The game is played entirely off the disk with no installation required, and except for beginning load time, it is fast, fluid and furious the entire way through. It is exciting to see the level of detail that can be achieved while still keeping the play speed at the manic levels.

Rebel Assault is a gorgeous, fast-paced shooter that is a lot of fun to play. The problem is, the fun is too short lived, and the game certainly doesn't lure us back to play again and again. If you love the old arcade style of frantic aim and shoot games, then *Rebel Assault* will be an experience not to be missed. If you live to see the cutting edge of PC entertainment technology, then this CD-ROM is a must have. But if you want hours of in-depth play, then perhaps the Force should guide you elsewhere. CGW

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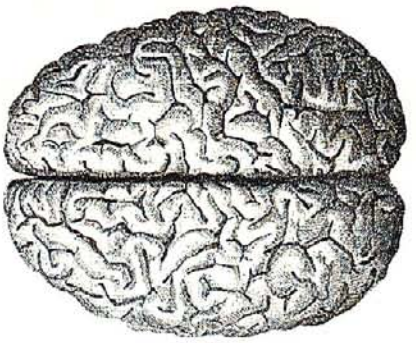

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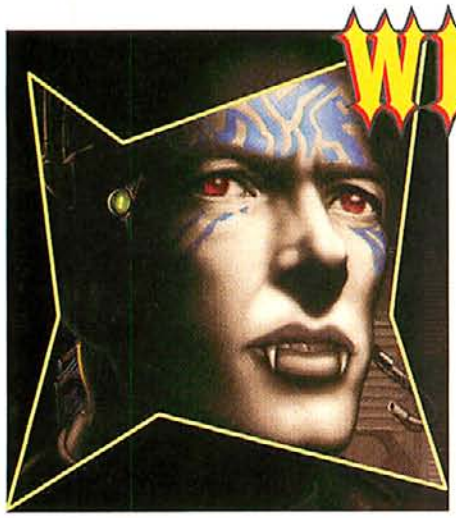

Dig Your Fangs Into The Dark Future of *Bloodnet*

by Douglas Seacat

Dark genres have become very popular. We are experiencing another age of the Film Noir, where the shadows are more alluring than the light. In particular, we have come to enjoy the concept of the moldering urban landscape, where technology provides an escape, not a solution, to problems and where life is a struggle for survival in an overpopulated rat-warren. Two literary genres have taken these themes to great popularity: Cyberpunk and the Modern Gothic. *BloodNet* is the bold attempt by MicroProse to combine these fictional environments into a better, darker, more morbid whole.

What does a vampire have to do with cyberspace? A difficult question. On one hand we have a dark metropolis dominated by hidden supernatural forces, creatures who have lived for centuries in secrecy, hunting upon humans in the hours of darkness. The modern Gothic is designed to stress our own humanity as we sympathize with undead creatures who are losing their connections to life.

Cyberpunk is a much different genre. It is a futuristic mythos of computers and technology, where scientific progress has created nightmares and pleasures to match any supernatural experience. Reality has been subverted by computer networks which can link directly to the mind and create imaginary worlds. There would seem to be little room in this hard-edged universe for mystical creatures of the night.

Despite this, *BloodNet* proves the two genres complement each other. Both rely on the darkness of a crowded city where the population is inured to violence and despair. In the Cyberpunk world, the mega-corporations leech money and information as greedily as any blood-sucker. Why shouldn't vampires adapt to the world of the future? The passing of time means nothing to such creatures. Cyberspace becomes simply another avenue of exploitation, another means with which to quench their thirst for blood and power.

Forcibly Inducted

It is in this rich background that *BloodNet*'s story takes place. The player takes the role of Ransom Stark, a man who has been victimized and must strike back at his persecutors. Like many residents of 2094 Manhattan, Ransom was first victimized by TransTech, his former employer. This mega-corporation controls cyberspace with an iron hand, monopolizing the technology of the information network. TransTech is notorious for abusing its workers. In *BloodNet*, the "Virtual Reality" of Cyberspace is stressful on the mind. Merging one's thoughts with the computer is hardly a natural process and over-exposure can cause severe mental unbalance. A disease known as Hopkins-Brie Syndrome can end the career of the best cyber-jockey, since victims can no longer separate reality from fiction. Instead of treating such victims, TransTech fires them, leaving them both unemployed and mentally unstable.

This was the fate of Ransom Stark, before he was given a neural implant that helps suppress his hallucinations. No longer working for TransTech, Ransom was forced to become a cyberspace pirate, illegally hacking into the system on a mercenary basis for the highest bidder. Such a criminal profession has been taken up by increasing numbers of the underworld, all of whom need the

Bloodnet

TITLE:	Bloodnet
PRICE:	$69.95
SYSTEM:	IBM
REQUIREMENTS:	386-16Mhz or better, 2MB RAM, VGA graphics, 9MB hard drive space, mouse; supports AdLib, PAS, Roland, Sound Blaster (Pro), Sound Master and Wave Blaster sound cards.
PROTECTION:	None
DESIGNERS:	John Antinori, Laura Kampo
PUBLISHER:	MicroProse Hunt Valley, MD (410) 771-1151

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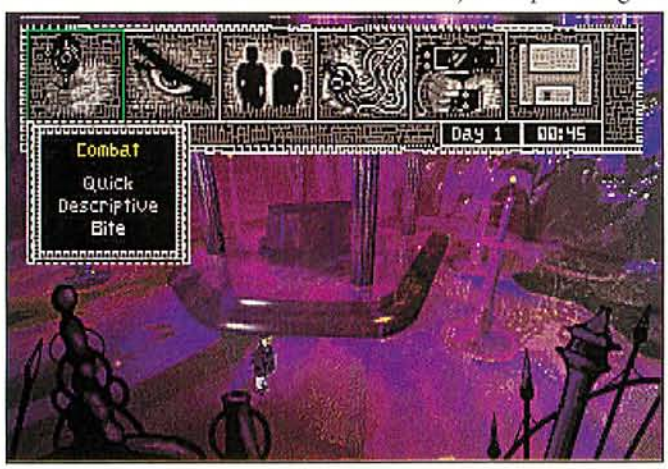
information TransTech hoards within their network. Rage gangs have sprouted throughout Manhattan. These punks and former employees of TransTech wage a war of survival by any means possible. Such gangs have no solidarity, and are as likely to kill each other as hurt TransTech. There are worse dangers than the rage gangs, however: vampires have begun to plague the city.

Ransom discovered this danger first-hand, when his payment for a job turned out to be the bite of a vampire. Ransom feels himself changing, becoming a monster thirsting for blood. Only his neural implant keeps Ransom from completing the transformation to an undead. Now partially human, he strives for a way to turn himself back to normal.

Stalking Manhattan

The player takes control of Ransom Stark, exploring the dark future of New York. To become human again, Stark needs much information, most of which must be gained from the myriad residents of the city. He has to get back in touch with old friends, make some new ones, always fearing discovery by TransTech or the vampires who turned him. Along the way, he becomes embroiled in conflict with TransTech, which he discovers (unsurprisingly) has ties to the vampires.

Despite the fact that the player is always Ransom Stark, it is possible to create a customized version of the down-and-out hacker. Through a series of questions (similar to the famous *Ultima IV* process), each person can develop their own unique "Ransom Stark." The list of skills and attributes is extensive and interesting, ranging from combat related skills to cyberskills and personality attributes.



The game's interface is designed to make Stark's quest as easy as possible. The controls are relatively simple. The bulk of the game takes place in the "real" world of 2094 Manhattan. Movement around the city takes place on a nicely drawn overhead map, where arrows indicate possible locations of interest. Such travel is conveniently instantaneous, but adds time to the game clock, depending upon the distance traveled.

Ransom's hunger grows as the game continues, and can only be satisfied by drinking blood, usually killing a victim and lowering Ransom's humanity. When Ransom loses all his humanity, the game is lost. Such hunger cannot be ignored. When Ransom is too hungry, he will lose control and kill randomly. Several creative alternatives to killing can be found in the game (such as the use of blood-producing nanotechs) but none are permanent, and Ransom's hunger always returns. The player must marshal his time, developing a course of action and following up clues.

As the game progresses, new locations become available, giving the game a sense of progress. However, in general, the game is quite non-linear. Stark begins the story with a list of contacts and friends, but is free to explore to his heart's content. The designers have done an excellent job of providing an interesting cast of characters whose dialogues not only help develop the atmosphere, but provide leads to continue the game. Some people won't cooperate until Stark has done them favors, while others are willing to help directly. The game begins as a solo quest, but up to five individuals can be added to the group. Some people need to be hired to join, while others are willing to help Stark out of friendship. One of the major decisions in the game is deciding which characters to bring along on particular missions.

Conversation is the most important game activity, but occasionally combat cannot be avoided. The vampires of Manhattan are a singularly vicious breed, and some rage gangs express their dissatisfaction best through violence. Reflecting the dangerous nature of both the Gothic and Cyberpunk genres, death is a distinct possibility whenever combat is entered. Each side is allowed to place characters on the board, and then melee ensues. If left to their own devices, the characters will fight the entire combat automatically, without any intervention by the player.

Otherwise, a player can take a hands-on approach and attempt to turn the tide of battle with specific commands. Characters can maneuver for better positioning, target different foes, use items, and switch weapons. There are a few vampire specific options, like "biting" a foe, or "exerting will" to confuse the enemy. In general, however, combat is a simple affair. Furniture doesn't provide cover, and moving about isn't generally helpful unless one happens to be using a melee weapon. The best strategy is often to scatter the characters evenly among the opponents, make sure they have heavy firepower, then sit back until all foes drop. This quick approach lets one get back to the story as rapidly as possible.

Naturally, no Cyberpunk game would be complete without cyberspace. Some of the puzzles in the game can't be solved until one finds a cyberspace port, decks in, and traverses this alternate computer realm. To a net-runner, no possession is more important than his computer deck. *BloodNet* allows one to upgrade the deck's hardware as the game progresses. Cloak chips can be found which reduce the chance of TransTech security noticing intrusion, memory can be upgraded, as can the "Soul Box" (an important deck component which ensures mental integrity in the cyberspace realm).

When transported to cyberspace, the player begins on the General Plane, a digital highway between different computer realms. Here one occasionally bumps into other "Data Angels" (characters similarly decked into the net), with whom one can talk. Otherwise, it is necessary to know an active address of a WELL, where all manner of interesting programs and information can be discovered.

As the game progresses, Stark gains increased access to locations in both the "real

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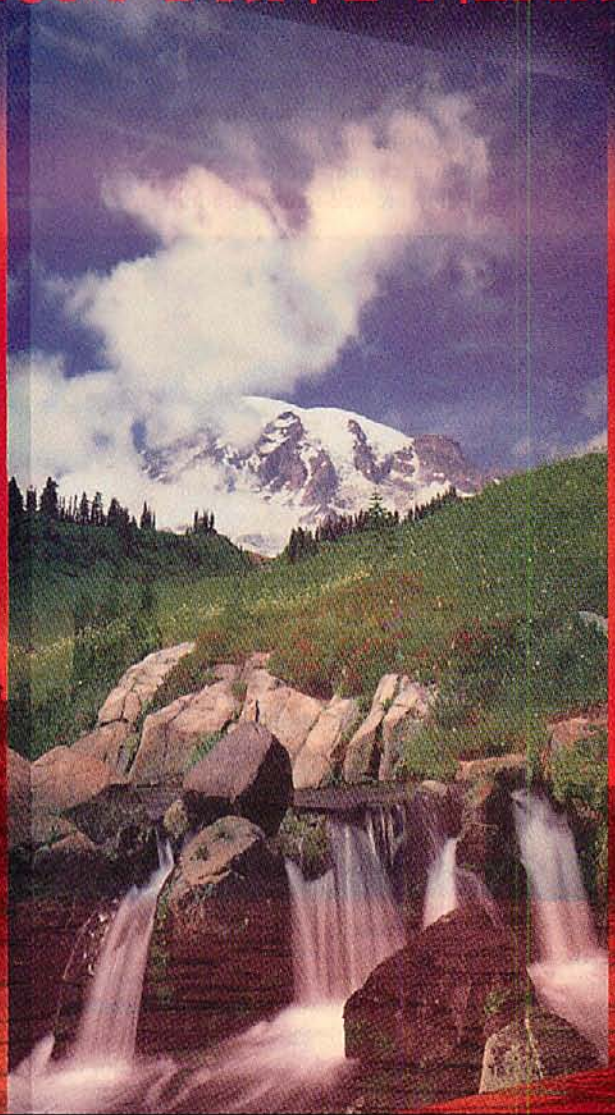

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world" and cyberspace, uncovering both more characters to interact with and more information about TransTech and the vampires of Manhattan. Similarly, the danger increases as he becomes hunted by both factions. Stark has to walk a narrow path to maintain his humanity while also using his vampiric gifts to best advantage.

Pumped Full Of Vasopressin

MicroProse is to be commended for showing that a Gothic-Cyberpunk synthesis is possible. Thematically, the game has a lot to offer. The designers could have chosen to slap down an easy action/adventure game drawing on two popular genres. Instead, they made the story the centerpiece, including a huge amount of dialogue to bring the plot to life. The conversations are hard-edged and filled with enough futuristic lingo and jargon to match any literary effort.

As the game progresses, the parallels between the two genres become increasingly clear, building mood. TransTech has developed the link between mind and computer so strongly that they have begun to leech valuable information from the minds of users, becoming a vampiric entity. Reversing this paradigm, Ransom Stark's hunger for blood grows with ravenous intensity, checked only by a complex piece of technology, the neural implant.

On the gaming side, the programmers have included several convenient options. Stark's neural implant allows him to remember all the conversations he's had throughout the game, which can be re-read as needed. While taking some notes is advised, the player need never despair missing something important.

The movement system is also convenient. Using the map allows one to journey throughout the city without the tedium of some CRPGs; travel between areas only takes up game-time, not real-time. Once in locations, it is unnecessary to walk near to characters to speak to them, another welcome decision. Objects can also be picked up anywhere on the screen, or dropped with equal liberty. Further, when speaking with someone who desires a particular item, it isn't necessary to dig through the inventory to find it since this is handled automatically. All these features help both to streamline game play and reduce CRPG Frustration Syndrome (a most persistent disease).

BloodNet delivers nicely on Cyberpunk technology. There is a wide and interesting variety of gadgets and weaponry in the game, including nanotech weapons, circuitry frying grenades, and holographic technology. The gamer has the opportunity to cyber-up with enhanced legs, hands, arms, and even eyes and ears. An interesting feature is the "Jury Rig" option which allows fabrication of items or drugs from base components. All these features help imbue the dark atmosphere with a decidedly science fiction edge.

Unlike some modern games that require the cutting edge of hardware, *BloodNet* delivers decent graphics without the computing strain. Animation is limited, and most of the graphics consist of still-shots of the background in a current location. These background shots are well-rendered, adding to the dark mood of the game without becoming distracting. In Cyberspace, strange morphing data structures float about within the computer web. These efforts provide an excellent backdrop for the story without demanding cutting-edge computing power.

Access Denied

In spite of praise-worthy efforts, *BloodNet* is flawed in several respects. Although based upon a most interesting premise, the game as a whole left me vaguely dissatisfied. A major reason for this is the game's pacing. I greatly prefer non-linear plots to restrictive ones, but sometimes *BloodNet* seems to bend too far the other way. Leaving options open is great, but often the player seems to be left with no sense of direction whatsoever. The protagonist becomes like a witless errand-boy, running around for others with little appreciable reason.

While there can be no doubt that the idea of a Cyber-Gothic is a good one, the game fails to deliver on some of the features of these genres. The story, atmosphere, and themes are all solid, but the details are lacking. This is particularly true in cyberspace, which was a great disappointment for me. In *BloodNet*, cyberspace takes on none of the depth of the "real world" characters and places. Occasionally a Data Angel will be found wandering the general plane, but this is a relatively rare occurrence, making the net seem vast and empty. The excitement of updating one's Soul Box was reduced when I noticed no negative side effect of staying for prolonged time in Cyberspace, even with a simple Tin Soldier Soul Box. On the vampire side, hunting is handled extremely loosely. To hunt, one can simply click a victim, who will immediately disappear with the message "Stark has disposed of the body." This works no matter how many other people might happen to be watching. Further, despite the manual's assertion to the contrary, Stark's humanity does not lower for acts of violence, only killing victims for blood.

Several aspects of the game are technically sloppy. The largest example of this is combat, which has few redeeming qualities. Combat graphics are markedly inferior to the rest of the game, and the entire combat sequence is both confusing and frustrating. Having most of the combat automated by the computer is a good idea, but only if computer supervision actually works. Sometimes characters will refuse to follow new orders, sitting uselessly in the combat rather than doing what they've been told.

Exacerbating the combat problem is one particular flaw in game design. There is an event in the game which causes a group of thugs, led by "Buzz" to attack the player frequently in the subway. No matter how many times Buzz and his men are killed, they will continue to attack at random intervals in the game. Worse, the event which makes them attack is virtually unavoidable. Similarly, certain characters can disappear permanently if they are "dismissed" from the party even if they are needed later.

ICEing The BloodNet

BloodNet has much to recommend it. As yet, there are no other games which combine these two game-worthy genres in this way. Perhaps Cyberpunk needs a little Gothic infusion to bolster its lagging popularity, and vampires are certainly a strong current fascination. The game is to be lauded for emphasizing the story line, something many recent games have forgotten, but the story is couched in game elements that are less than ideal. *BloodNet* can be compared to an uncut gem; it is a dark and wonderful gem of an idea, but a gem without polish. CGW

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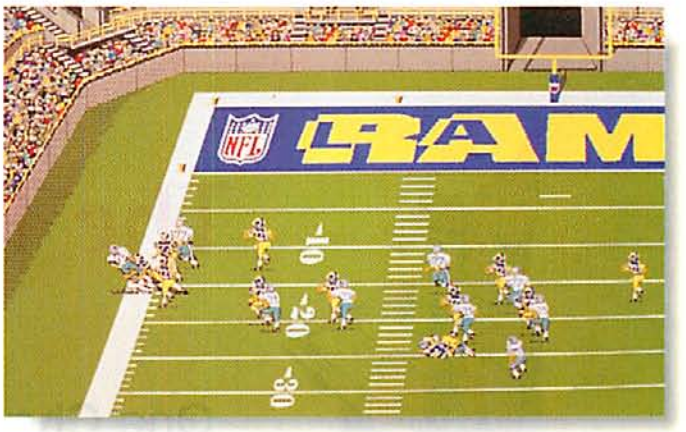

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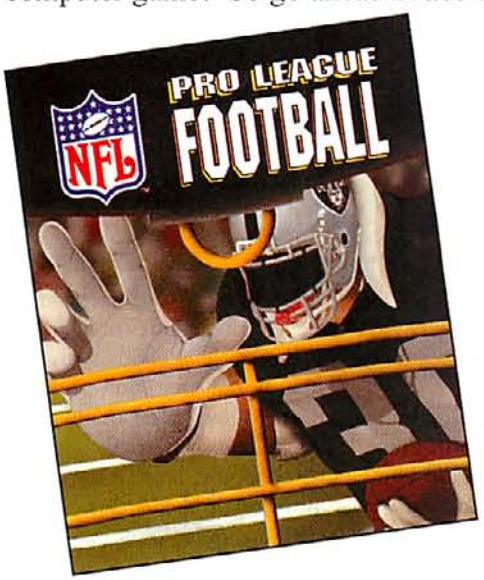

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The Tale Of Mustafa

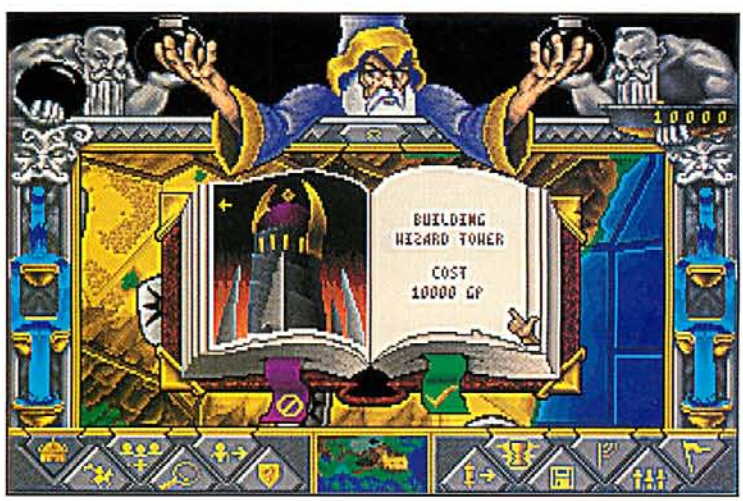
One Character's Rise to Glory in SSI's *Fantasy Empires*

by H.E. Dille

Today, fellow warriors, we hear the tale of Mustafa, a young dwarven noble who rescued his kingdom through diplomatic cunning and brilliant maneuvering on the field of battle. Pay attention, brave fighters, that when your call to battle comes, you shall be prepared.

In the summer of his thirty-fifth year, Mustafa the Noble received some rather unexpected news. He and a small band of adventurers, some of whom he dared to call friends, were returning to Northern Rockhome when a messenger came stumbling up to the party, somewhat weather beaten from his travels. The messenger gasped and wheezed his way through the news, glancing over his shoulder periodically, as though he could scarcely wait to get home. Mustafa learned of the passing of his Uncle, the Baron of Murkits, and the subsequent summoning of his presence by the Baron's advisors.

The news was troublesome, and not simply because of the grief it conveyed. Mustafa felt unprepared for the responsibilities laid before him and shared his feelings with his friends. The land was facing perilous times, and they were all too aware of the risks and opportunities conveyed in the inheritance. His duty seemed clear, however, and he forced himself to cast his doubts aside. He was, nevertheless, quite relieved when his friends offered to join him.



Upon arrival in Murkits, Mustafa found that the situation was grave indeed. In the time since his Uncle's passing, much of the fief's wealth had been carted off and the country of Ethengar Khanate divided into nine separate provinces. Further, the once proud castle of Murkits had been ravaged, leaving only a keep, an armory and some rather insignificant fortifications. There wasn't even a remnant of the Baron's Guard or any other standing militia. All of these once loyal retainers had apparently pursued more mercenary objectives in the absence of central leadership. The months ahead would be long and arduous, but Mustafa knew what he must do. Gathering his party of adventurers, Mustafa laid out his plan.

"Friends, my first task must be to train and re-organize the once proud army of my homeland. I will round up groups of 100 strong fighters and, when they are ready, I will send them off into one of the nine provinces. Every third month, I will look for one among them who can be a leader like ourselves. I will train this one personally. As each of the provinces of Ethengar Khanate are subdued back into lawfulness, I will build new keeps for the collection of taxes and to maintain order. I am confident that I can do all this without your aid. Wait...before you protest, I did not mean that you were not needed at all. Word has come to me about Eol, Magdel, Dauros and Nightspawn, the other powers that had challenged my Uncle in the past. Each are restless and seeking to expand their base of power. They are already fighting amongst themselves. If we are to have any hope of meeting this threat, we must be prepared. I charge each of you to a quest: Search the lands for magical items that can aid our common goal. Return to me when each is found, and I will have units available for your command."

Thus began the tale of the one who unified all Mystara under a single banner. Mustafa's plan to consolidate the Ethengar Khanate was sound, and by the time he had done so, all but one of his friends had come and gone many times, building experience and gathering magical larder for the Imperial Vault. The missing friend, an Elf of some stature, had perished inexplicably.

Mustafa mourned his loss, not only from a personal standpoint, but also because he had hoped to use this hero to gather support in the Elven Kingdom of Alfheim. The elves were powerful warriors, and the Leader who developed their trust would likely prevail in the coming conflict. Mustafa coveted their lands, but opted to expand into the Principalities of Glantri and the Broken Lands first. It was rumored that powerful magic users and clerics could be trained there and none of his current provinces could support them. He had skirmished briefly with Eol in the mountainous region known as Rockhome, land of the dwarves, and had seen firsthand the power of magic on the battle field.

Nightspawn, the foulest of all the opposing Lords, had established

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a presence in the Broken Lands. For Mustafa's plan to work, he needed to appease Eol from attacking his eastern borders while he massed troops in the west. The rate of his expansion thusfar had precluded the construction of castles or siege engines, both of which would have eased his burden. He proposed a treaty for six months (turns), adding 2500 gold pieces for enticement, which Eol gleefully accepted.

Mustafa massed three armies of 200 fighters in separate western provinces, each lead by one of his original party. Other Fighter leaders that had risen from the ranks were left with token forces on the eastern border to guard against treachery. To the south, Mustafa's underbelly was soft and weak. Fortunately, no sign of trouble had appeared in this area.

The three armies swept quickly through Glantri, conquering three neutral provinces each month without encountering Nightspawn. The entire resources of the treasury were devoted to building keeps in the wake of their passage. By the end of the third month, the armies were depleted to a quarter of their original strength from nothing more than quelling the local populace. It was time to consolidate the new acquisitions.

Two Armories were constructed behind the front lines to replenish the western armies. Other revenue was expended in the construction of a wizard tower in the principality of Boldavia. As plans were contemplated for the coming months, a dark specter arose over the province of Kiyats. In the guise of the Grim Reaper, the visage struck our coat of arms thrice, and 70 of Mustafa's stalwart defenders fell to the ground, dead. Eol was suspected of the deed, though none could prove it. Treachery was in the air.

The prophecy was fulfilled shortly thereafter when Eol broke the treaty two months early, taking Kiyats without casualty and defeating the defenders of Bor with minor losses. To counter this offense, Mustafa hastily constructed two more armories in Murkits, which brought his total troop concentration in the home province to 240. These were split and sent to reclaim the contested provinces the next turn. Nightspawn would have to wait for now, and a treaty was struck with him immediately.

With four armories fully employed, Murkits turned out a steady stream of 240 warriors a month. These forces continued the counter-offensive through Eol's scattered forces in Rockhome for the next six months, rising from regulars to veterans in the process. In the wake of their wrath, keeps and armories were constructed in the mountains to begin training dwarven warriors. Any excess monies collected were invested in more cleric and wizard towers, scattering them among all the provinces that would support them to prevent mass destruction from any magical attack on one province.

All was proceeding well until Mustafa's warriors attacked the Makkres Mountains, where Eol had built a huge castle to withstand the assault. Lacking catapults or battering rams to breach the heavy gates, over 200 battle hardened veterans were cut down in the fields surrounding the castle by barrages of javelin sized arrows fired from ballista on the battlements. A second period of consolidation was necessary.

Mustafa felt that Eol had his back to the wall, but he needed to buy time to construct the siege engines necessary to reduce the fortress. Magdel and Dauros were as yet uncontacted, but one or both of them had surely come in contact with Eol. In the hopes of spurring their campaigns against Eol, Mustafa sent both leaders aid. If the plan succeeded, Eol would be caught between the narrowing jaws of a vise.

While fortifying the eastern and southern borders with a steady stream of fighters and dwarves, Mustafa had sufficient reserve force to renew the offensive in the west. The objective would be to drive through the Broken Lands and solidify control of Alfheim and the Republic of Darokin. The initial going was easier than expected, because Nightspawn had used the preceding period of peace to expand southward into the Five Shires and the Grand Duchy of Karameikos. He possessed a lot of warriors, but had foolishly garrisoned them in small groups throughout his lands, as opposed to concentrating force where necessary.

As this campaign progressed, the forces of Dauros mounted a surprise amphibious invasion of Bor, and threatened Murkits with a large force. Fortunately, Mustafa had used magic sparingly up to that point, allowing the globe of power to glow a brighter red with each passing month. Death was cast on Dauros's legions, weakening them for the coming slaughter. Concurrently, a meteor storm was summoned to wreck havoc in the Makkres Mountains. The catapults and ballista were ready, and Mustafa did not want to lose too many

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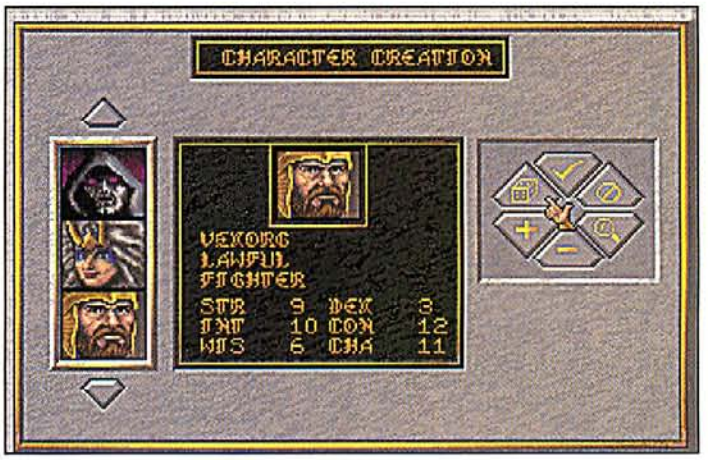
of them in eliminating Eol, for now he knew that Magdel was crouched like a snake in Sodderfjord and Ylaruam.

With two-thirds of Mystara in his grasp, Mustafa had sufficient resources to build concentrations of armories in Alfheim, massing deadly armies of Archers that could swing to any front in a few short months. Using a Rod of True Sight brought back from one of the hero quests, Mustafa sought out the largest concentrations of troops in the enemy lands. Wizard and Cleric towers were targeted in the same manner. Tornados and Lightning Storms were wrested from the magical orbs and sent where they could do the most damage. Structures crumbled under the onslaught, and even elite troops were destroyed in the ensuing chaos.



Despite the aid that was given, Dauros did not prove much of a threat. His center of power was in the island Kingdom of Ostland, and he had already been driven from the mainland by Magdel. Eol fell swiftly before the assembled siege engines, though he did outlast Dauros. Nightspawn proved elusive, as he mounted a campaign of cat and mouse through the archipelago of island fortresses that ran along the southern expanse of Mystara. Magdel proved to be an entirely different proposition.

By the time Mustafa had succeeded in eliminating the other opponents, his forces were scattered all over the land. This made them easy targets, despite their experience. Further, Mustafa had expended all of his accumulated Magical energy, and lost a good number of heros to dangerous quests and ill fated attacks. Magdel capitalized on the weak borders and began an across the board offensive, ignoring all requests for a treaty.

With each passing month, Mustafa's base of power shrank, while Magdel's grew. The heroes that lead her forces were indeed powerful, and Mustafa saw the need to personally coordinate attacks against them in each battle. In the end, he succeeded in turning back her offensive when she controlled fully 40% of the land. Mustafa's Elves deserved the most credit for changing the tide of events, though the ability of his many clerics to turn Magdel's undead legions could not be discounted.

At the feast of celebration that marked the war's end, Mustafa reflected on the lessons of his campaign. He vowed to never discount the affects of magic. Also, to further his skill as a diplomat, using this refined art of gentlemen to obtain his true objectives. Finally, he learned not to underestimate the presence of heroes on the field, and to husband well the men under their command, as one elite unit is worth five of fresh recruits. These things he now knew well, and would not forget the next time the Empire is threatened. CGW

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COMPUTER WARGAMING WORLD

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Italian Commander: "If you are a great general, come down and fight me."

Marius: "If you are a great general, come and make me fight you."

Gaius Marius (c. 157BC - 86BC), Adcock, *The Roman Art of War Under the Republic*, 1940

Call Me A Dreamer

(Just Don't Call Me Late For The Game)

by Alan Emrich

The Data Highway as a Military Objective

While at the Western Cable Show back in December, I attended a panel where the likes of Rupert Murdoch, Ted Turner, John Malone and Trip Hawkins discussed the future of 500-channel and interactive TV. The possibilities of the future were on the lips of every attendee at show.

Wandering through the various booths, I noticed one for The History Channel, coming soon to a cable station near you. Since many of us see the world through simulated field glasses (i.e., "wargamer's eyes"), putting The History Channel together with the interactive television that is rapidly approaching would make any wargamer smile. When the networks finally achieve *interactive history*, we'll probably be fighting each other to be first in line — and then we'll be fighting each other *on-line*, big time.

Why end this daydream here? Imagine the *Interactive History Channel* of the future — While scanning your listing of favorite programs, you notice that Wednesday night at 8:00 PM is *The Age of Napoleon*. The show's concept is that each week, a group of veteran wargamers (and amateur historians) would get together to maneuver units and issue commands within the game's structure through their interactive TV system. Meanwhile, some entertaining commentator/historian (David Chandler?) follows the game, presents the history of the age (complete with anecdotes) and interviews some of the players. All the while, information is coming in on the forging and breaking of alliances, military maneuvers, battles being fought, etc. Professional actors in period costume could do cameos of prominent individuals from the era to help bring it all to life. Wow!

Reality Check

Sure, the ratings might not be that great, but with 500 channels, who is going to notice? In the meantime, we must consider the more immediate future of our hobby.

First, the bad news. After finishing his work on *CPU Bach*, Sid Meier is finding it tough to get motivated to go back to his Civil War game. It has been sitting on his back burner for a while, so we're watching closely to see what toy Sid will pick up and start playing with next.

Among the good news, there are several random dispatches. Another inter-network *CHQ* tournament has been launched. This one is featuring the new 2.x version of the game and involves several players from the *CompuServe* and *Prodigy* networks.

Computer-enabled board wargamers will be pleased to hear that more boardgame titles are appearing for the *Aide de Camp* system all the time. **The Gamers** have released their *Perryville, Barren Victory* and *Stalingrad Pocket* for the *ADC* system, among others. Scott Hamilton, who is presently busy preparing his WWII East Front tactical armor game *(Tigers on the Prowl)*, will be working on a major 2.0 revision for the popular *Aide de Camp* kit.

Aide de CGW?

It's no secret that we like wargaming strategy articles, but we also like tables, outlines, indexes and other "game aids." Allow me to put before you, the talented grognards among our readers, an open solicitation for supplemental wargaming material that would be considered game aids. If you see the need for a popular computer wargame to have supplemental material, and you're up to the task of creating them, give me a call here at *CGW* and let's see if we can work an article out of it. You can reach me from 8 AM to 5 PM Pacific Time at (714) 283-3000 x25. Take this to your hearts, and give me your charts. If you're able, give us a table. You get the idea.

From the bunker, Alan Emrich CGW

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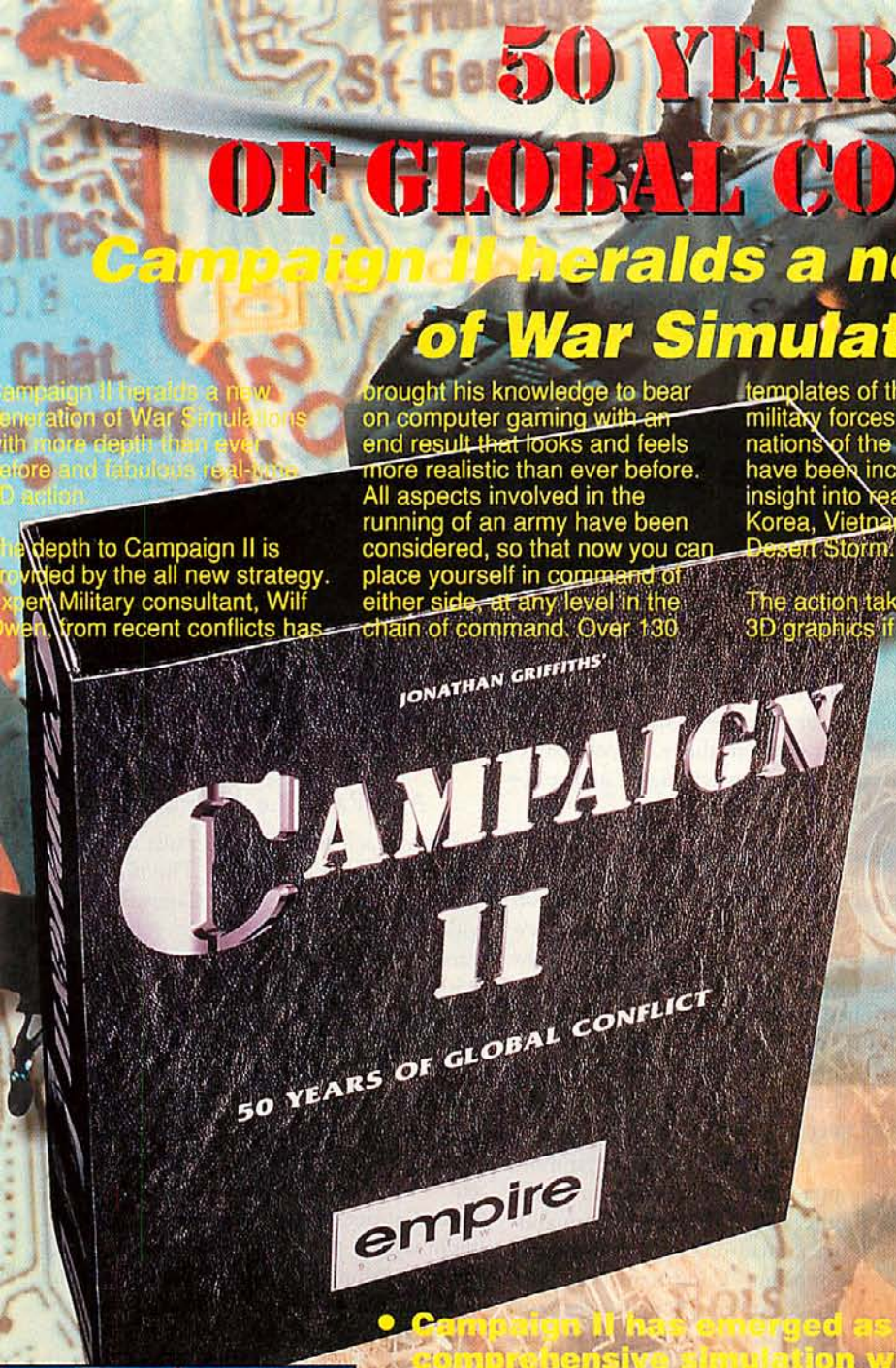
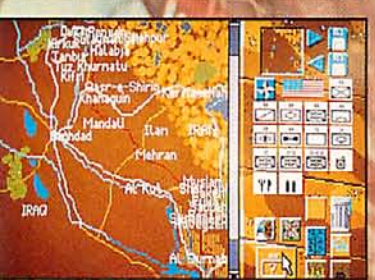
The action takes the form of fast 3D graphics if you choose to enter the battlefield in one of the 152 types of military vehicles. APCs and Mobile Artillery, utilise weapons ranging from wire-guided missiles, rockets, homing missiles, and machine-guns supported by laser rangefinders to tracer rangefinders, night vision, and gun stabilizers.





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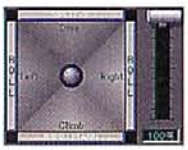
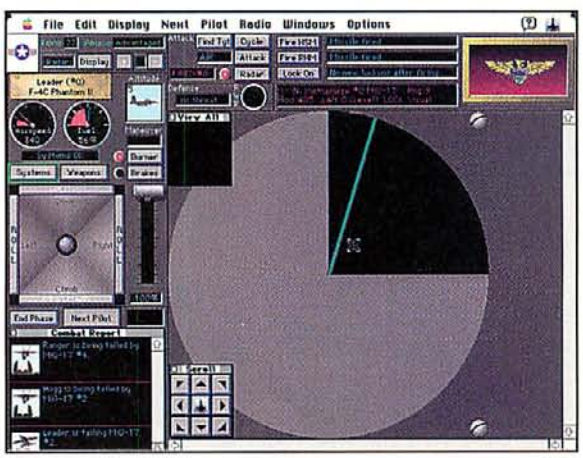


Air-to-Air Combat For The Reflex Impaired

A Review of Big Time Software's *Flight Commander*

by Alan Emrich

Believe it or not, there were "flight sims" long before there were computers to fly them on. In the glory days of board wargaming (during the 1970s and early 80s), cardboard counters representing individual aircraft flew across gridded paper maps. Supporting each counter was a separate sheet of paper used to simulate its cockpit control panel. Upon this cockpit sheet were more cardboard chits to designate speed, altitude, bank, incline, weapons, performance ability, damage, etc. Although we had to envision much of what was going on with our mind's eye, we *were* flying dogfights with planes of every era back in those days—and it was great!



Clearly, Charles Moylan cherished those days as well. He has created a one-man computer game company, **Big Time Software, Inc.**, and produced what is, essentially, a computerized flight combat boardgame. Though an admitted computer joystick jock, Charles wanted to create a computer game in which his tactical skills and knowledge of air combat techniques would determine the outcome of engagements, *not* his hand-eye coordination. Taking a page from those cumbersome paper wargames of yesteryear, he created *Flight Commander* to be as detailed as a boardgame, but with the computer keeping track of all the number crunching and "boring parts" of air combat in the jet age. (I can almost hear the voice of Sid Meier saying, "Charles, just give 'em the really cool parts" because that's exactly what *Flight Commander* has.)

Flight School

The well designed manual starts you off with a quick tutorial lesson, blowing up a few ground targets in a cakewalk mission. The game includes many such single mission scenarios. These cover the era from Korea to the near future of jet combat. While there are some historical encounters, most seem to be hypothetical engagements.

Tutorial number two is far more interesting. This takes you to the other half of the game, commanding a squadron of planes through a campaign. Campaigns are connected missions fought over a series of days, where one or two missions per day might be conducted. With about a dozen planes and pilots, keeping pilots rested and damaged planes repaired adds a new dimension to *Flight Commander.*

Flight Commander is played on a square grid, with each square and each level of altitude representing 1/3 of a mile. Each game turn simulates 7.5 seconds of real time. Aircraft can face in any of 8 directions (the square's four sides and corners) and maneuvers are conducted in 45 degree increments. The map will either be a pale blue and white for air-to-air duels or brown for bombing missions. Since the screen includes an overview map for "telescrolling," several zoom levels to play on, plus smooth scrolling buttons, managing large air battles is about as easy as can be.

Praise The Lord And Pass The Ammunition

Before each mission, you must arm all of the airplanes on your side. The number of planes is up to you; *Flight Commander* provides the freedom to vary force levels, and you can create large squadron level engagements with the click of a mouse. Since *Flight Commander* covers the entire span of jet aircraft history, the quality of heat and radar homing missiles, "dumb" and laser guided bombs and such, all vary with the epoch played. Here, you can decide if you want more radar or heat seeking missiles, bombs or extra fuel capacity, etc.—whatever your plane can carry without exceeding its hard points and still maintain flight weight. Honestly, I had more fun with the old "clunkers" from the Vietnam and Arab-Israeli wars of the 70s than with the newer stuff. I learned a new respect for pilots who flew during my formative years with those old weapons. For other players, however, it is easy enough to suit one's own tastes from the wide selection of mission and armament options to choose from, although I would urge players to try every era.

Flight Commander

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REQUIREMENTS:	Mac Plus or better, System6.0.5 or higher, Monochrome: 1MB RAM, Color, System 6: 2MB RAM, Color, System 7: 3MB RAM
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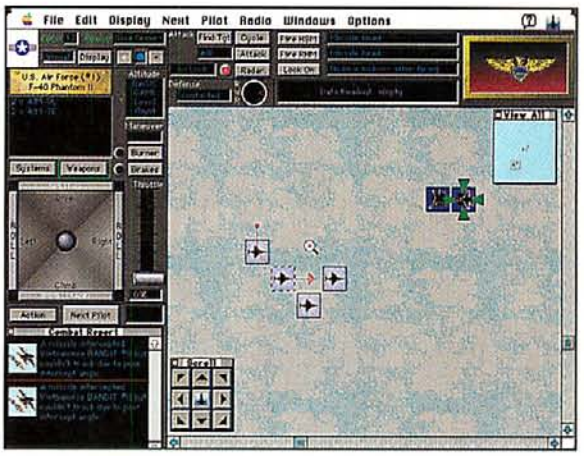


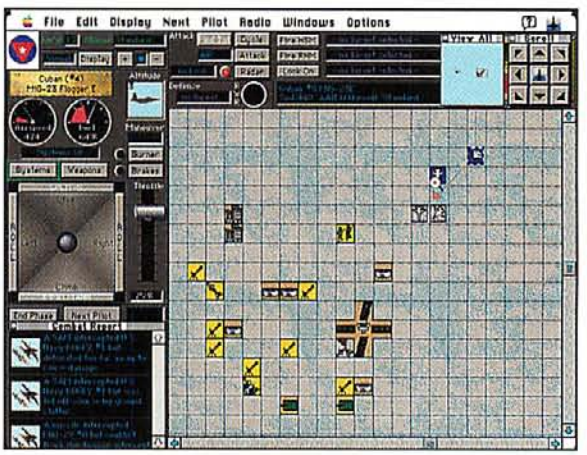
After a few mouse clicks, your aircraft are armed and the mission begins. If you are fortunate enough to have area radar (when using that advanced rule), you'll know where your enemy is on the map at all times (just like a boardgame). Players without EWACS or ground based radar to paint the sky must find their targets with either aircraft radar or get within eyeball distance (and with long range missiles, planes can be dead before they'll ever make visual contact). The enemy might begin in your sights or on your tail, but usually they are at some relative position in-between.

Planes paths are plotted individually by way of a simulated joystick to the left of the main playing area. By clicking on and repositioning this joystick, you alter the distance, altitude and direction of that plane's next move for the current game turn. Effects of acceleration and deceleration will not kick in until the following turn, however. Diving for the second consecutive turn allows the option of performing a Split-S maneuver, while climbing two turns in a row affords the opportunity to perform an Immelmann. Barrel Rolls and High-G maneuvers can also be plotted, although the latter has only a chance of success (based upon the airplane type and pilot skill). I found this interface to be so intuitive, quick and easy that my turns were plotted in only a minute or two, which kept things moving quickly and maintained my interest level like boardgames on this subject never could.

"Bandits! Bandits!"

Flight Commander comes with a plethora of sound effects and many digitized voices to liven up play, both at appropriate times and randomly. Each turn begins with an audio cue of a jet passing overhead and the beeps, chatter and explosions progress from there. The audio atmosphere is terrific, although it can be toggled off when you need to play in "stealth mode."

After individually plotting your aircraft's course, pressing the Next Turn button simultaneously executes every plane's plotted maneuvers. Cannon fire is automatically resolved whenever the opportunity presents itself during this execution phase. The firing of all other weapons actually occurs during planning phase. Bombs will score their hits (if any) immediately when fired, as will missiles unless the advanced rule is switched on that moves missiles during the execution phase concurrently with aircraft. This latter option can create some real nail biting as missiles might take two or three turns to close with an enemy—two to three turns that they can fire back!



Chaffing At The Hit

Defenses are handled by probability tables within the program. Certainly pilot skills, plane types, and technology levels are all factored into the equations. Missiles and cannons might miss for any of a number of reasons, and the player(s) are notified of the reasons *why* they missed when they do. I found myself quickly learning to get better attack angles from this useful feedback, and learning the minimum and maximum ranges (in squares) for firing certain radar homing missiles. Players will also get a feel when they're up against superior technology. Sometimes ECM can protect a plane from everything but a cannon's gunsights.

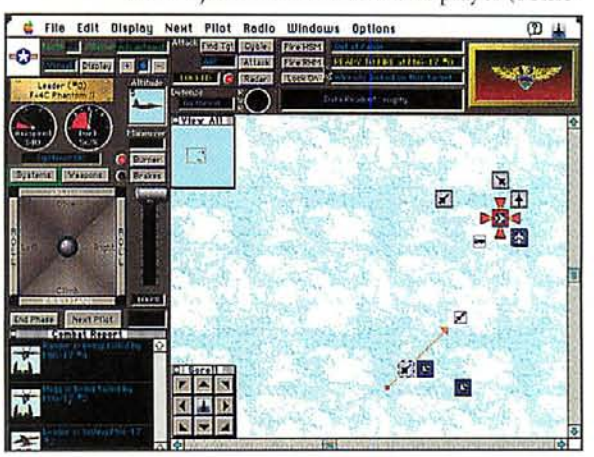
What I found so striking about *Flight Commander* was how fast the game moved along. I finished most scenarios in about 15-20 minutes once I got the hang of the system (which was pretty quick). Setting up another mission or campaign takes less than five minutes, so my verdict is that *Flight Commander* has got "replay value" written all over it for those who can handle a strategy game on tactical jet combat, rather than a real time sim.

Flight Commander is not only a fine solitaire wargame (the AI is better than I am at its best levels, but in modern aerial duels, that's not saying much, I'm afraid), but two human players can play on the same machine with ease, quickly taking turns entering their moves and then watching together as they are resolved. There is no play-by-email or play-by-modem feature supported, but I have a feeling that these will come if the game catches on.

Presently, *Flight Commander* is only available for the Macintosh, but I found out that Big Time Software is already investigating a Windows version of the game. Frankly, *Flight Commander* would be a perfect Windows wargame due to its quick, simple and exciting play. It is easy to envision it as a "10 minute break" game.

DYOB (Design Your Own Battles)

The glory of *Flight Commander* would have to be in its flexible design-your-own scenario features. From a simple display, you can select offensive and defensive combatants, the mission objective for the offensive player (bomb-



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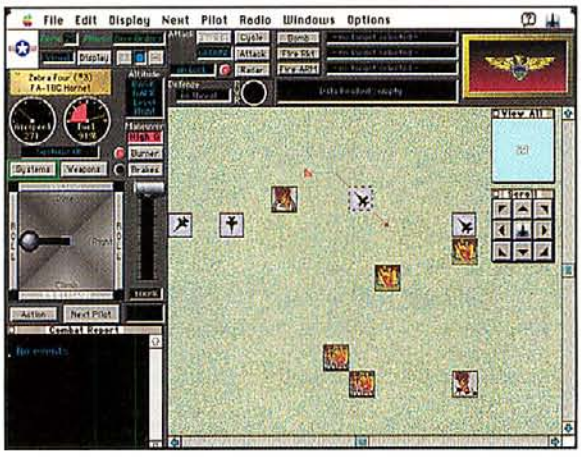
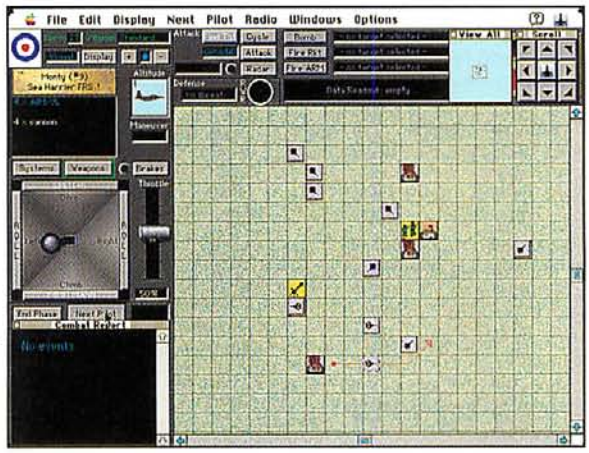


ing any number of target types, including ships, or going for air superiority), and the general weather conditions. Aircraft on each side can be automatically or manually selected, and these selections can be either based on point values or simply numbers of aircraft per side (and some very *large* furballs can be constructed!). It's a breeze to create, say, two groups of four strike aircraft, support by a third group of three fighters and have them encounter a dozen enemy bogies and a target with SAM support. Even the process of arming these aircraft can be handled by the computer, if desired. These instant scenarios add even more to *Flight Commander*'s replay value and drew me back to the game again and again.

What's Not To Like?

I found one minuscule bug in the game (my tutorial airplane had no bombs, so I had to destroy the ground targets with missiles and strafe them). When I called Charles Moylan to report this, he said that it would be fixed in a wink. When queried what I didn't like about *Flight Commander*, I had to admit that I found it tedious to issue identical orders to every plane in a group that I wanted to keep formation. Charles promised that I could have a patch that afternoon with that feature in if I wanted it, and that it would certainly be in the game's next revision. Honestly, I got the feeling that he was doing this just because I was a fellow wargamer who liked his game, not because of any special "reviewer's clout." This sort of dedication and attention to customers is the beauty of the one-man game company.

Flight Commander is for any Mac Plus or newer system (and, yes, it even plays all right in black & white). The manual is written in a friendly, informative manner that will quickly get you started and have you mastering all of the advanced options in no time. It even includes an extensive reference section. With customizable missions and woolly campaign games, this board-cum-computer wargame gets a big thumb's up from this fly boy. I have to admit, I really enjoyed having the time to think about my flight tactics, rather than rely on my sorry old reflexes. CGW



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And The Walls Come Tumbling Down

Mindcraft's Siege Engine Comes of Age in *Walls of Rome*

by H.E. Dille

"The origin and rise of fortification is undoubtedly due to the degeneracy of mankind."

J. Muller, Professor of Fortification
Royal Military Academy, Woolwich, 1746

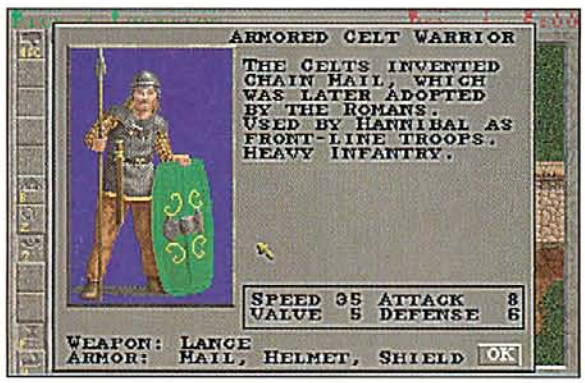
The statement of our esteemed Prof. Muller doesn't speak well of the moral character of the folks at Mindcraft. Fortifications and more fortifications have been their business for over a year now, between their original *Siege* game, their *Dogs of War* extension, and now their latest siege game, *Walls of Rome*. If the Professor's suggestion is correct, it sure doesn't show in Mindcraft's product. The *Siege* series of games has done anything but degenerate. It has, in fact, improved quite a bit.

Walls of Rome (WOR) pulls the *Siege* gaming engine out of the Dark Ages into more classical times, literally and figuratively. In the literal sense, this release has abandoned the Medieval fantasy setting of its predecessors in favor of the historical battles of antiquity. Figuratively speaking, *WOR* corrects many of the AI problems of prior releases, breaking down the artificial wall that had inhibited player satisfaction up to this point. The computer opponent is much more aggressive, logical and methodical than before. The result is a well executed treatise on the sieges of the Romans, Celts, Carthaginians and Parthians, which introduces you to the soldiers of the time, but doesn't require you to feed them, house them, and give them time off for the Holidays.

WOR allows you to pursue a single battle in which you may take either side, or a campaign focusing on the expansion of one of the aforementioned empires. The campaigns are played out as a series of linked battles without strategic maneuver between each one.

Man The Battlements!

At the beginning of an engagement, the defensive side will have a limited number of troops already manning the walls of the castle. The remainder of the force is in reserve within the barracks. By clicking on the barracks, you can see a display of the troops and equipment available for deployment. Double clicking on a troop type will bring up a window providing additional information about that unit, including offensive and defensive strength, weapon types and speed of movement. Mindcraft has even done a little homework and dressed the troops in authentic period apparel.



To deploy troops, click on the unit, then click on the up arrow at the top of the barracks display. This will form a group. Additional clicks on the arrow will add to that group in accordance with the multiplier option set on the left side of the display. The default setting is the Roman numeral ten (X), and it is adequate for most situations. The maximum size of any given group is 50 soldiers, and they may be deployed in conjunction with an equivalent amount of equipment; 50 Roman slingers can carry 50 ladders to raise along the castle walls. Also, 50 archers can carry 50 pots of Greek fire to conduct a barrage of flaming arrows. When Cavalry is sent to the field, the maximum group size is reduced to 25 because the horses count into the total. Also, there is a maximum number of 40 groups per side at any given time, regardless of the number of troops in each group.

To the right of the troop window is a similar display for equipment, which might include ladders, bridges, catapults, ballistae and Greek fire, among others. This equipment is available for immediate use, but if you wish to supplement these figures for an extended barrage or some other strategy, it is possible to construct more equipment using the Engineer function. The engineering options are one of the finer points of *WOR* and supplement the base combat model nicely.

Used To Couldn't Spell Engineer, Now I Are One

Beyond knocking politely at the front gate, placing ladders under crennels (the openings at the top of a wall) is the fastest way to get into a castle, but it is also very dangerous. Troops who carry the ladders are burdened and very vulnerable to attack, although the survivors of such a group can immediately scale the walls. With proper timing, defenders may pour Greek fire down on the ascending warriors and push the ladders back off the walls. Because of this, it is always best to have at least one archer group supporting the raising of the ladders via barrage and two large

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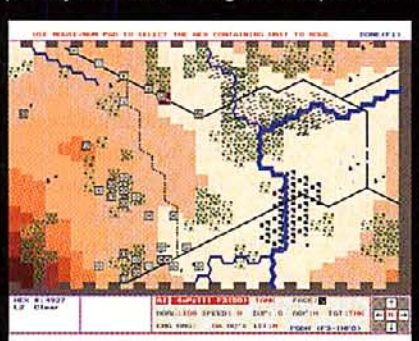

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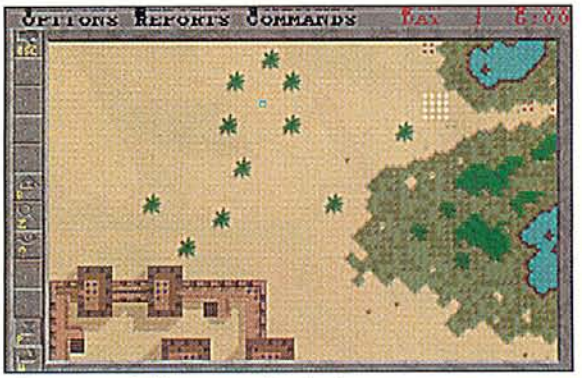
infantry groups behind the engineering unit to flood the breach created. Casualties will be high in such an assault, but if properly executed, a "beachhead" can be established on one of the castle walls and supplemented with further troops as the attack continues.

Another classic method of breaching the enemy defenses is through mining. Undermining the castle walls so that they collapse is much more time consuming than a ladder assault, but it is usually not as costly in terms of men and equipment. Tunnels appear as green squares on the terrain display and do not impede troop movement on the surface.

Siege towers, when properly constructed and placed against a castle wall, provide immediate access for large numbers of troops. Although initially harder to erect than ladders, siege towers are preferable for their durability and the increased safety they afford assaulting troops. The construction of siege towers should be done far from the castle, out of range of enemy archers, catapults and ballistae. Once completed, the tower is pushed to the desired location, acting as a shield in the process for the troops who are moving it.

Other engineering functions include the laying of bridges and the construction of battering rams, catapults, ballistae and ramparts behind which "artillery" can hide while bombarding. If troops are encountering too much resistance while performing a given function, you may also have them drop their equipment and mount a defense or a hasty retreat. Other troops can later gather the equipment that has been dropped.



Taking Tactical Command

Once troops are deployed in the field, they can be given orders to advance, occupy a given area, conduct a barrage of an area, target a single group, conduct patrols in an area, even chase and fight a specific enemy unit. As you can see, this is a much more diverse command structure than was present in prior Mindcraft titles. Further, when units are given movement orders—say, move from an attacking barracks to one of the critical locations within a castle—the AI recognizes the closest access point to the interior (ladders, tower or whatever), vectors the unit directly to that point, and automatically plots the zig-zag path necessary within the castle. This alleviates user frustration over trying to obtain exact tactical point to point movement and frees the mind for tactical thought.

On the field of battle, there are three levels of zoom available to view the clashing troops. At the widest view, the entire field is depicted, and the user can control area functions like bombardment and troop movement. Zooming in a level, the overview shows roughly a third of the entire area, with each group now depicted as a mass of individual dots as opposed to a block of color. Dots that turn dark in a group are casualties, so this view is a good one to quickly monitor the progress of several groups at once. Clicking the magnifying glass a third time reveals individual soldiers in combat, and only a portion of an entire group may be visible on the single screen. At this level, arrows whiz back and forth, and the corpses of the fallen litter the landscape. This level of magnification allows minute control of individual troop movements if desired.

Deployed groups may be relieved on station by other units or released from their current activity. These units return to the barracks to recover from their fatigue and allow wounded soldiers to recuperate in the hospital. These soldiers become available for redeployment after their wounds have healed (the exact number of days varies).

Victory in *WOR* centers around controlling strategically important regions in each castle. These conditions are also modified by the ratio of attackers to defenders, so that games that become un-winnable due to heavy casualties are not prolonged unduly. To monitor your progress toward victory, the main menu bar contains reports on regions controlled, casualties for the day and the battle, and other reports of interest to the astute commander.

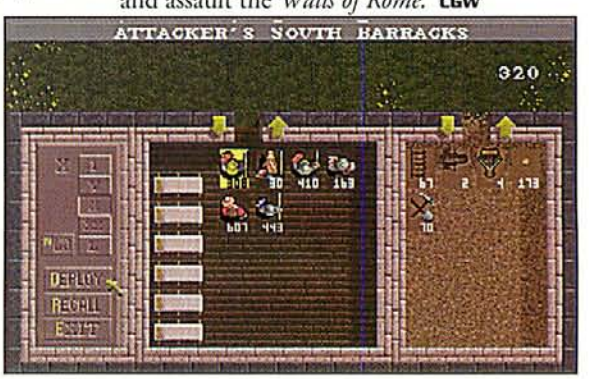
For those who are willing to invest the time, Mindcraft has included a fully functional system editor with *WOR*. This feature allows you to edit existing battles or create entirely new ones of your own, which may be subsequently uploaded to the Mindcraft BBS for other *WOR* players to enjoy. Separate editor functions include map alteration and construction, troop composition and numbers, location of the battle, days allowed for the siege, even the number of hours of daylight allotted.

Chinks In The Armor

WOR's gaming engine, though vastly improved as noted, still requires some minor tweaking. Units on the move still tend to elongate into weak columns as opposed to retaining more classic fighting formations. Also, when defending, you must keep group size small to get each deployed unit positioned correctly on the wall. As such, with the limitations imposed on the total number of groups, the defender will generally have fewer troops in the field than the attacker at any given time.

Some players have also reported a bug that allows no more than 23 groups to be deployed at any given time. This anomaly only appears with certain hardware configurations, but Mindcraft is working on a patch if you are experiencing the problem. The patch can be obtained directly from Mindcraft or through the major networks.

Despite these minor flaws, I could not help but be impressed with the amount of improvement that has occurred. *WOR* is not only a solid extension of the original *Siege* engine, it offers loads of replay value as well. If you have yet to experience Mindcraft's *Siege* system, it may be time to go back in time and assault the *Walls of Rome.* CGW



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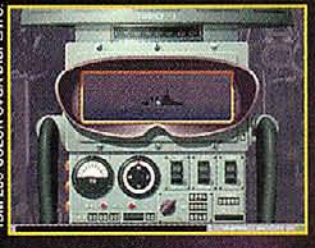

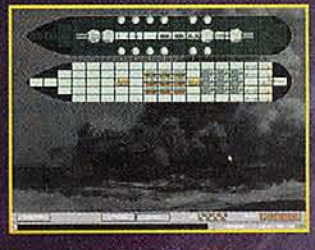

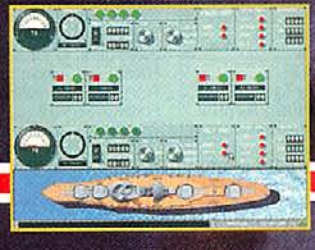

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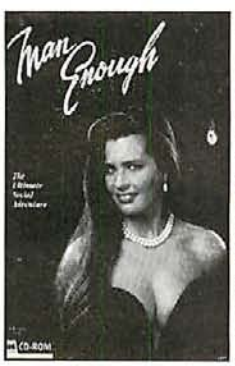

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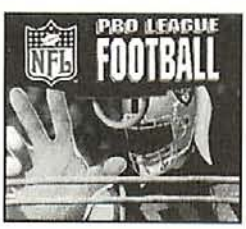

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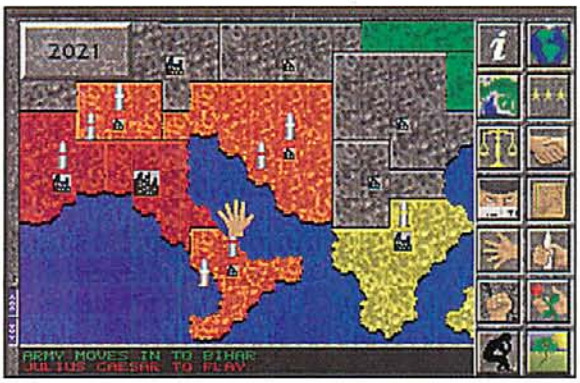
The Last Dictator

Grabbing The Global Reins In *Global Domination*

by Chuck Moss

Underneath our civilized veneer, underneath our day-to-day submissiveness to demands of family, job, and country, we strategy gamers all possess a common drive: we want to rule the world. Fortunately for family, job, and country, we have lots of socially acceptable outlets for this lust to conquest.

The most recent outlet for our will to power is *Global Domination* from **Impressions.** Part of a full-court press of Impressions game releases, *Global Domination* attempts to be



both a grand-strategic game a la *Command HQ* and a tactical game in the *Dune II* or *Perfect General* mode. The resulting game is at once both a failure and a surprising success.

Global Domination is actually a successor of sorts to an earlier Impressions conquest game called *The Final Conflict. The Final Conflict* attempted to marry logistics, strategy, economics, and the arcade-style action that Euro-audiences seem to love. It flopped miserably, myself being one of the perhaps five yanks who actually bought and played it. *Global Domination* has narrowed its scope and concentrated on two areas: a simple strategic world conquest game and a detailed tactical simulation for the action-oriented conqueror.

The game allows five human or computer players to slug it out for world dominion, either on our world or a randomly generated one. The computer players have personalities chosen from a list of nine historical worthies—from Queen Victoria and Abe Lincoln to Gengis Khan, Henry V, and a drooling Caveman for novices. (Bismarck stands in for Adolf Hitler—the documentation shows Der Fuhrer's puss, but political sensitivity, or just plain common sense, prevailed.) The personalities resemble characters in *Sid Meier's Civilization*: each favors his or her own strategy and trustworthiness level, but their graphic depictions pale against those of Sid's Civ.

The strategic game runs just fine, albeit slowly, on an old 286, but getting the most of the tactical game requires a 386. The "learning curve" of the game can hardly be called a curve at all: you boot it up, you make some mistakes in the first game or two, and you're ready to conquer the world. The documentation is adequate, and the game's icon-driven menus are largely self-explanatory. The manual has a little tutorial exercise that explains everything you need to know.

The interface is mouse-driven, with menu buttons selected by a pointing finger cursor. While the graphics are sharp and clear, one longs for the ability to select some of the more common commands via keyboard. Many operations must be done repeatedly, and constant clicking of the same buttons gets tiresome.

The global map is clear and sharp and very colorful. Split up into territories with different "cities" or point levels for each province, the world begins just like the old board game *Risk*,with players holding a few regions amidst a lot of unclaimed space. Indeed, the strategic game is very reminiscent of *Risk*, with players taking turns, spending income on armies, attacking, garrisoning and defending.

Each turn represents a month and is not divided into phases. You can perform any action in any order you choose. Typically, one goes to the logistics screen, buys armies, places them, moves, attacks, and conducts covert operations. Typical turns last 10 to 15 minutes.

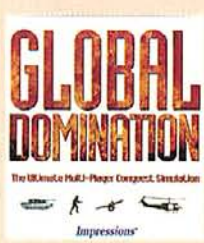
Purchasing armies is not a totally abstract exercise as in *Risk*. Players assemble forces of different components—from infantry and light armor to strike aircraft and air mobile troops. There are six settings for forces, and you can tweak your units around, adding or subtracting as cash flow merits. This "unit mix" seems irrelevant from the strategic purview, but is actually vital to the tactical game.

Movement logistics are handled very abstractly. You buy "movement points" and use the mouse to manipulate a little hand to pick up your armies—shown as bullets of varying sizes—and place them somewhere else. If the new territory is unoccupied, it changes to the attacker's color. If defended, a conflict ensues that can rage for months. Sea movement is handled through fleet points—and little ships that sail *very* slowly between continents. There is no naval combat.

One non-*Risk* wrinkle is the addition of covert operations. You can purchase intelligence points that enable you to spy on other players, learn about force compositions, leadership qualities, and offer alliances and pacts. It also allows you to build "special forces" that try to "destabilize" (i.e. drive mad) other leaders, buy loyalty, and incite territories to revolt.

Revolution is an integral part of the game, as a territory in revolt changes color to a vivid purple and cannot be invaded or traversed for an indeterminate—usually lengthy—period of time. Indeed, fomenting revolution is the best way to tie your enemy up in knots. The revolution command is a little fist, and one of the game's most amusing features is sailing your fist above the world, capriciously dropping down to cause trouble. Like those two young reprobates on MTV would say: "Heh, heh—revolution is cool!"

Global Domination



TITLE:	Global Domination
PRICE:	$59.95
SYSTEM:	IBM
REQUIREMENTS:	286 or higher (386-16MHz recommended), VGA graphics, 8MB hard drive space, mouse; supports Ad lib (Gold), Aria, Roland, Sound Blaster sound cards
PROTECTION:	None
DESIGNER:	David Lester
PUBLISHER:	Impressions Cambridge, MA 02142 (203) 676-9002

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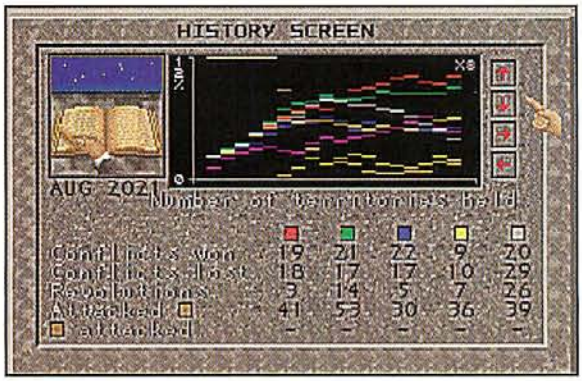
So…you buy armies, attack, try to beat the other guys, and stir up mischief at home. Is that all? Not by a long shot. *Global Domination* has a detailed tactical game, called "satellite battles." Briefly, those units you buy in the logistics screen are placed on a detailed map of varying terrain, and you must either attack or defend certain objectives like headquarters, airfields and supply depots.



You have mouse-driven command of your units, which can vary from one infantry soldier to fleets of tanks, helicopters and jets. Command is much like *Dune II* and *The Perfect General*, with individual units selected and objectives chosen. The graphics and sounds of this portion of the game are stunning.

However, the tactical game does not measure up to the standard of the other games mentioned. The command system is clunky, lacking the fluidity and ease of the other games' controls. The command options are too few to efficiently handle large numbers of units. I spent too much time fighting the interface and watching those beautiful jets and tanks go somewhere else than ordered, or miss the target by one "square" because the prey moved. Also, it's very slow on low-end (286/386) machines.

In short, the tactical game, while visually gorgeous, is simply not up to current standards. After a couple of tedious battles, I longed for the quick, easy, resolution of the strategic game. The other bells and whistles—conflict watching, physical maps—add little to the game and remind one of *Final Conflict*'s Euro-style chrome. So the much-ballyhooed tactical simulation is, in my opinion, not quite enough. Maybe in arcade-mad Europe, it would work, but the US market has segmented this type of game and dealt with it in a far more detailed fashion.

So take away the tactical wargame and what's left? A simple, workmanlike, intermediate-level, conquer-the-world game that's surprisingly enjoyable and addictive. Imagine a jazzed-up *Risk* with computer players and nasty revolution! *Global Domination* neatly fills the niche between simple games like *Risk* and more involved products like *Command H.Q.* and *Empire Deluxe.*

While the game does come with a modem feature, attempts to tele-play foundered on slow conflict resolution, which may have been due to my buddy's slow machine. However, *Global Domination* makes a great solitaire game. I lost much sleep and marital accord ("I know its 1:30 but I'm besieging New Jersey!"). It's fast, fun, and sneaky. It is not too complicated, but neither is it overly simple-minded. Replay value? All I can say is that this article was delayed by frequent "fact checks" that took up to four hours each!

So give *Global Domination* an unexpected thumbs up. Its ambitious challenge to *The Perfect General* falls flat, but what's left makes a perfect addition to the global conqueror's hard drive. It's a pleasant and entertaining little game allowing you to match wits with history's greatest warlords and sweep them before you like digitized chaff. Now, if you'll excuse me…I've got to drive Napoleon out of Africa. CGW

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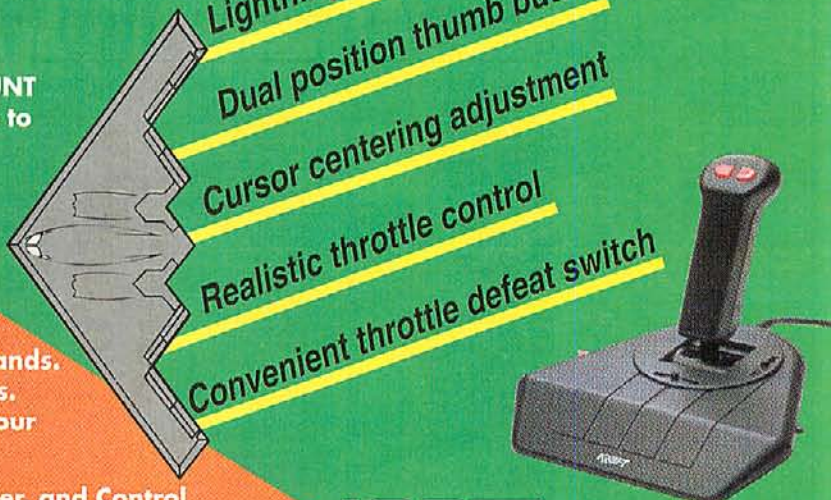

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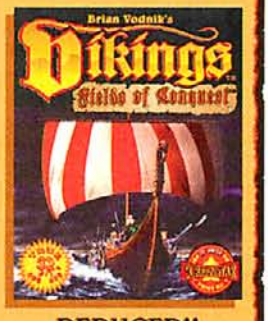

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Opponents Wanted

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- Include a brief description of the types of opponents and games you are interested in playing. Games being played other than direct by modem *can* be listed (trading save game disks or even face-to-face).
- At least one (possibly more) telephone number(s) must be included. *Do not forget the area code* and mention whether they are Home, Work or Modem numbers.
- Include your city and state so that people who call you will both: a) have a clue as to what time zone you are in and b) recognize it when they see it on their phone bill.

The Networks

The following are voice contact numbers for many of the various on-line network services that connect gamers. Call them for more information on these networks.

America On-Line: (800) 827-6364
CompuServe Information Service: (800) 848-8990
Novalink (formally Digital Dreams) **Network:** (800) 274-2814
GEnie: (800) 638-9636
The ImagiNation Network: (800) IMAGIN-1
Multi-Player Games Network: (800) GET-GAME
National Videotex (NVtel): (800) 336-9096
Prodigy: (800) 822-6922 x556
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Bulletin Board Systems

Wargamers unite! Looking for an opponent for *War in Russia, Empire Deluxe, Falcon 3.0* or others? Look no more! **Cybersystems BBS** has an Opponents Wanted and wargame discussion message bases, Sysop moderated wargames, tournaments and more. Large *War in Russia* tournament in progress. Play FT, swap saved games, play-by-modem. 24 hours a day, hassle free! Funning Sychronet, 3 Gigs, 3 Lines, 30+ on-line games. Settings: 8-N-1, 2400/9600/38.4 (USR Duals). No fee. Call (908) 654-1290.

The **Dakota Central Telenet BBS** in Carrington, ND (58421) is a BBS with many challenging on-line games and over 30,000 files available to download free of charge. On-line games include the massive *Land of Devastation* post-nuclear war RPG with an available EGA graphic user interface, plus you can battle other traders and aliens in *TradeWars 2002* (tournaments start frequently). Explore with your character in the combat-happy RPG *Wizard's Arena*, and make big booms with others like *Nuke War* and *Naval Battle*. Trivia and card games are also on-line. Huge games file area. Free access, with a small fee for total access. 3 nodes; 300-14,400 Baud, 8-N-1. Call (701) 674-8115, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The Informer BBS under SYSOP John Custer is running flight sim updates, Cracks, flight sim conferences. This is the home of SIMNET, the flight sim network of the 510 Tactical Fighter Wing (sponsors of SIM CON 93). We also have a direct link to Thrustmaster tech support and many pilots to answer your questions. (415) 468-6713, 6714 or 6715.

Call **Little Caesar's Nightclub** at (416) 238-8238. All wargamers should check out message base #13 for discussions on computer wargaming. Find an opponent or leave a review. All computer platforms welcome.

The **Elfspire Tome** is a Fantasy Role-Playing Game Master's resource bulletin board. We feature role-playing echoes, on-line games, fantasy clip art and much more. 1200-9600 Baud. (415) 595-2387.

The **Electronic Estates BBS** in Oak Lawn, IL invites you to join their *Tradewar 2002, Global War* and *Chess* games. Many files available for download, Netmail, instant access and more. "A world class, American BBS" (pmc 11/93). Call (708) 424-6136.

Will you hack and slash your way through a real-time, multi-user dungeon (MUD) or attempt to conquer an entire galaxy? It's your choice when you call **The Batboard BBS** in Columbia, MO. Enjoy the true *AD&D* action of *Legends* and the professional e-mail game *VGA Planets* (with an off-line VGA interface) or tackle over 30 other on-line challenges, including *ANSI Pro Football, Chat Roulette, BandWarz*, role-playing, strategy, trivia and casino games. Prizes awarded for highest monthly scores, with full access on your first call (and it's free)! Two CD-ROMs on-line, with the latest in quality shareware games! FidoNet echoes (including GAMING), multiline chat, the adult role-playing game *Wild Side* — visit today for the best in multiline diversions! We're always open 24 hours at (314) 446-0475 with 14400 bps supported.

The Delphic Oracle is an all-gaming BBS. Play RPGs (*AD&D, GURPS*), play-by-e-mail games (*Diplomacy, ASL*), *Empires at War* (a Napoleonic on-line game) and other games on-line. Find modem game players. Gamemasters and players wanted. Simi Valley, California (805) 582-9004 [2400 8-N-1] Free access.

The **Gaming Connection BBS** in Everett, WA specializes in connecting modem-to-modem players. Give it a call at (206) 742-4044, twenty-four hours a day. Join a Gaming Ladder and make new friends to challenge. *Empire Deluxe* and *Harpoon* scenarios, plus access to everything (including over 5,000 files) available on your first call!

The **Ho-Down BBS** wants you to "test your metal" in multi-player games of *Spaceward, Ho!* Are you tired of beating 19 smart computer players in a small galaxy? Want a *real* challenge? Try competing against the most deadly, devious, dastardly, dangerous, diabolical, double-crossing dealers of death and destruction this side of Deneb. In other words, against players just like you! Call with modem set at 8-N-1, up to 14400 bps, (206) 577-8868.

The Imperium BBS is looking for modem gamers like you! Tournaments are run for *Knights of the Sky, Command HQ, The Perfect General* and *Global Conquest* (just to name a few!). We have on-line games, message base and 3 gigs of files, too. Call one of our three nodes in Middleton, NJ at either: 1200/2400 (908) 706-0342; 9600 v.32 (908) 706-0305; HST Dual Standard 38.4 (908) 706-0321.

The **Mac Commonwealth BBS** in metro New Orleans, LA is sponsored by the National Home & School Mac User Group, a nonprofit organization promoting leisure and learning on the Mac. Our multi-line system features over 1 gigabyte of downloadable files, with emphasis on games and educational material. On-line magazines, Usenet newsgroups, OneNet conferences and Internet e-mail. Support file sections for over 60 commercial games! FirstClass graphic user interface. All lines support 1200 - v.32bis 14,400 access. For information on BBS and group activities, send inquiries to NHSMUG, P.O. Box 640641, Kenner, LA 70064. BBS line 1: (504) 837-7984.

By Area Code

Grognards, unite! Rather mature gamer (who confesses to remembering initial release of Avalon Hill's *Gettysburg*) is stranded in the wilderness of LaGrange Park, IL and wants to find other wargamers familiar with *Aide de Camp*. Hopefully, we can play some *Flat Top*—electronic, double-blind. Also looking for a good, long session of *Grigsby's Pacific War* to play by file transfer (I'm not only willing, but *eager* to be the next Nagumo). Byron Inglesh, CompuServe [73322,203].

Miami, FL player throws down his gauntlet to anyone who challenges him in a game of *Battlechess* (either disk or CD-ROM). If you have a network with Internet access, respond at CJHM22A@PRODIGY.COM or call Stephen Hertz at H-(305) 448-8425.

Seeking local opponents for modem gaming. Will play *The Perfect General, F-15 III* and many others. Call me in Syracuse, NY at H-(315) 622-2204. Ask for Jerry any time between 8am and 10pm.

Looking for a local opponent to meet for face-to-face game of *Clash of Steel, Warlords II* or other board and computer wargames. I'm in Harford County, MD. Call Josh at H-(410) 939-1021.

Opponents sought for *Empire Deluxe, Conquered Kingdoms, The Perfect General* and *Global Conquest*. Will also play other modem capable games (I have a PPI 14.4 modem). I can't afford long distance, but will consider PC Pursuit. Contact Gene Gooldy between 12pm and 10pm any day at H-(410) 923-6188 in Anne Arundel County, MD.

Local modem opponent wanted for almost any flight sim or *Robosport*. Call Al (The Cheesy) at H-(415) 593-1989 in the San Francisco bay area.

Wanted in the San Francisco area: Head-to-head *Falcon 3.02.1/MiG 29 1.01* players. Will also play *F-15 III/Tornado*. I can play at speeds up to 14400 Baud and am a member of the 510 Tactical Fighter Wing. All challengers welcome. Call H-(415) 468-2021.

Local (Contra Costa County, CA) modem opponents wanted for *Falcon 3.01* (or allied) and *The Perfect General*. Contact Joseph "Joe Cruise" in Concord, CA at H-(510) 827-0283 anytime. Beginners are more than welcome! I have lots of free time, so if you are interested in another game, or want to play face-to-face in any game of your choice, please call.

Seeking local opponents for *Command HQ, 688 Attack Sub, The Perfect General* or any other game of your choice. Please, call David in the Vancouver/Lower Mainland area and let's do battle. Phone me at H-(604) 264-7998.

Brigadier General "Shifty" Pierre challenges you to battle in *The Perfect General*. The battle "Stuck in the Middle Again," short game, partial sighting, random hit. It doesn't matter where you live, I have PC Pursuit and I'll phone you. Or, what about a war for control of the planet in *Empire Deluxe*? CGW Tournament rules, Wrap on. I live near Chicago. Voice: H-(708) 479-4344; BBS: (815) 886-0109.

Local opponents sought for *The Perfect General, Falcon 3.02* and other games in the NYC area. Contact Lorenzo "Wren" Lamberty at H-(718) 597-3588 anytime after 4pm.

Seeking opponents for modem play in the Colorado Springs, CO area. I would love to play *The Perfect General, Empire Deluxe, Modem Wars, Knights of the Sky* or anything you've got a hankering to lose at (hehehe). Contact Steven Woodcock at either of the following: H-(719) 392-2975 or by email via the InterNet at: swoodcoc@oldcolo.com

Local opponents wanted for *Falcon, F-15 III* or *Tornado*. Call Rod in Memphis, TN at H-(901) 527-8764 or W-(901) 525-2557.

Opponents wanted in the Longview, TX area for *Conquered Kingdoms* by modem. I am also interested in any type of modem strategy game. Call Bill Anderson at H-(903) 663-2120.

Looking for PBEM opponents for *Second Front, Carrier Strike* or just about any other wargame. Contact Ernest Calridge in the Toronto area after 6pm at H-(905) 238-8238.

Mediocre *Empire Deluxe* player seeks same for modem or e-mail contest. Ask for Johnny at H-(909) 676-7251. CGW

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Taking A PEEK

A quick look at titles now appearing on a store shelf near you.

Activision
11601 Wilshire Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90025
(800) 477-3650

SIMON THE SORCERER: Begin with a spellbook and a large cauldron. Fill it with swamp water; mix in a dash of *Altered Destiny*; and add a smidgen of *Legend of Kyrandia.* Then, blend in a large portion of *The Secret of Monkey Island* topped off with a just a hint of *Waxworks* and mix well. The result? *Simon the Sorcerer*, a wacky, tongue-in-cheek interactive fantasy with an attitude about an adolescent destined to save a magical dimension from the archetypal evil wizard. With humor closely resembling that of LucasArts' *Monkey Island*, this tale of a dimension-crossing boy and his dog features a rich world of tasty puzzles designed to test the wits of the most astute adventurer while keeping the humor dial turned up to the max. IBM ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #1.

Apple Computer, Inc.
20525 Mariani Ave.
Cupertino, CA 95014
(800) 708 STAR

WACKY JACKS: Not quite live, from Cupertino, it's Don Pardo! Yes, the voice of *Saturday Night Live* provides the vocal counterpoint for this simple multimedia game show. Up to four players switch back and forth in the "hot seat" in front of the computer in order to play games similar to Concentration, Hangman, Tic-Tac-Toe, and scrambled pocket puzzles. All of the games draw from a large library of pictures from around the world and feature the vocal stylings of the golden-throated Pardo. Though the CD access time means occasional "dead air," which would horrify the legendary TV announcer, *Wacky Jacks'* three difficulty levels make it easy for families to play the games together. Macintosh CD-ROM ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #2.

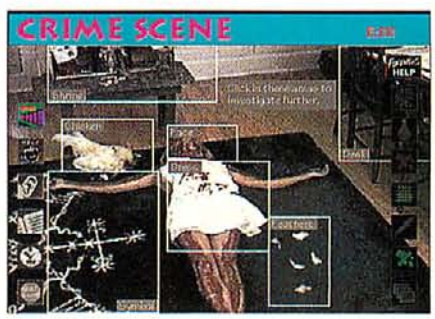
Bethesda Softworks
PO Box 7877
Gaithersburg, MD 20898-7877
(301) 963-2002

THE TERMINATOR: RAMPAGE: Just when you thought it was safe to hang up your

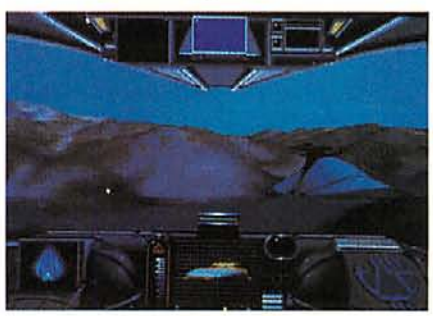
Simon the Sorcerer

Wacky Jacks

The Terminator: Rampage



The Magic Death



CyberRace

M-30 Grenade Launcher, SKYNET reappears. It seems that prior to its destruction SKYNET sent a core dump of all its vital data back to 1984, housed in a specially modified T-800 Terminator. The result: SKYNET became fully functional much sooner than planned and used the knowledge of its future destruction in an alternate timeline to bring about the annihilation of mankind before the resistance could be formed. Fortunately, just enough resistance fighters survived the timeline shift to send a resistance commando into the past to defeat SKYNET. The player, of course, becomes said commando. With enhanced features over the previous *Terminator* release, *Terminator Rampage* offers a look similar to **id Software**'s *Doom*, though the gameplay doesn't compare. Action, regardless of difficulty, is intense. The faint of heart need not apply. IBM ($69.95). Circle Reader Service #3.

Creative Multimedia
514 NW 11th Ave., Suite 203
Portland, OR 97209
(503) 241-1530

THE MAGIC DEATH: Digital detectives in search of murders to solve may want to investigate this new offering from **Creative Multimedia.** Bearing strong resemblance to **Viacom**'s *Sherlock Holmes* titles and built on the engine of **CMC**'s earlier *Who Killed Sam Rupert?*, *The Magic Death* brings criminology into the 90s with more technology-based means of aiding the sleuth in determining the culprit(s) involved in a crime. Blood tests, fabric analysis, autopsies and the like are now at your disposal. Examine the crime scene, question the suspects, check your sources, review the evidence, verify alibis and hold your press conference. Watch your time, though; you only have six hours of game time in which to solve the case. IBM CD-ROM with Windows-ROM ($49.99). Circle Reader Service #4.

Cyberdreams, Inc.
21243 Ventura Blvd., Suite 230
Woodland Hills, CA 91364
(818) 348-4560

CYBERRACE: Designed by the renowned futurist Syd Mead *(Blade Runner, Tron, 2010, Star Trek: The Motion Picture)*, *CyberRace* brings futuristic 3D combat and racing to the PC. A front runner in concept, *CyberRace* also benefits from improvements in VOXEL graphics that allow **Cyberdreams** to render detailed landscapes at amazingly fast speeds. Though some role-playing elements fill the intermediary scenes between race segments, game play is primarily action intensive. Most playing time is spent in the CyberSled, jockeying for position and eliminating your opponents. Certainly, having the talents of Syd Mead in the development of the storyline is

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Microforum

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the strength behind *CyberRace*, and the story itself may actually eclipse game play. Nonetheless, it appears that *CyberRace* will find a strong appeal among sci-fi fans and racing enthusiasts. IBM and IBM CD-ROM ($69.95). Circle Reader Service #5.

Dynamic Dimensions Development, Inc.
512 Main St., Suite 1014
Ft. Worth, TX 76102
(817) 336-1105

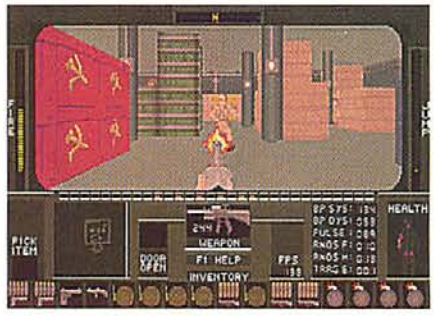
MORPHMAN: THE CHALLENGE OF THE QUEAXMAR EXPERIMENTS!: Look! Up in the sky! It's a bird. It's a plane. Actually, it's both. It's Morphman! Combining 3D animations with **Microsoft**'s *Video for Windows, Morphman* provides an interesting concept, but generally lacks more than minimal interaction. As superhero Morphman, you must rescue Professor Roberts from a group of evil military scientists who have kidnapped and imprisoned him in their fortress. Using your wits and molecular sampler, you must infiltrate and destroy the structure, freeing the professor in the process. Under normal use, your molecular sampler allows you to "sample" creatures you meet and alter your molecular structure to match them (like a fish, bat, etc.). Used in reverse, the sampler becomes a powerful energy weapon. Unfortunately, the interaction seems rather too limited for those attuned to more traditional quests. IBM CD-ROM with Windows ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #6.

Froggman Software
PO Box 144506
Miami, FL 33114-9776
(305) 567-1363

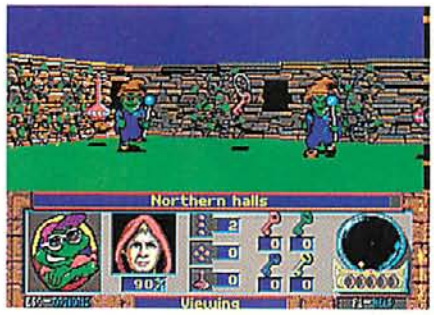
LETHAL TENDER: Remember when your mother told you not to put money in your mouth because you didn't know where it had been? In *Lethal Tender*, **Froggman**'s version of a *Wolfenstein 3D* game, Nick Hunter infiltrates a secret underground manufacturing plant where the criminal mastermind, Thorne Devereaux, is producing a high explosive called PAID (Particle Accelerated Incendiary Device). The plan is to impregnate coins with PAID; hence, creating millions of monetary time bombs jingling in peoples' pockets all across America. When the protective coating wears off—BOOM! Hunter's task, of course, is to foil Devereaux's plans by destroying his operation. *Lethal Tender* is not exactly in the same league with *Wolfenstein 3D*, but it *is* a good value for its low retail price. With ten action-filled levels to explore, *Lethal Tender* offers a full clip of excitement for the money. IBM ($14.95). Circle Reader Service #7.

TERROR OF THE CATACOMBS: Following on their popular *Catacomb* adventures, Froggman has just shipped their newest title in the series. As the 3D adventure continues, Nemesis once again threatens life as we know it, resulting in your call back to action. Unfortunately, he has gained control of the Time Gates and must be stopped before he can unleash any more high-tech monsters from the distant future or decaying beasts from the ancient past. As it stands, this continuation of the *Catacomb* games looks and plays exactly like the former releases. Unfortunately, this means the graphics are still only 16-color EGA (though VGA and SVGA compatible). Playability is good, almost addictive, and offers bang for the buck in spite of its lackluster visuals. IBM ($14.95). Circle Reader Service #8

Morphman: The Challenge of the Queaxmar Experiments!



Lethal Tender



Terror of the Catacombs

Id Software, Inc.
(800) 434-2637

DOOM: If *Wolfenstein 3-D* kept you happily awake each night, look forward to a delight of insomnia with *Doom*. Instead of nasty Nazis, this time you may gleefully blow away space aliens with a variety of weapons, including rocket launchers, mega-machine guns, and even space-age brass knuckles (with appropriate spikes, of course). The player is a space marine, rooting through the treacherous depths of our local space station for the "Ultimate Evil," which gives the usual level-to-level crash and bash some semblance of a plot. Game controls are similar to *Wolf 3-D*, but also include a strategic map of the space station levels for planning one's Rambo-like assaults. Be sure to have at least a 386SX, but for those wishing the full thrill of carnage, only a 486 will do. Since networking is supported, bring along a friend to share in the visceral delights. *Doom* is a stand-alone product, not requiring *Wolf 3-D*, and the first episode of *Doom* is shareware from **Id Software.** IBM (Registered version: $40). Circle Reader Service #9.

Impressions Software, Inc.
222 Third Street, Suite 0234
Cambridge, MA 02142
(203) 676-9002

CLASSICS FUN PACK FOR WINDOWS: This collection of seven Windows games is definitely FUN! *Classics Addiction Pack* might have been a better title for the package. Included are Peg Jump, Code Breaker, Word Search, Puzzle Game, and three solitaire card games. Most need no introduction as they are self-explanatory. All, though, are just as brain teasing as the original table games on which they are based. Those who like a good game of solitaire will surely gravitate to Klondike, Lady Louise or Canfield. Logic lovers will be drawn to Peg Jump and Code Breaker. Gamers with a penchant for word puzzles will find Word Search worthwhile. Whether you have only 15 minutes or hours to play, this little collection of classics is worth the low admission price. IBM

Classics Fun Pack for Windows

Doom

You can play war games or you can make history.

Hannibal takes history out of the books and into your PC. Experience the life and times of one of history's most controversial heros. You are Hannibal. Think his thoughts, fight his battles, befriend his allies and negotiate his treaties. Do everything as he did, or dare to do more.

- Based upon the actual history of Roman and Carthagan campaigns.
- 700 towns, each a possible friend or foe.
- Go to market to equip your army with horses, ships, mercenaries and elephants.
- Keep tabs on the political situation: don't raise tax rates too high or you may suffer the consequences.
- Negotiate peace or seige and destroy to increase your finances.
- Includes historical survey of Hannibal and his times.

Can you conquer the powerful Roman Empire?

Developed by Stardock

Suggested Retail Price: $49.95
UPC Code: 037523-84113-1
Format: IBM/PC Compatible
System Requirements: 640K RAM, 286/16mhz or faster, hard drive, DOS 3.3 or higher, VGA, supports SoundBlaster® and SoundBlaster® compatible, mouse recommended.

Published by
U.S.P., 201 Bellevue Building
Newark, DE 19702
1-800-334-6572
MICROLEAGUE interactive software

Circle Reader Service #93

with Windows ($24.95). Circle Reader Service #10.

WW2 AIR FORCE COMMANDER: At the bargain price, one can hardly expect **Impressions**' second title in their *Air Force Commander* series to be "Their Finest Hour," but it is still worth considering. Focusing on the European theater of World War II, *WW2 Air Force Commander* is a real-time, strategic simulation of air combat that allows you to recreate the large-scale, airborne conflicts of the second world war, including the famous Battle of Britain. Included are 28 historic scenarios, a wide variety of WWII planes, and reasonable selection of geographical maps, all featured in 256-color VGA graphics in an easy-to-use point-and-click interface. AdLib music and Sound Blaster digitized sounds are supported. Owners of the original *Air Force Commander* who have eagerly anticipated an add-on "mission disk" can purchase *WW2AFC* directly for $9.95, plus $5 shipping and handling. IBM ($19.95). Circle Reader Service #11.

Legend Entertainment Company
PO Box 10810
Chantilly, VA 22021-0810
(800) 658-8891

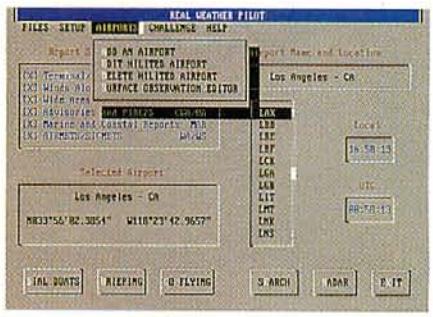
COMPANIONS OF XANTH: Previewed in our July 1993 issue (*CGW* #108), this graphic adventure breaks some new ground for **Legend Entertainment**. It is their first release to use a parserless, icon-based interface (there is a parser, but it is nearly transparent to the user). Plus, it's a very funny game based on an interesting literary license. When Piers Anthony wrote *A Spell for Chameleon*, the first Xanth novel, he certainly couldn't have expected the number of forthcoming titles it would generate. Even less would he have expected that the competition described in one of those Xanth novels would appear as a computer adventure game. Based on Anthony's novel *Demons Don't Dream*, *Companions of Xanth* offers traditional adventure game puzzles, though it also has some that cannot be solved without the help of the titular Companions. IBM ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #12.

Mallard Software, Inc.
3207 Justin Rd.
Flower Mound, TX 75028
(214) 539-2575

REAL WEATHER PILOT: Storm clouds are looming on the horizon with the release of **Mallard**'s *Real Weather Pilot*, which generates weather for *Flight Simulator 4* or *5*. Capable of dialing up the DUATS weather reporting system and downloading actual weather reports, *Real Weather Pilot* lets you experience the actual weather conditions between any two U.S. airports. Of course, simulated weather conditions are also available. So, you can land at LAX in the middle of a snow storm if flying into L.A. isn't unreal enough for you. Weather reports can be grouped for providing comprehensive preflight briefings and can be printed out for inflight reference. You can also save interesting weather patterns in archive files for later use. In addition, random weather patterns can be generated with difficulty levels ranging from novice to impossible. All considered, *Real Weather Pilot* is a first-class tool for a coach fare. *Flight Simulator 4* or *5* is required. IBM ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #13.

WW2 Air Force Commander

Companions of Xanth



Real Weather Pilot

Red Shift

Multimedia Kaleidosonics

Maris Multimedia
London E1 8AX, England
011-44-071-488-1566

RED SHIFT: Although it is not a game, *Red Shift* is a powerful astronomy program that allows amateur astronomers to print visibility reports on deep sky objects to determine when and where such phenomena can be observed. One simply selects a location on the map and tells the program to calculate with regard to that location. Then, it's easy to find the Andromeda Galaxy, Horsehead Nebula and a host of comets. There are 250,000 stars and 40,000 deep sky objects catalogued in this program, and the algorithms were executed by scientists from Space Mission Control in Russia. Combined with this astronomy program is a multimedia library of both still pictures and about a half dozen film clips. Macintosh CD-ROM (69£ British plus Value Added Tax). Circle Reader Service #14.

Masque Publishing, Inc.
PO Box 5223
Englewood, CO 80155
(303) 290-9853

MULTIMEDIA KALEIDOSONICS: This interactive art toy combines 38 attractive photographs of natural wonders, from the desert to the mountains to outer space with a jazz/fusion soundtrack. Designer John Ratcliff *(688 Attack Sub, Seawolf)* uses a variety of special effects to play with the images, while floating 2-D and 3-D texture wrapped objects like liberated parade floats. Where this program differs from a screen saver is in its endlessly customizable options and relaxing New Age audio. Users may change—and save—2-D and 3-D settings, object movement and rotation, mirroring, warping, background shatters, speed and brightness. Rob Wallace created the soothing 48 minute score for the program in a MIDI studio using his computer. If you want to up the technological ante on nature-scape videos such as those seen in The Nature Company, *Kaleidosonics* may be your cup of tea. IBM CD-ROM ($24.99). Circle Reader Service #15.

ReadySoft Incorporated & Epicenter Interactive Present

DRAGON'S LAIR® CD-ROM

You're in for the adventure of your life...

Dragon's Lair is back and better than ever on CD-ROM!

This full arcade version is packed with spectacular animation and digitized sound, bringing Dragon's Lair to life like never before!

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Lead on brave adventurer... your quest awaits!

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ReelMagic

3DO

also available for IBM PC & Macintosh

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READYSOFT

ReadySoft Incorporated
30 Wertheim Court,Suite 2
Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada L4B 1B9
Tel: (905) 731-4175 Fax: (905) 764-8867

Media Vision Multimedia Publishing
47300 Bayside Parkway
Fremont, CA 94538
(510) 770-8600

CRITICAL PATH: It's Cinemaware Meets Digitized Video when **Media Vision**, manufacturer of multimedia hardware (read: sound and video cards), enters the multimedia publishing fray with their first interactive action-adventure. In this new CD-ROM title combining motion picture, video game, and computer generated animation elements, Kat, a 24-year-old renegade chopper pilot, must be safely guided through a post-apocalyptic setting with your help. Pursued by mutant thugs and dogged at every turn by an insane dictator, Kat is forced to face one life threatening event after another in an effort to escape her captor's "fortress." During the course of the game, you must anticipate the various threats to Kat's life and help her avoid danger by aiding her from a remote control station. Extensive use of video and sound effects makes the game intense and creates a fast-paced and captivating experience. However, expect a good deal of trial and error in the process of securing Kat's safety. IBM CD-ROM with Windows ($79.95). Circle Reader Service #16.

Merit Software
13707 Gamma Rd.
Dallas, TX 75244
(800) 238-4277

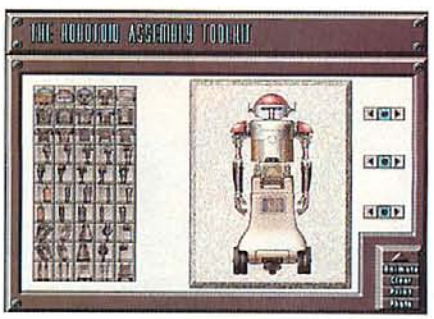
KRONOLOG: THE NAZI PARADOX: In *Kronolog*'s version of history, Germany won World War II through a German monopoly on the atomic bomb. The result of this revisionist past is a plausible future of a world on the brink of ecological disaster. It is now 2020 and America is under the cultural and intellectual chokehold of the Nazi German Empire. To make matters worse, the Nazis have invented a workable time machine. Meanwhile, American society is involved in a surrogate war in the Far East and is on the edge of complete environmental devastation. Some Nazi collaborators and a secret underground movement soon raise the tensions to apocalyptic levels. You are, of course, thrown into this milieu, with your goal being to stop the environmental destruction and bring the Nazi government to its knees. This puzzle-based, icon-operated animated adventure features a more interesting premise than execution. IBM ($69.95). Circle Reader Service #17.

Microsoft Corporation
One Microsoft Way
Redmond, WA 98052-6399
(206) 882-8080

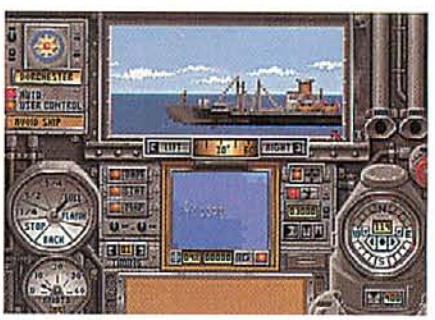
ISAAC ASIMOV'S THE ULTIMATE ROBOT: One of the first releases in the new *Microsoft Home* line is this combination photo gallery, short story library, robot paper doll print shop, and film clip vault. Not only does this product provide short, succinct *QuickTime* film clips from some classic science fiction films, but it also provides the text for more than 50 of Isaac Asimov's robot stories. Unfortunately, the robot assembly portion of the program isn't as sophisticated as one would hope. It is essentially *Designasaurus* for robots, with the user assembling paper doll robots that can be printed to hard copy or animated on screen. Though somewhat interesting, there isn't any real game to it. Also, the advertised screen savers require *After Dark* to function. Still, it is definitely the type of product that has something for every robot fiction fan. Macintosh CD-ROM ($79.95). Circle Reader Service #18.

Critical Path

Kronolog: The Nazi Paradox



Isaac Asimov's The Ultimate Robot



Wolfpack CD-ROM

Heirs to the Throne

NovaLogic
19510 Ventura Blvd. #200
Tarzana, CA 91356
(818) 774-0812

WOLFPACK CD: This is a reworking of the original *Wolfpack* released in 1989, packed onto a CD with a fabulous new introduction sequence and sound track. While not the definitive work on the subject, *WolfPack CD* is more like a "Fun Pack" for burgeoning submariners. Using a fairly easy point-and-click interface, players can jump from ship-to-ship on their side (commanding either the submarines or convoys) as they close for a fateful engagement, leaving every unattended ship under the AI's guidance. Instead of running from room-to-room or ship-to-ship, as in some simulations, commands can be entered from a single control panel in this simulation. What makes *WolfPack CD* compelling is its intriguing soundtrack and mission construction set. New captains will also appreciate its short learning curve, which will have them at periscope depth before they can say "Heil What's-His-Name." IBM CD-ROM ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #19.

QQP, Inc.
1046 River Avenue
Flemington, NJ 08822
(908) 788-2799

HEIRS TO THE THRONE: A decisively German import (you can almost hear the accent when reading the roughly translated docs), this is one speedy strategy game! The king has died and you, as one of the land's Barons, must step in to fill the vacuum. Naturally, the other Barons are also vying for control of the kingdom, so the stage is set for a classic multi-player strategy game (for up to four players at the same machine). With clean systems and an intuitive interface, the game offers a bunch of options and random maps that serve to give it depth and variety. Strategists will quickly find themselves mastering the interface to the point where they will be clicking off turns as fast as their wetware can

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47971 Fremont Blvd., Fremont, CA 94538

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process. IBM ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #20.

Sierra On-Line, Inc.
P.O. Box 485
Coarsegold, CA 93614
(800) 757-7707

POLICE QUEST: OPEN SEASON: This latest offering in the *Police Quest* series draws from the expertise of former L.A. Police Chief Daryl Gates. Beginning with a brutal murder of one of L.A.'s finest, you don the badge of a detective working on a bizarre murder case. Life as an L.A.P.D. homicide detective is no picnic: as if the bad guys weren't tough enough, you must also deal with the press, and must follow strict police procedures at all times. From the manual that reads like "the book" that officers must go by when enforcing the law, through mandatory weapon qualifications, to visiting actual police hang outs, *Police Quest: Open Season* evinces a remarkable degree of work-a-day police realism as a result of Gates' contributions. Set in a new, enhanced game engine with marvelous digitized backgrounds, this game may be more appealing than True Crime television. IBM and IBM CD-ROM ($69.95 and $79.95 respectively). Circle Reader Service #21.

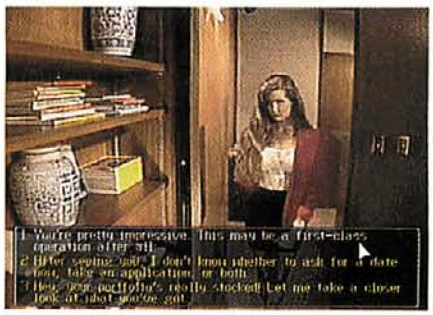
TAKE A BREAK! CROSSWORDS, VOLUMES I & II: Provided courtesy of **Sierra** and **Dynamix**, and designed for use in the Windows environment, this exercise in alphabetic aerobics offers over 750 puzzles broken down into several sizes and complexity levels. With an animated faery for a host, *Take A Break! Crosswords*' animations and digitized voices make their contributions to what is, essentially, a digitized version of a crossword puzzle book (however, since these puzzles can be printed out, you can still solve them in the paper and pencil medium if you desire). The intuitive interface comes in particularly handy when playing against the clock for bonus points, and the inclusion of an auto-check feature and on-line hints will help serve the crossword-impaired among us. IBM with Windows ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #22.

Tsunami Media, Inc.
PO Box 790
Coarsegold, CA 93614-9983
(800) 644-9283

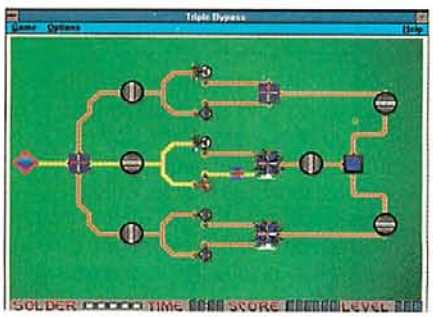
MAN ENOUGH: In this dating simulation, the object is to win and *not* to "score." The gamer as Mr. Right (or Mr. Wrong, as the case may be) has to interact with six beautiful and, more importantly, different women in order to be successful in his simulated social life. Interaction occurs mostly via menued conversation trees that are numerically weighted for each computer date's profile. Too many strikes and the gamer is out. Enough fast pitches and the date may be on. There are some interactive video sequences such as a paintball game and parachute drop that add garnish to play. The spice of the game, however, is provided by the witty repartee replete with sexual innuendo and the boudoir pictures provided during encounters with each of the six lovelies. There is nothing X-rated about these film clips and slide shows, but those who think *Victoria's Secret* catalogs are too risqué will want to steer clear of this product. IBM CD-ROM ($79.95). Circle Reader Service #23.

Police Quest: Open Season

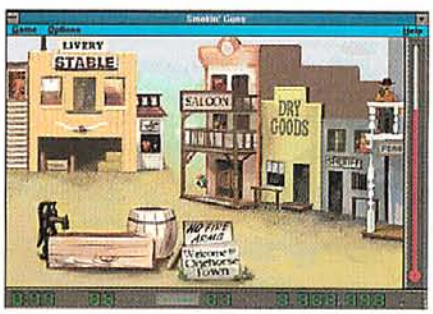
Take A Break! Crosswords, Volumes I & II



Man Enough



Nanotank



Smokin' Guns

Twin Dolphin Games, Inc.
220 Twin Dolphin Dr., Suite B
Redwood Shores, CA 94065
(415) 637-9300

NANOTANK: If Mr. Wizard couldn't help you understand electronics, *Nanotank* may offer some clues. In this bizarre Windows puzzle game, *Nanotank* allows you to control a microscopic probe as it traverses the treacherous innards of a computer system in search of an evil virus. The 100 puzzling levels are set up like circuit boards, with an entry point and an exit. The Nanotank must cross the board and reach the exit without losing contact with a powered "trace." The pathway is littered with odd components—switches, diodes, capacitors, relays, optocouplers, teleporters—that must be manipulated or repaired with solder to make clear the pathway to victory. You don't need a degree in Electrical Engineering to play *Nanotank*, but that kind of problem-solving smarts would certainly help. IBM with Windows ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #24.

SMOKIN' GUNS: Ready! Aim! Click! Trigger-happy gamers now have six venues of rapid-fire carnage under Windows with *Smokin' Guns*. Scenarios include: Gangsterland, for shootin' it out against the mob; House on the Hill, for a Haunted House ecto-blaster of ghost-busting fun; County Fair, a more traditional shooting gallery with no return fire; Neptune Six, offering outer space alien popping; Silicon Gulch, a wild west six-gun slinger; and Terminal Flight, for Bruce Willis types. With mouse cursor as gunsight, your task is to dispense with the bad guys while avoiding blasting innocent bystanders. Though killing bad guys increases your score, hitting bystanders lowers it 1000 points each. Multiple rounds are provided in each scenario with each round offering increased difficulty. Survive long enough without your life meter running out and get your name on the sharpshooter list. With oodles of configuration options and great visual and audible enhancements, *Smokin' Guns* hits the bull's-eye. IBM with Windows ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #25. CGW

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD HALL OF FAME

The games in *Computer Gaming World's* Hall of Fame have been highly rated by our readers over time. They have been rated for their impact on the computer gaming hobby during their peak period of influence and acceptance by our readership. Note that the dates listed for each game are the copyright dates and may precede the actual release dates. Specific formats listed are those which *CGW* has in its possession.

The Bard's Tale (Electronic Arts, 1985)
Many Formats
Chessmaster (The Software Toolworks, 1986)
Many Formats
Civilization (MicroProse, Inc., 1991)
Amiga, IBM, Macintosh
Dungeon Master (FTL Software, 1987)
Amiga, Atari ST, IBM
Earl Weaver Baseball (Electronic Arts, 1986)
Amiga, IBM, Macintosh
Empire (Interstel, 1978)
Amiga, Atari ST, C-64, IBM
F-19 Stealth Fighter (MicroProse, Inc., 1988)
IBM
Gettysburg: The Turning Point (Strategic Simulations, Inc., 1986)
Amiga, Apple, C-64, IBM
Gunship (MicroProse, Inc., 1989)
Amiga, C-64, IBM
Harpoon (Three-Sixty Pacific, 1989)
Amiga, IBM, Macintosh
Kampfgruppe (Strategic Simulations, Inc., 1985)
Many Formats
King's Quest V (Sierra On-Line, Inc., 1990)
Amiga, IBM, Macintosh
M-1 Tank Platoon (MicroProse, Inc., 1989)
Amiga, IBM
Mech Brigade (Strategic Simulations, Inc., 1985)
Many Formats
Might & Magic (New World Computing, 1986)
Amiga, Apple, C-64, IBM, Macintosh
M.U.L.E. (Electronic Arts, 1983)
Atari 8-bit, C-64
Pirates (MicroProse, Inc., 1987)
Many Formats
Railroad Tycoon (MicroProse, Inc., 1990)
Amiga, IBM, Macintosh
Red Baron (Dynamix 1990)
Amiga, IBM, Macintosh
SimCity (Maxis, 1987)
Many Formats
Starflight (Electronic Arts, 1986)
Amiga, C-64, IBM, Mac, Sega
The Secret of Monkey Island (LucasArts Entertainment Company, 1990)
Many Formats
Their Finest Hour (LucasArts Entertainment Company, 1989)
Amiga, Atari ST, IBM
Ultima III (Origin Systems, Inc., 1983)
Amiga, Apple, Atari ST, C-64, IBM
Ultima IV (Origin Systems, Inc., 1985)
Amiga, Apple, Atari ST, IBM
Ultima VI (Origin Systems, Inc., 1990)
C64, IBM
War in Russia (Strategic Simulations, Inc., 1984)
Apple
Wasteland (Interplay Productions, Inc., 1986)
Apple, C-64, IBM
Wing Commander (Origin Systems, Inc., 1991)
Amiga, IBM, Sega
Wizardry (Sir-Tech Software, 1981)
Many Formats
Zork (Infocom, 1981)
Many Formats

Their Finest Hour

LucasArts Entertainment Co., 1989

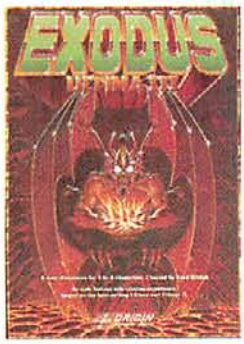
Amiga, Atari ST, IBM

Lucasfilm, (now LucasArts) electrified the gaming world with Larry Holland's second action game/combat flight simulator. The realistic bit-mapped graphics were a big hit with gamers who were tired of the polygon-filled look of other flight simulators, and the flight model was more realistic than that used in its predecessor *(Battlehawks 1942)*. In addition, gamers loved the ability to fly on both sides of the conflict and to take on the role of a crew member, as well as a pilot.

Ultima III

Origin Systems, Inc., 1983

Amiga, Apple, Atari ST, C64, IBM



Although Lord British often refers to the first three Ultimas as a trilogy (and they are marketed as such), *Ultima III* was really the first one to have a coherent plot beyond the typical dungeon romp. It set the tone for the future series and encouraged Lord British to try to accomplish more, in terms of role-playing, in the next trilogy of releases. Also, when the Ultima series was converted to the Nintendo platform, *Ultima III* was the game which became known as *Ultima* to hundreds of thousands of cartridge gamers.

Top Adventure Games

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Day of the Tentacle	LucasArts	10.19
2	Monkey Island 2: Le Chuck's	LucasArts	9.91
3	Indiana Jones: Fate of Atlantis	LucasArts	9.79
4	Quest for Glory III	Sierra	9.56
5	Sherlock Holmes CD	Viacom	9.55
6	The Seventh Guest	Virgin	9.42
7	Star Control II	Accolade	9.36
8	Les Manly in: Lost in L.A.	Accolade	9.28
9	Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes	Electronic Arts	9.20
10	King's Quest VI: Heir Today...	Sierra	9.17

Top Role Playing Games

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Ultima Underworld	Origin	10.29
2	Betrayal at Krondor	Dynamix	9.98
3	Lands of Lore	Virgin	9.65
4	Might & Magic: Darkside of Xeen	New World Computing	9.46
5	Ultima Underworld II	Origin	9.42
6	Might & Magic III	New World Computing	9.41
7	Ultima VII	Origin	9.34
8	Eye of the Beholder II	SSI	9.34
9	Might & Magic: Clouds of Xeen	New World Computing	9.34
10	Wizardry VII: Crusaders of Savant	Sir-Tech	9.10

Top Simulation Games

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	X-Wing	LucasArts	9.78
2	World Circuit	MicroProse	9.66
3	Falcon 3.0	Spectrum HoloByte	9.59
4	Comanche: Maximum Overkill	NovaLogic	9.39
5	Aces of the Pacific	Dynamix	9.38
6	Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe	LucasArts	9.19
7	Red Storm Rising	MicroProse	9.04
8	Stunt Island	Disney	9.04
9	Silent Service II	MicroProse	9.03
10	Gunship 2000	MicroProse	9.02

Top Strategy Games

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Master of Orion	MicroProse	10.20
2	Solitaire's Journey	QQP	9.97
3	Dune II	Virgin	9.87
4	Syndicate	Electronic Arts	9.37
5	Chessmaster 3000	Software Toolworks	9.32
6	Hong Kong Mahjong Pro	Electronic Arts	9.13
7	The Lost Admiral	QQP	9.05
8	Mech Warrior	Activision	8.94
9	The Incredible Machine	Dynamix	8.92
10	The Island of Dr. Brain	Sierra	8.91

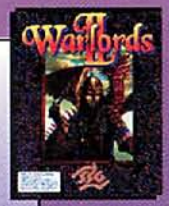
Reader Poll #113

Top 100 Games

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD
The #1 Computer Game Magazine

	Game	Company	Type	Score
1	Links 386 Pro	Access	SP	10.41
2	Ultima Underworld	Origin	RP	10.29
3	Master of Orion	MicroProse	ST	10.20
4	Day of the Tentacle	LucasArts	AD	10.19
5	Warlords II	SSG	WG	10.16
6	Wing Commander II	Origin	AC	10.00
7	Betrayal at Krondor	Dynamix	RP	9.98
8	Solitaire's Journey	QQP	ST	9.97
9	V for Victory: Velikiye Luki	Three-Sixty Pacific	WG	9.93
10	Monkey Island 2: Le Chuck's Revenge	LucasArts	AD	9.91
11	Dune II	Virgin	ST	9.87
12	Indiana Jones: Fate of Atlantis	LucasArts	AD	9.79
13	X-Wing	LucasArts	SI	9.78
14	The Perfect General	QQP	WG	9.75
15	Front Page Sports Football	Dynamix	SP	9.72
16	Carriers at War Construction Kit	SSG	WG	9.68
17	World Circuit	MicroProse	SI	9.66
18	Lands of Lore	Virgin	RP	9.65
19	V for Victory: Utah Beach	Three-Sixty Pacific	WG	9.63
20	Falcon 3.0	Spectrum HoloByte	SI	9.59
	Wolfenstein 3-D	Id Software	AC	9.59
22	V For Victory: Market Garden	Three-Sixty Pacific	WG	9.58
23	Quest for Glory III	Sierra	AD,RP	9.56
24	Sherlock Holmes CD	Viacom	AD	9.55
	V for Victory: Gold Juno Sword	Three-Sixty Pacific	WG	9.55
26	Conquered Kingdoms	QQP	WG,ST	9.53
27	Privateer	Origin	AC	9.50
28	Links	Access	SP	9.47
29	Might & Magic: Darkside of Xeen	New World Computing	RP	9.46
30	NHLPA Hockey	Electronic Arts	SP	9.45
31	Warlords	SSG	WG,ST	9.43
32	Ultima Underworld II	Origin	RP	9.42
	The Seventh Guest	Virgin	AD	9.42
34	Might & Magic III	New World Computing	RP	9.41
35	War in Russia	SSI	WG	9.40
36	Comanche: Maximum Overkill	NovaLogic	SI	9.39
37	Aces of the Pacific	Dynamix	SI	9.38
38	Syndicate	Electronic Arts	ST,AC	9.37
	Hardball III	Accolade	SP	9.37
40	Star Control II	Accolade	AD,AC	9.36
41	Pacific War	SSI	WG	9.34
	Might & Magic: Clouds of Xeen	New World Computing	RP	9.34
	Eye of the Beholder II	SSI	RP	9.34
	Ultima VII	Origin	RP	9.34
45	Chessmaster 3000	Software Toolworks	ST	9.32
46	Les Manly in: Lost in L.A.	Accolade	AD	9.28
47	Jack Nicklaus Signature Golf	Accolade	SP	9.27
48	Lemmings	Psygnosis	AC,ST	9.21
49	Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes	Electronic Arts	AD	9.20
50	Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe	LucasArts	SI	9.19

Top Wargames



	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Warlords II	SSG	10.16
2	V for Victory: Velikiye Luki	Three-Sixty Pacific	9.93
3	The Perfect General	QQP	9.75
4	Carriers at War Construction Kit	SSG	9.68
5	V for Victory: Utah Beach	Three-Sixty Pacific	9.63
6	V for Victory: Market Garden	Three-Sixty Pacific	9.58
7	V for Victory: Gold Juno Sword	Three-Sixty Pacific	9.55
8	Conquered Kingdoms	QQP	9.53
9	Warlords	SSG	9.43
10	War in Russia	SSI	9.40

Top Action Games

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Wing Commander II	Origin	10.00
2	Wolfenstein 3-D	Id Software	9.59
3	Privateer	Origin	9.50
4	Lemmings	Psygnosis	9.21
5	Tetris Classic	Spectrum HoloByte	9.14
6	Oh, No! More Lemmings	Psygnosis	8.92
7	Prince of Persia 2	Broderbund	8.60
8	Out of this World	Interplay	8.57
9	Flashback	SSI	8.38
10	Lemmings 2: The Tribes	Psygnosis	8.33

Top Sports Games

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Links 386 Pro	Access	10.41
2	Front Page Sports Football	Dynamix	9.72
3	Links	Access	9.47
4	NHLPA Hockey	Electronic Arts	9.45
5	Hardball III	Accolade	9.37
6	Jack Nicklaus Signature Golf	Accolade	9.27
7	Tony La Russa Baseball II	SSI	8.78
8	NFL Pro League Football	Micro Sports	8.54
9	The Games: Winter Challenge	Accolade	8.50
10	PGA Tour Golf	Electronic Arts	8.49

Poll is based on reader survey cards in each issue of *CGW* and published two issues subsequent. Data on more than 100 games is archived and top ten lists may contain games which scored below the Top 100 cutoff.

51	Clash of Steel	SSI	WG	9.18
52	Second Front	SSI	WG	9.17
	King's Quest VI: Heir Today...	Sierra	AD	9.17
54	Tetris Classic	Spectrum HoloByte	AC	9.14
55	Hong Kong Mahjong Pro	Electronic Arts	ST	9.13
56	The Castle of Dr. Brain	Sierra	AD	9.11
57	Eye of the Beholder	SSI	RP	9.10
	Wizardry VII: Crusaders of Savant	Sir-Tech	RP	9.10
59	The Dagger of Amon Ra	Sierra	AD	9.09
	Conflict: Korea	SSI	WG	9.09
61	Ultima VII: Part Two Serpent Isle	Origin	RP	9.08
62	Empire Deluxe	New World Computing	WG	9.07
63	Bane of the Cosmic Forge	Sir-Tech	RP	9.05
	Quest for Glory I (VGA)	Sierra	AD,RP	9.05
	The Lost Admiral	QQP	ST	9.05
66	Stunt Island	Disney	SI	9.04
	Red Storm Rising	MicroProse	SI	9.04
	Eric the Unready	Legend	AD	9.04
	Conquests of the Longbow	Sierra	AD	9.04
70	Silent Service II	MicroProse	SI	9.03
71	Quest for Glory II	Sierra	AD,RP	9.02
	Gunship 2000	MicroProse	SI	9.02
73	Police Quest 3	Sierra	AD	9.01
74	Ultima V	Origin	RP	9.00
	Battles of Destiny	QQP	WG,ST	9.00
76	Space Quest IV	Sierra	AD	8.98
	Western Front	SSI	WG	8.98
78	Carriers At War	SSG	WG	8.97
79	The Adventures of Willy Beamish	Dynamix	AD	8.96
	Freddy Pharkas Frontier Pharmacist	Sierra	AD	8.96
81	Alone in the Dark	I-Motion	AD	8.95
82	Mech Warrior	Activision	ST,SI	8.94
83	The Incredible Machine	Dynamix	ST	8.92
	F-117A	MicroProse	SI	8.92
	Oh, No! More Lemmings	Psygnosis	AC,ST	8.92
86	The Island of Dr. Brain	Sierra	ST	8.91
87	Rise of the Dragon	Dynamix	AD	8.89
	Martian Memorandum	Access	AD	8.89
89	F-15 Strike Eagle III	MicroProse	SI	8.88
90	Chuck Yeager's Air Combat	Electronic Arts	SI	8.87
91	Indianapolis 500	Electronic Arts	SI	8.83
92	Elvira	Accolade	RP	8.82
	MiG-29	Spectrum HoloByte	SI	8.82
94	Command HQ	MicroPlay	WG,ST	8.81
	Spellcasting 301: Spring Break	Legend	AD	8.81
96	Rex Nebular	MicroProse	AD	8.80
97	Gateway to the Savage Frontier	SSI	RP	8.79
98	Tony La Russa Baseball II	SSI	SP	8.78
	Populous II	Electronic Arts	ST	8.78
	Hoyle Book of Games, Vol. 3	Sierra	ST	8.78

Games on unnumbered lines have scores equal to the line above. = Top game of type. Magenta=New Game
AD=Adventure, RP=Role Playing, SI=Simulation, ST=Strategy, WG=Wargame, AC=Action, SP=Sports

The Computer Gaming World Poll

A monthly survey of the readers of Computer Gaming World Magazine.

PC Research Hits List Of Top-Selling Software

October, 1993

PC Games (MS-DOS/Windows)

Rank	Title and Source
1.	Microsoft Flight Simulator 5.0 (Microsoft Corporation)
2.	Privateer (Origin Systems, Inc.)
3.	AD&D Dark Sun (Strategic Simulations, Inc.)
4.	Return to Zork (Activision)
5.	Scenery Disk: San Francisco (Mallard Software, Inc.)
6.	Masters of Orion (MicroProse, Inc.)
7.	Microsoft Arcade (Microsoft Corporation)
8.	Street Fighter II (Hi Tech Expressions)
9.	X-Wing (LucasArts Entertainment)SimCity
10.	The Blue & The Gray (Impressions)
11.	Front Page Sports Football Pro (Sierra On-Line, Inc.)
12.	Return to Zork CD-ROM (Activision)
13.	The 7th Guest (Virgin Interactive Entertainment)
14.	NHL Hockey (Electronic Arts)
15.	Chessmaster 4000 (The Software Toolworks)
16.	SimCity (Maxis Software)
17.	SEAL Team (Electronic Arts)
18.	Lands of Lore (Virgin Interactive Entertainment)
19.	Links 386 Pro (Access Software, Inc.)
20.	X-Wing: Imperial Pursuit (LucasArts Entertainment)

Amiga Games

Rank	Title and Source
1.	Overlord (Virgin Interactive Entertainment)
2.	688 Attack Sub (Electronic Arts)
3.	Hoyle's Book of Games (Sierra On-Line, Inc.)
4.	Oh No! More Lemmings (Psygnosis)
5.	John Madden Football (Electronic Arts)

Macintosh Games

Rank	Title and Source
1.	Chuck Yeager's Air Combat (Electronic Arts)
2.	SimCity (Maxis Software)
3.	Prince of Persia (Broderbund Software, Inc.)
4.	Star Trek: 25th Anniversary (Interplay Productions, Inc.)
5.	Microsoft Flight Simulator (Microsoft Corporation)

CD-ROM Products

Rank	Title and Source
1.	Return to Zork (Activision)
2.	The 7th Guest (Virgin Interactive Entertainment)
3.	King's Quest VI (Sierra On-Line, Inc.)
4.	ROMaterial (Moon Valley)
5.	MPC Wizard (Aris Entertainment)
6.	Dracula Unleashed (Viacom New Media)
7.	Mad Dog McCree (American Laser Games)
8.	Day of the Tentacle (LucasArts Entertainment)
9.	Just Grandma and Me (Broderbund Software, Inc.)
10.	Wing Commander Deluxe Edition (Origin Systems, Inc.)

This list is based on units sold by ten retail chains, representing over 1300 stores. For more information please contact PC Data at (703) 435-1025.

What You've Been Playing Lately

Every month our mailbox bulges with hundreds of Reader Input Cards from our most loyal and outspoken readers. Over the years we've found these cards to be an invaluable source of feedback. Within 10 days of releasing our latest issue we can expect to see cards pouring in with suggestions, encouragements, tirades and many good laughs, in addition to the data for our Top 100 poll. Through your efforts, we know *exactly* where we stand with our readers (you don't mince words!), and we are treated to well-articulated opinions on anything and everything related to gaming. This column is a forum for these responses and for the results of our "Playing Lately?" query on the Reader Input Card. Thanks for taking the time to fill them out...keep 'em coming!

Playing Lately? Results For CGW #113, November 1993

1	Master of Orion (MicroProse, Inc.)
2	Front Page Sports Football Pro (Dynamix, Inc.)
3	Warlords II (Strategic Studies Group)
4	X-Wing (LucasArts Entertainment)
5	Aces Over Europe (Dynamix, Inc.)
6	Privateer (Origin Systems, Inc.)
7	Betrayal at Krondor (Dynamix, Inc.)
8	Lands of Lore (Westwood Studios)
9	Empire Deluxe (New World Computing)
10	Civilization (MicroProse, Inc.)

Notable Quotables

"I think *FPS: Football Pro* is as close to a perfect game as has ever been made, computer or otherwise!"
S. Morze, Alhambra CA

"Mastering *Orion* has taken all my time. *Orion* has mastered me!"
Leominster, MA

"To those who make strategic military wargames, let us make new units!"
Kuan, New York City

"Great 'zine in December—it's always fun. However, my mailing label is covering the *second-best part* of the young lady (an Amazon?).You didn't do that on purpose, did you?"
John Laton

"I saw a picture of Johnny Wilson the other day and he looks just like the man who mugged me last Friday. Do you know if he was in Kansas City recently?"
Stephen L. Click, Kansas City, KS

"I don't think *Strike Commander* gets the credit it deserves. Granted, it requires a fast machine to run on—I had an older 386/33 and boy was it slow, totally unplayable. I recently purchased a REAL computer, DX2/66 VESA 16MB, etc., and I tell you, *Strike* is hands down the best sim on the market. It is unfortunate that more gamers don't own faster machines so that they could really enjoy flight simulation at its best."
Randy Heiting, Ranama City, FL

"I know this might be too much to ask of you folks, but one issue of *CGW* a month simply isn't enough for me!!! Ever think about going weekly, since now you have the muscle of Ziff-Davis behind you?"
Byron Hamilton, Palm Springs, CA

"First there was *Empire.*
Then there was *Civilization.*
Now there is *Orion.*"
(mystery conqueror, address unknown)

The Patch File

Computer game programs have grown so massive and the number of possible configurations has become so huge that incompatibilities and glitches seem to be breeding at an exponential rate. Consumers and publishers are both frustrated at the need for adding patches into "buggy" programs, but they seem to be an interim solution that is going to be with the hobby for a while (presumably, until a standard platform configuration is agreed upon). So, until the golden age of standardized platforms and bug-free programs, *Computer Gaming World* will publish a regular list of the latest updates of which we are aware.

These patches can usually be downloaded from most major networks (e.g., CompuServe or GEnie), but can also be obtained from individual software publisher's own BBSs or direct from the publisher with proof of purchase. We continue to urge publishers to keep us updated on the latest versions/patches to their games.

('**' indicates new files)

Blue And The Gray Update V1.01 Update: With this patch, poor quality units will now rout at 15% rather than 10%, transporting troops will not "pop" back into a train or ship, and the AI will now be tougher and quicker in battle. 10/23/93

** **Clash of Steel V1.1 Update:** Fixes a number of small bugs. 11/18/93

Darksun V1.1Update: Fixes problems with Wave Blaster and Sound Blaster + LAPC/SCC1. Eliminates the crash that may occur after the final battle, and random crashes when changing regions. 10/26/93

** **Empire Deluxe V3.11a Upgrade:** Updates Version 3.11 to Version 3.11a. Corrects a number of minor bugs and extends the sound card support. 12/02/93

Even More Incredible Machine Windows Patch: Corrects several problems including these specific errors: "You cannot run more than one copy of this program" error message when in 256-color mode, and "RunTime Error: Stack Overflow" error message when Windows MIDI Mapper is not configured correctly. 10/19/93

** **Fantasy Empires V1.1 Update:** Fixes the Multiplying Siege Engine Bug, the Disappearing Hero Bug, and eliminates most random crashes. 11/25/93

** **IndyCar Racing V1.02 Update:** Fixes random crashes/hangs and low memory problems. 11/25/93

** **Kasparov's Gambit Version 1.1:** In addition to restoring the chess engine to the full strength of the original 32-bit Socrates II program, this patch also improves driver setups, low-memory detection, time controls, ratings and much more. 12/3/93

Lands of Lore Version 1.11A Patch: Fixes a number of small bugs including the inability to retrieve Dawn's second key. 9/08/93

** **Leisure Suit Larry 6 Update:** Fixes the "Oops errors" that occur while playing. Also contains the bonus sound effects for 8-bit sound cards. 11/24/93

Links 386 Complete V1.11 Update: Contains both the Link 386 Pro EXE version 1.11 and a collection of new VESA drivers for various video cards. 9/03/93

NFL Coaches Club Football Update: Corrects some rare problems, improves the AI, and adds some new features. 10/21/93

Omar Sharif on Bridge Upgrade (IBM/Windows): The latest version of Interplay's bridge game for Windows. 9/03/93

Railroad Tycoon Deluxe Version 2: Fixes a few problems and adds some features. 11/23/93

Red Sky At Morning V1.33: The latest version SimCan's new wargame. 9/18/93

Return of the Phantom CD-ROM Speech Fix: Fixes digital speech repeat and echo due to an odd EMS configuration. 9/14/93

Rules of Engagement 2 V1.05 to 1.06 Update: Patch for those having problems running the game with a Viper graphics cards. 10/09/93

** **Rules of Engagement 2 V1.07 Update (Amiga):** Update to the Amiga version of Impression's game. 12/02/93

Solitaire's Journey For Windows Patch: Corrects minor bugs in the Windows version of SJ. 11/11/93

Strike Commander/Tactical Operations 1 Fix: Converts old Strike Commander save games to the Tactical Operations format. Only needed if you wish to run Strike Commander saves create prior to Tactical Operations installation. 9/30/93

** **Tony LaRussa II Version 1.2 Update:** . 11/5/93

Tornado 1.0 to 1.0c Upgrade: An update for the US version of the game. 10/29/93

V For Victory 3.1 Upgrade (IBM): Upgrades Velikiye Luki and Market Garden Versions 2.0 to Version 3.1. 8/19/93

V For Victory Utah Beach 2.0 Data Upgrade (IBM): Upgrades Utah Beach to Version 3.1 8/19/93

V For Victory 3.11 Upgrade (Mac): Upgrades Velikiye Luki and Market Garden to Version 3.11. 8/19/93

V For Victory Utah Beach 2.0 Data Upgrade (Mac): Upgrades Utah Beach to Version 3.11. 8/19/93

V For Victory: Gold Juno Sword Version 4.01 (Mac): Upgrades the Macintosh version 4.0 to 4.01. 8/28/93

War In Russia 1.1 Upgrade: Fixes three bugs and adds an enhancement. 10/04/93

Warlords Version 1.1.5 Update (Macintosh): Updates any version of Warlords Mac to V1.1.5. 10/09/93

Warlords II c1.02 to v1.02a Update: Fixes a bug with certain VGA cards (Diamond) and updates a few sound drivers, including PAS 16. 10/26/93

WW2: Battles of the South Pacific: Corrects a problem with the ranking system. 9/21/93

The PRODIGY Weekly Top Ten

Computer Gaming World is Prodigy's on-line games expert. Look for us in their Game Center, a forum where users read articles posted on-line by *CGW* and exchange messages on the bulletin boards (we can be reached there at EXPT40B). The Prodigy Game Poll is run by Prodigy based on a list of games provided by *CGW* and is updated weekly. Note that it is not a cumulative rating over time (like the *CGW* Top 100 Poll). Instead, the Prodigy Game Poll is a weekly "Snapshot" of game popularity with gamers rating their favorites on a 1 - 10 scale. The highest total point earners make their Top 10. We provide this data to our readers as another barometer of "what's hot" in computer gaming.

The Rumor Bag

In Search Of Nessie

by Sir Ian Bain Macintosh

It was raining in Inverness. To those who are familiar with the area, such a statement is tantamount to stating that Apple II games are a rarity. Nonetheless, I was not about to let a Scottish squall spoil my great adventure. I stood on the deck of a tourist ship that was sending its exhaust smoke behind us in such a way as to emulate the famous fog on the moors. Still, I kept my eyes glued to the surface of the loch in hopes that the most famous resident of Inverness might welcome me to his or her world.

The friendly native guide, her blonde hair darkening as it peeked out from under her tam and became soaked with the rain, kept delivering her spiel about the monster as though it were a warm spring day instead of a wet, rainy one. I might ha' believed the wee lass, but her dimple kept showing so I realized it was all a game to her. As she finished her tale, I told her there was another set of Celtic tales that was about to find its way to civilization. After all, **Koei Corporation** is hard at work on a title called *Celtic Tales: Balor of the Evil Eye.* It is expected to be the first in a series of fantasy/strategy games in the **Koei** tradition.

She seemed genuinely intrigued by my rumor, but as the boat pulled up to a dock next to the ruins of Uruquhart Castle, she told us how the English had destroyed the castle in order to strengthen their rule of the highlands. I briefly pictured the destruction and wondered aloud if any computer games would ever be based on the Jacobite Rebellion. "Not really," my guide surprised me by answering what I had intended as a purely rhetorical question, "my friends and I at the wargaming club usually prefer games with nukes or Nazis." She really surprised me by stating that they were testing a new game from QQP.

"It's called *The Pure Wargame Volume 1: Death From Above*," she said and the dimple was lost in her most thoughtful expression. "It's supposed to have eight scenarios, but we've only played the Arnhem, Kanev, Maleme and Ste. Mere-Eglise Carentan (6/5/44) scenarios. I guess it's obvious that it emphasizes paratroopers, but the bonny part is that you can have the troops drop into their historical locales or face random drift. In fact, the random weather option can make your plans gang agley faster than you can quote a Robbie Burns poem." By the time she explained about the way the score takes into account the objectives and area controlled, as well as the number of prisoners taken and casualties inflicted, we had reached the keep of the old castle.

By now, the rest of the tour was getting restless. They didn't like a fellow with a tartan bag on his head getting that much special attention from their tour guide. We were down in the dungeon and, as a bekilted Scotsman came toward me with a menacing gleam in his eye, I felt like I was right in the middle of **Capstone**'s new *Corridor 7*, a new game using the *Wolfenstein 3-D* engine with full-screen graphics and diminished lighting.

The Scotsman didn't have real violence on his mind, though. He had simply heard me discussing QQP with our native guide and wondered what was new about *The Perfect General II.* I told him that the art was more detailed and that animated shells zip across the map whenever the tanks or anti-tank weapons fire. I also told him that the most important difference was the addition of aircraft. In fact, I told him that they had a really interesting method of plotting air attacks and even included an anti-aircraft calculation based on a 1/3 chance of hitting the aircraft if a machine gun is present within two hexes of the target.

He thanked me, but proceeded to throw a brief scare into me. He reached down and pulled out his dirk. Fortunately, he handed the dirk to me with the bone handle blade first. I accepted the knife and noticed the word **Adanac** on the handle. When I asked him why the game company's name was on his dirk handle, he quickly explained, "Laddie, in my wargame club we play Nukes, Nazis and *Napoleonics.* I just thought ye might be interested in the fact that **Adanac** is working on a new game called, *The Road from Marengo to Waterloo.*"

I handed back his dirk and assured him I was interested. Then, as we trudged up the stone stairs to an upper story where we could look out over the loch, I told him that the winding stair wells reminded me of a new puzzle game from QQP. Called *Origamo*, it is essentially *Tetris* meets anagrams. Artistically, the real-time shaped puzzle game features oriental, pyramid, Native American, and Alice in Wonderland themes, among others.

I looked out over the loch and strained my eyes for even one view of the sea monster. The drizzle had moderated by this point and the sun had begun to shine. I kept finding that I was less and less interested in seeing Nessie than I was in viewing the bonny face of our tour guide. So, I kept turning my back to the loch as my eyes took in the lovely. After all, if I wanted to see a monster, all I had to do was wait for *The Evolver* from **Trimark.** *The Evolver* can easily be described as "Terminator meets Child's Play," but the most interesting prospect for the film is that the game and film are to be produced concurrently. So, filming for the game will be accomplished at the same time as filming for the theatrical release. I was just about to inform our lovely docent that production was set to begin in mid-January of 1994 when a little girl pointed to the loch behind me and covered her mouth to stifle a scream.

There was an audible intake of breath from the entire group as I turned around, only to see the bubbles where some large creature had been scant moments before. Had I really missed seeing the legendary monster or, as so many readers have written in to tell me, had I merely missed the mark? Ah, well, I could always have purchased a picture of the monster from one of the local residents. You don't suppose the pixelation means anything, do you? CGW

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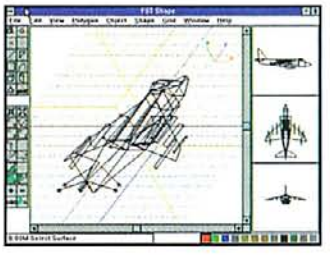

Screens shown: IBM 256-color SVGA displays.

IBM PC/COMPATIBLES: *Available November 1993*

Requires Windows™ 3.1

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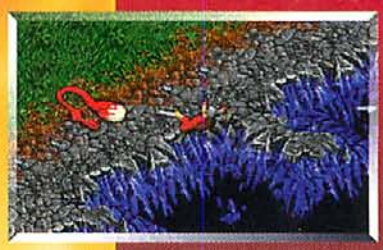

Actual screens may vary.

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