

MORE THAN 100 GAMES RATED INSIDE

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

The Premier Computer Game Magazine

May 1993 / Number 101

CGW GOES TO WAR EA's SEAL Team

Also in this issue:
Ringworld
SVGA Air Warrior
Legends of Valour
Ultima Underworld II
Conquered Kingdoms

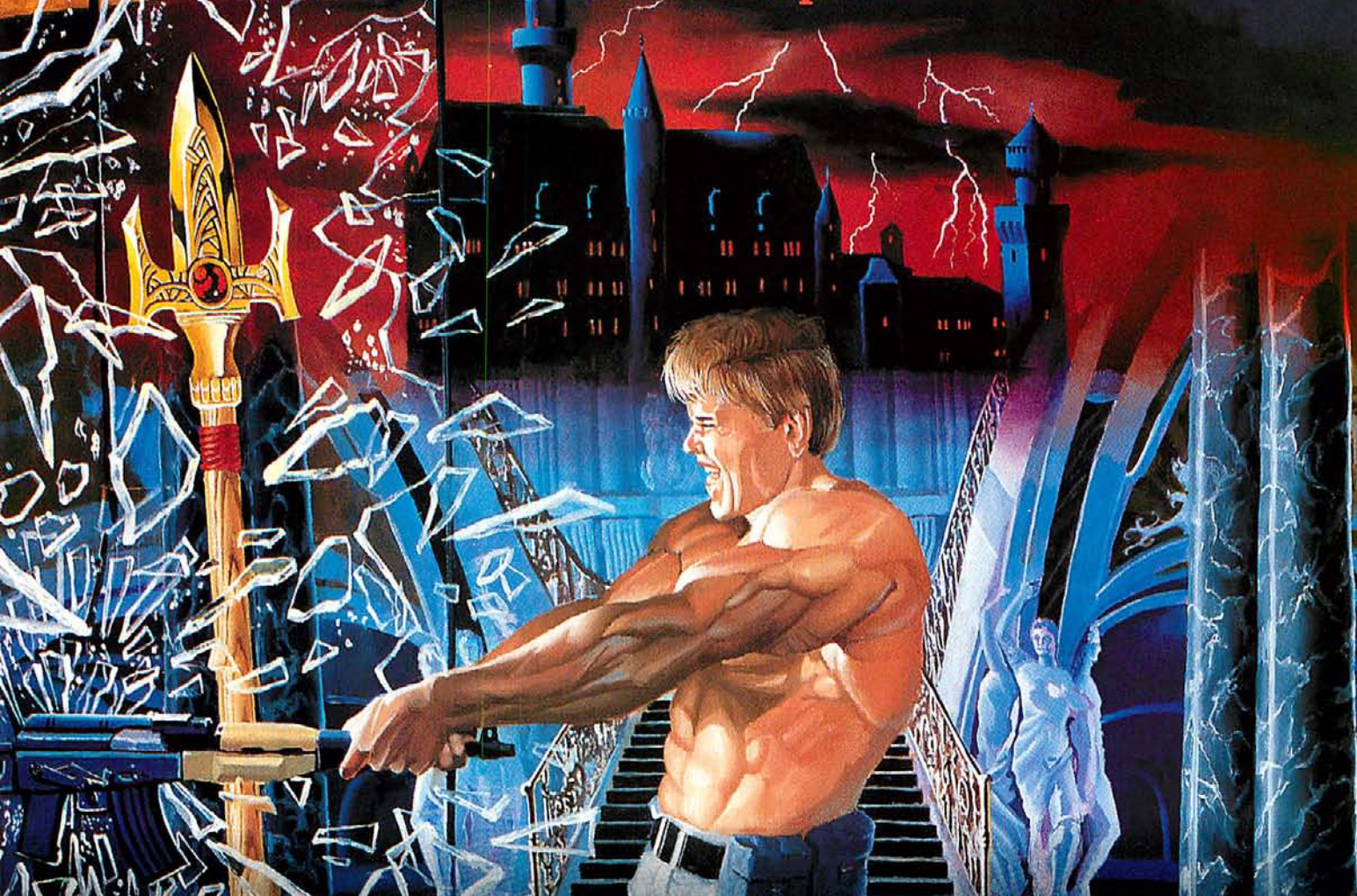
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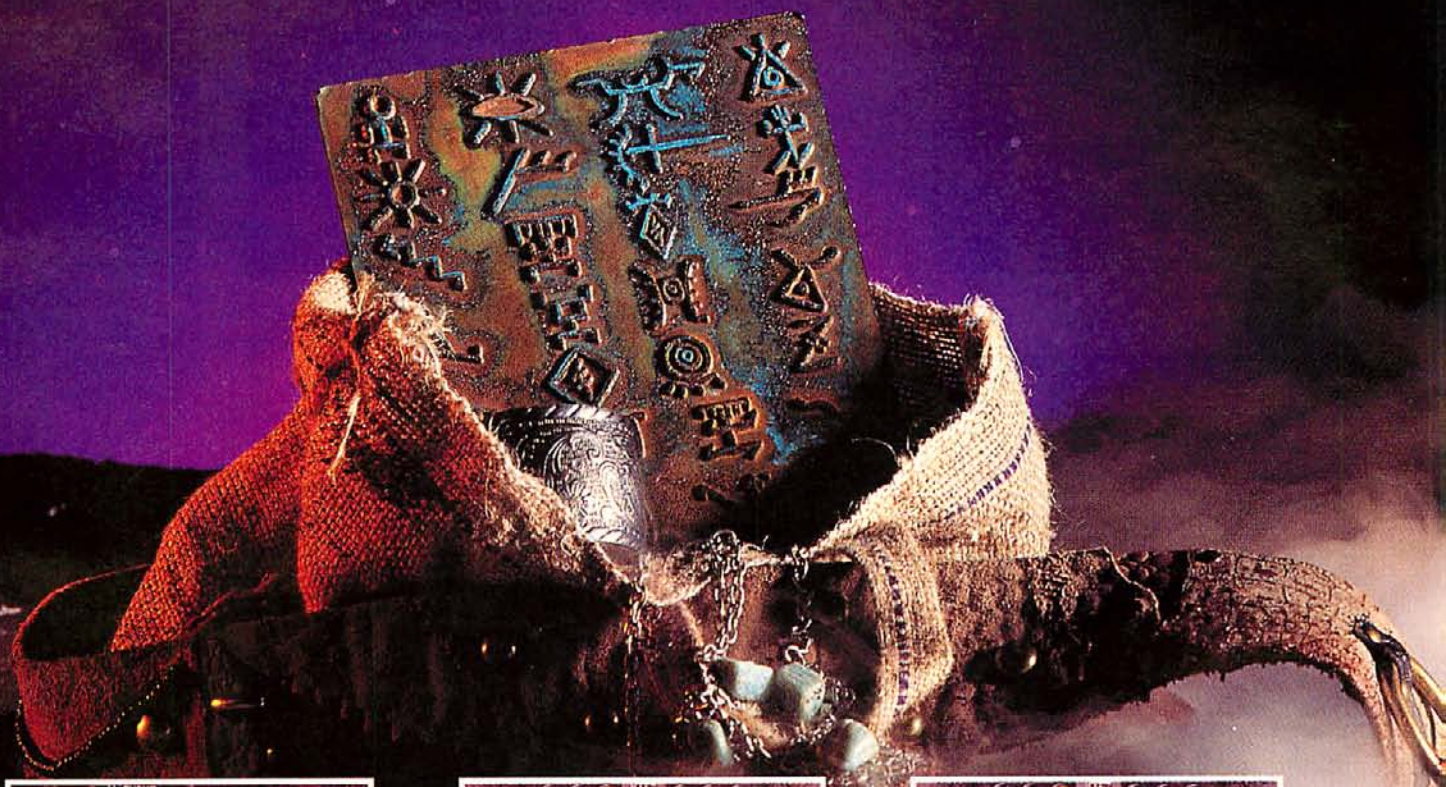
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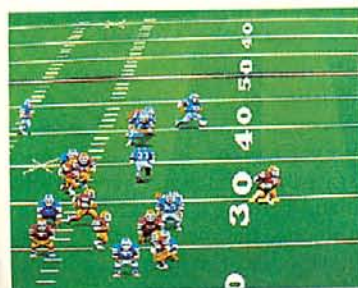
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THE MOST HIGHLY RATED GAME IN FOOTBALL.

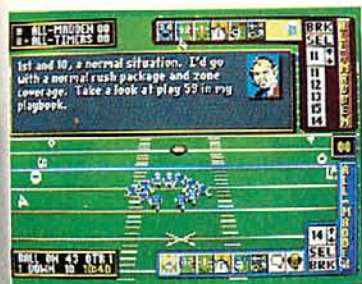
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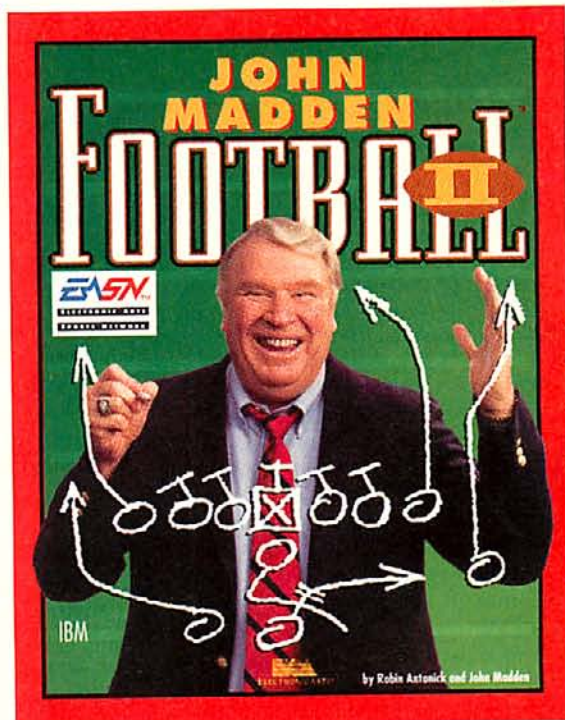
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Dancing with SEALs

Simulation Therapy With Electronic Arts' SEAL Team

by Johnny L. Wilson

Sneak Previews are not designed to be reviews. They are feature articles based on "works in progress" that CGW's editors have deemed worthy of early coverage. These articles are not intended to provide the final word on a product, since we expect to publish appropriate review coverage when the game is finished.

An acquaintance of mine has a son who happens to be the same age as my daughter. Both offspring are in their last year of high school. That makes me sensitive to any stories about adolescents who are venturing into adulthood. What got my attention, though, was the fact that my friend, a Vietnam veteran, had a son who desperately wanted to enlist in the service (special forces, in particular) and get involved in a "hot one."

I told this gentleman that my daughter was a "peacenik" like her father, and I had hoped that all of her generation had learned the painful lessons of war. I had hoped that their generation would be, as corny as it sounds, spared the casualties that our generation had faced. He responded that he couldn't get through to his son. His son's favorite film is *The Green Berets* (starring John Wayne) and the young man watches it regularly, firmly believing that the glory depicted in the film is the glory of war. My friend tried to get his son to watch more realistic presentations of the Vietnam Conflict, citing *Apocalypse Now* and *Platoon* in particular. The upshot is that I am extremely proud of my daughter's direction in life. My friend is rather disappointed in his son.

I wonder what the reaction of this young man would be to Electronic Arts' *SEAL Team*. Would he be affected at all by the moving cinematic sequences at the end of each

mission where the team returns and the program only shows the survivors getting off the boat or out of the helicopter? Would there be glory or revulsion as he adjusted his weapon to full automatic and fired, just as a black pajama-clad VC started standing and raising his hands in surrender? Would he nervously peer at the screen, occasionally jumping, as a white butterfly crossed the screen or a blue bird flew out of the bushes or would those feints of nature be brushed aside as an annoyance, a waste of programming energy? I think they are a great touch.

Would he pay any attention to the elaborate insertion and extraction scenes where the SEAL team must wade out into the water to reach their objective or be picked up by their support boat? Would he realize that the on-screen bull session that precedes each mission was talking about just such bodies of water when one of these stalwart commandoes spoke of wearing pantyhose in order to be able to remove leeches easier? Would he realize that his air-conditioned house was nothing like the hot, humid jungles being depicted in beautifully-rendered terrain on the screen? Would

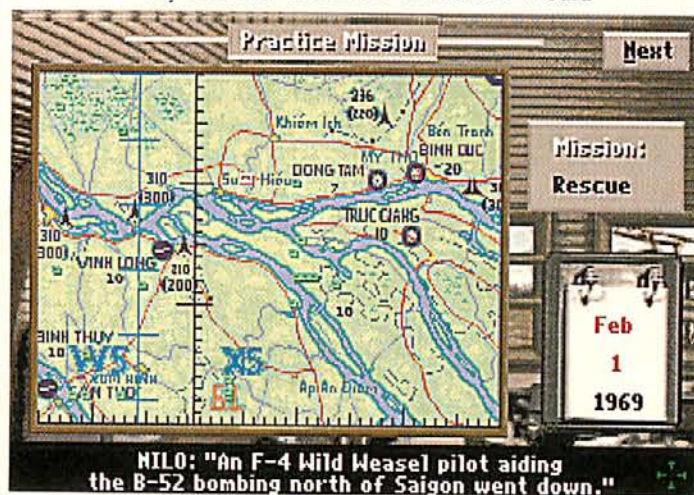
he be affected by the sight of fallen polygon-filled comrades behind him and other team members rushing medical aid to said comrade? Would he recognize that the simulation makes it easy for gamers to distinguish between the black pajamas of "Charlie" and the blue pajamas of civilians? Would he place any importance upon the fact that VC guerrillas always surrender (in my playing experience) *legitimately* to the player's team rather than pulling any diabolical tricks like being pre-wired with explosives?

How Realistic Is It?

Electronic Arts' *SEAL Team* is a first-person simulation of small unit action in the jungles of Vietnam. It is graphically impressive in that it presents a more detailed environment than many games which use polygon-filled graphics, and because it uses cinematic techniques to enhance the mission briefing and debriefing, as well as the insertion of the team into and extraction of the team from the action. The polygon-filled figures seem more realistic than those in *Wolfenstein 3-D* and the action feels smooth and convincing.

The interface is fascinating because it uses the mouse in a fascinating analog of movement. When one wishes the team to move forward, the mouse must be pushed forward in deliberate steps. When one wishes to go faster, more such mouse steps are required. To slow, one reverses the procedure by simulating mouse steps backward. To stop, one continues pulling the mouse back. To back up, one continues the reverse mouse steps. To turn left, one clicks the left mouse button. To turn right, one clicks the right mouse button.

Such an interface adds to the verisimilitude of the experience, particularly when combined with the





capacity to move upright, lumber in a crouch, or crawl in a prone position (performed with a press of the 1, 2 and 3 keys respectively) and the graphic views to support such perspectives.

In many ways, *SEAL Team* is extremely realistic. The missions follow a logical progression, and the team has adequate resources to accomplish them (in contrast to the chaos faced by the grunts in the jungle). Some missions only require intelligence gathering and return, while others require the player to use demolition skills or set up an ambush. The weapons have accurate rates of fire and ranges, the role of the support boats and aircraft seems reasonable, and the objectives are based on actual mission data from the Vietnam era.

Verisimilitude breaks down somewhat (as in most simulations) when one considers how much damage the gamer's character can take before being killed. On one mission, my unit was shelled by a mortar attack as soon as we stepped out of the river. Although one of the team members was wounded, this had very little impact on our ability to carry out our mission. After another ambush, one of the team members was forced to carry the other member and this did slow us somewhat. Yet, I think we would all have been wasted in a real ambush. Of course, being *too* realistic can kill a game.

Further, although the game has extremely attractive graphics, current machine speeds do not allow programmers the ability to really make the jungle as dense as it truly is, and travelling through the underbrush and swampy rice paddies seemed significantly easier than I would have expected it to be in real life. Again, a simulation should not be so

realistic that it is no longer interesting to play, but I would have liked to see some game feature that indicated something more of the unfriendly terrain. In many ways, the simulation is too pretty. Many gamers, however, will prefer the less inhibited movement system chosen by the designers than the sluggish restrictions I might have imposed on the sim.

Finally, though the simulation accurately conveys *some* of the problem of civilian casualties which was faced by personnel during the Vietnam Conflict, the gamer certainly has it significantly easier than the veterans did. The program not only color-codes civilians (blue)

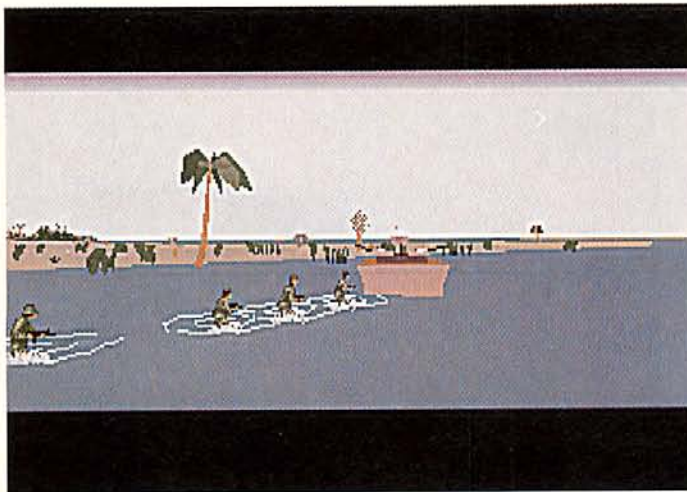
each recruit who had graduated from SEAL training and carefully nurtured him through the campaign. In my initial campaign, he won a lot of purple hearts and was often extracted from unsuccessful missions by the skin of his teeth.

Yet, every time my character returned to base, I felt a sense of accomplishment — even if we botched the mission. Somehow, it was a more personal issue than when I brought planes and submarines home in other simulations. Somehow, it was more important to me than winning medals, even though there are plenty of medals to be won in *SEAL Team*.

I also think that the skill-based nature of the character selection adds something to this personalization, as do the atmosphere-setting conversations between team members prior to each mission. The deaths of my brother SEAL members on various missions and the cinematic segues between an extraction and the mission debriefing certainly brought the message home.

Further, I will never forget the time I switched my weapon from semi-automatic to automatic fire and pulled the trigger (by hitting the ENTER key), only to watch a VC stand to surrender just before my burst sliced through him. I'm sure it wouldn't dissuade my friend's son from enlisting in special forces, but it sure might open his eyes to what's in store.

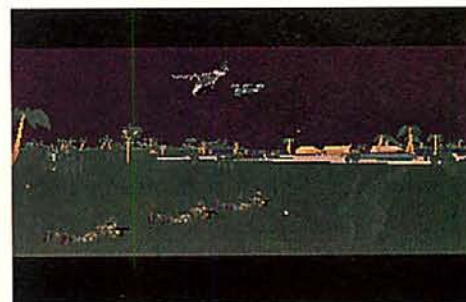
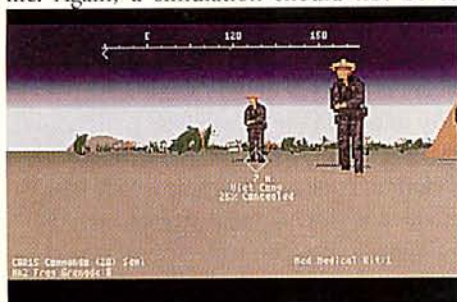
Technologically, *SEAL Team* is an outstanding advance. It offers all the bells and whistles of a vehicle simulation with a clever interface and a design that makes gamers really care about the results. It is a showcase product graphically with a tremendous amount of game play. Give the design team a medal. They deserve it. **CGW**

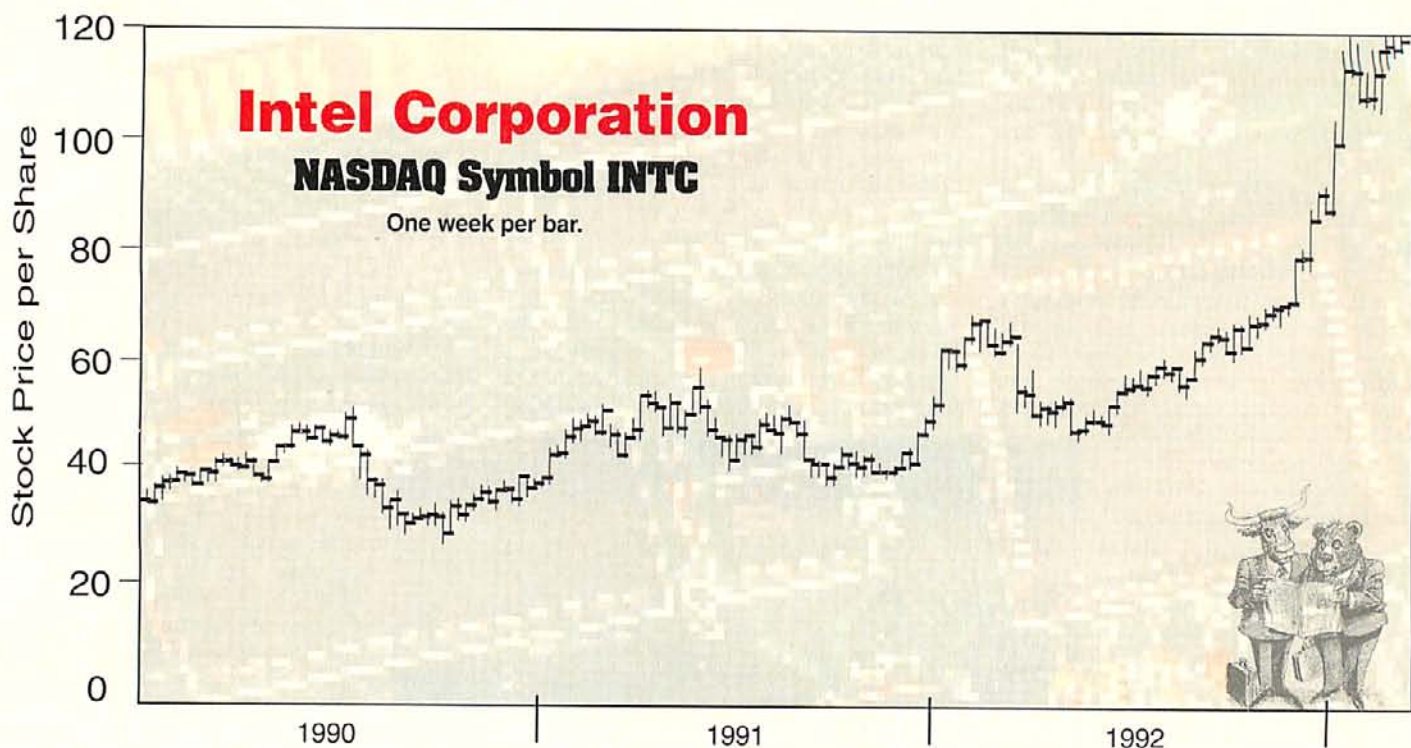


and VC (black), but the targeting diamond designates (at least in the pre-release version we examined) whether that potential target is a civilian or Charlie. As anyone who has studied the history of the Vietnam Conflict is aware, it wasn't always easy to tell the "good guys" from the "bad guys." One thing is certain, I am glad that the design team took the time to put non-combatants in the game. I really hate games where one can shoot everyone and everything with impunity. Fortunately, *SEAL Team* has more character than such games.

Mission Accomplished

Whatever my quibbles about verisimilitude, I must confess that *SEAL Team* has the potential to be a phenomenal game. I was against the war in Vietnam and avoided it with all my resources, yet I found myself drawn into the humanity of the game. For me, the goal of the game was to survive. I selected my player character from a selection of files describing





Intel Processors Drive Profits And Computers

Apparently, computer gamers aren't the only ones who think processing power is important. There seems to be a real hunger for faster, more powerful processors in the marketplace, and **Intel Corporation** (NASDAQ: INTC) has the earnings to prove it. On February 10, 1993, Intel announced earnings per share of \$4.97 for 1992. This was approximately a 27% increase over the earnings of the previous year (\$3.92 per share, representing a 23% increase over the previous year). In addition, the company paid its initial quarterly dividend in December of 1992 (\$.10 per share).

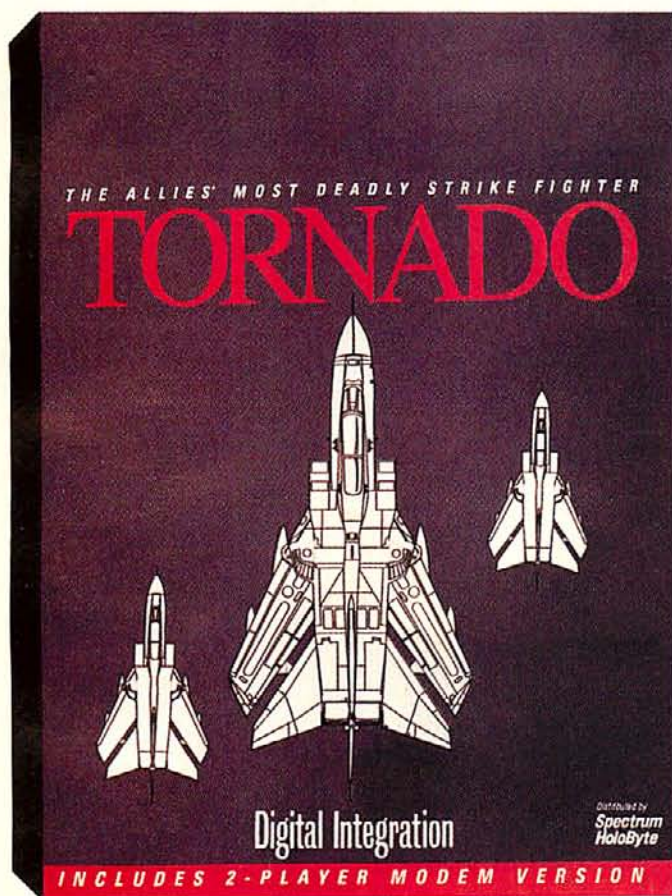
In an interesting move which occurred at press time, the company announced its intent to offer a 2-for-1 stock split on their common stock. As the chart shows, Intel has had a tremendous run over the last year, from around the \$46 per share mark to its press time quote of \$116. In order to provide more affordable shares for the average investor, the company's directors have elected to offer the split which would, in effect, halve the price per share (while doubling the number of shares held by existing shareholders).

As readers who peruse the story on the *Pentium*TM processor (see the following pages) should realize, Intel is expecting to play a big role in the lives of gamers. At press time, the *Pentium* processor had not been officially announced and **Standard & Poors** (providers of the most followed rankings on Wall Street) had already estimated 1993 income at \$6 per share. Whether the new technology will have significant impact on these earnings estimates or not will remain to be seen. In the meantime, cutting-edge technology, strong demand for existing processors, and sound management make Intel a stock to watch over the long haul.

Ironically, Intel's success is a mixed bag for computer gamers. Their continually improving processors make new and improved games possible, but the proliferation of advanced machines creates an accelerating pattern of obsolescence (meaning gamers have to upgrade more often) and provides a temptation for some game developers to try too much (resulting in "buggy" products). In the long run, the introduction of new processors should create a better gaming atmosphere. **CGW**

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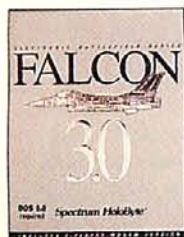


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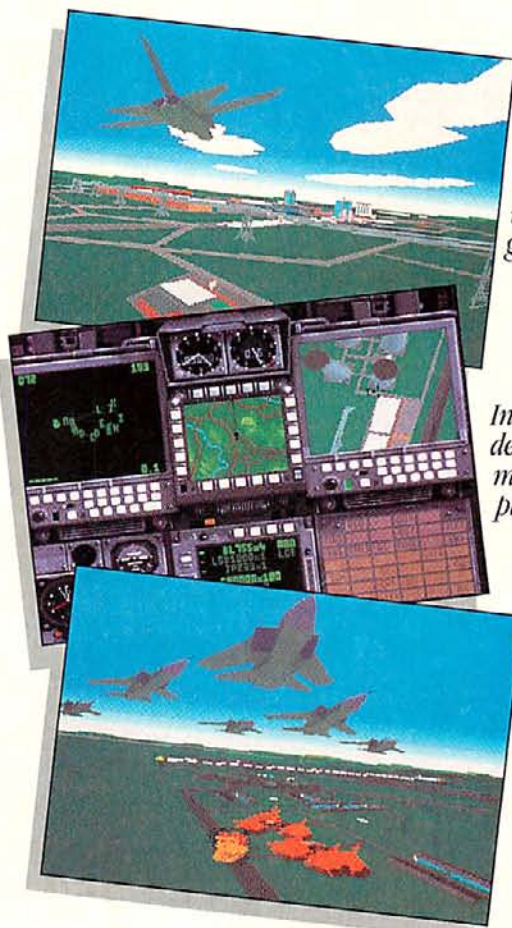
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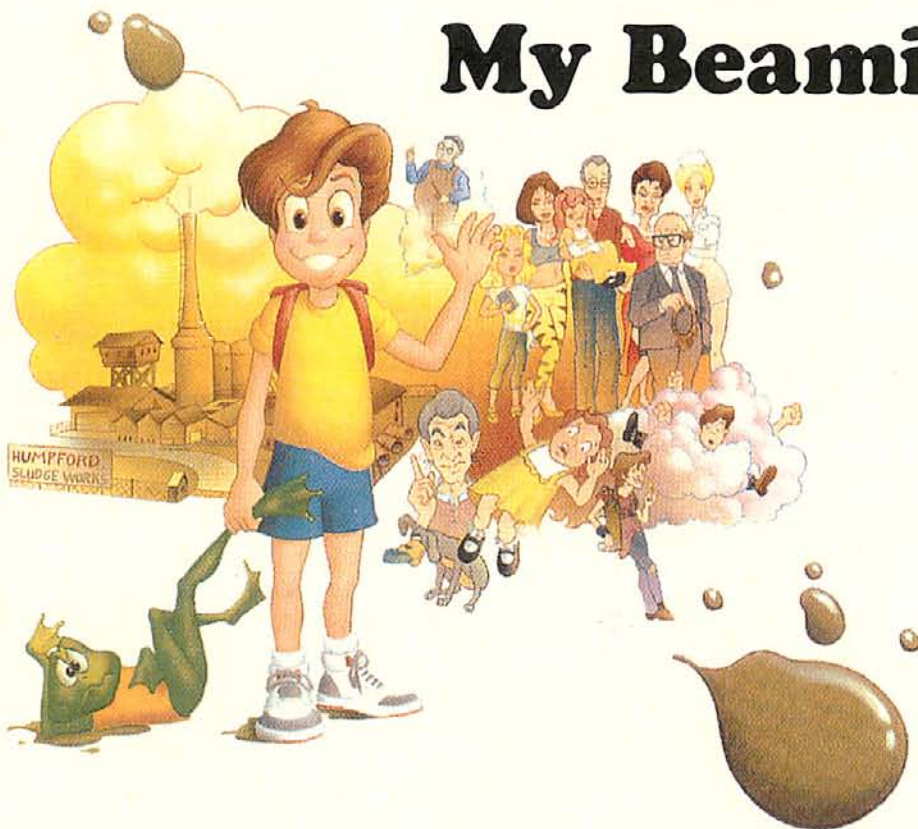
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Become CD-ROM, My Beamish Boy!



Dynamix' *The Adventures of Willy Beamish*

by Charles Ardai

Having just reviewed Sierra's CD-ROM edition of *Space Quest IV* (issue #105), a first-rate enhancement of a solid original, I am particularly disappointed to see what sister company Dynamix has done to *The Adventures of Willy Beamish*. Well-chosen voices and strong readings made *Space Quest IV* smarter, faster and funnier. *Willy Beamish*, on the other hand, is practically ruined by a cast of voice actors who climb all over each other to give their characters the ugliest voices this side of Saturday Night Live's "Pat." In the process, they trample the storyline, louse up the jokes, and generally make a hash of what started out as a pretty good game.

One wonders how this happened. Did CD Director Scott Wallin deliberately instruct his actors to read their lines as slowly as they do? The performances seem to be paced and pitched at the comprehension level of a four-year old, with lots of strained pauses between words and actors speaking in condescending baby-talk intonations.

Did Voice Casting Director Sher Alltucker (who, in a fit of inspiration, cast herself as both the villain and the heroine of the story) think it was clever to have the singularly untalented Roxy Ragozzino supply the voices for all of Willy's female relatives? In the most ill-advised triplecast since NBC's showing of the Summer Olympics last year, Ragozzino gives readings as Willy's mom, big sister, and little sister that are as subtle as a kick in the pants and as enjoyable to hear as a car alarm at three in the morning. (Mom is a whiny yuppie, Tiffany a whiny valley girl, Brianna

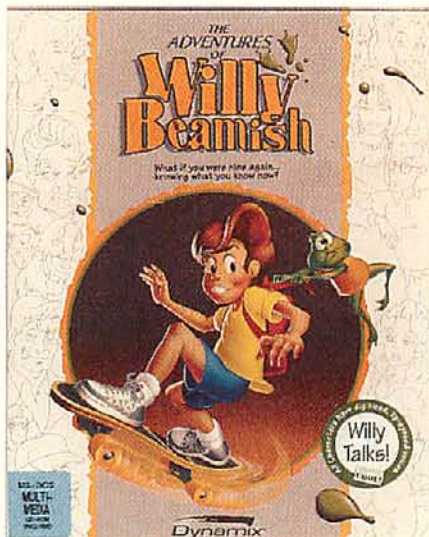
a whiny toddler.) Sitting at a dinner table with these three harpies is like dying and waking up in Sartre's *No Exit*.

Did Michael Zibelman, who struggles along bravely in the role of Willy, never ask politely whether the game might not be that much better if he screamed "Yahooley!" a little less often? Did no one play the game before it went out to the stores to see whether anyone could stand to listen to it?

We'll never know. Somehow the game made it to the light of day wearing all its flaws like so much Spring finery. That no one stepped in somewhere along the way with a reality check — "Time out, guys, are we doing this right?" — is remarkable. It seems, nevertheless, to be the case.

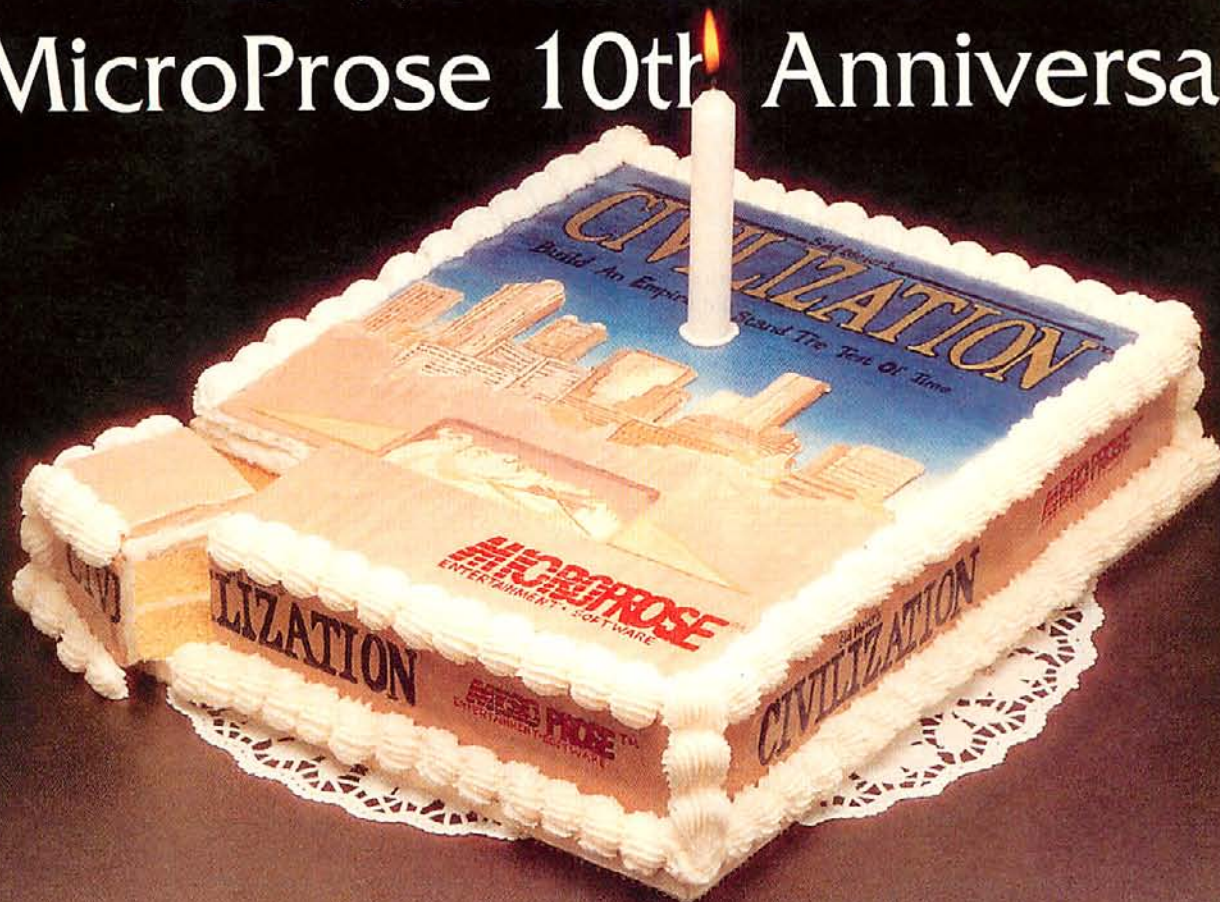
Slick Willy

Willy Beamish is an attempt to present a kid's-eye view of being a kid. The game consists of a series of dirty-hands-and-skinned-knees adventures in suburbia starring a precocious (but not geeky), cute (but not cloying), mischievous (but not rotten), tousle-headed, videogame-addicted, chore-avoiding moppet.



| | |
|-------------|--|
| TITLE: | The Adventures of Willy Beamish CD-ROM |
| SYSTEM: | IBM with CD-ROM |
| PRICE: | \$69.95 |
| PROTECTION: | None |
| DESIGNERS: | Jeff Tunnell, Meryl & Tony Perutz |
| PUBLISHER: | Sierra/Dynamix Coarsegold, CA (800) 326-6654 |

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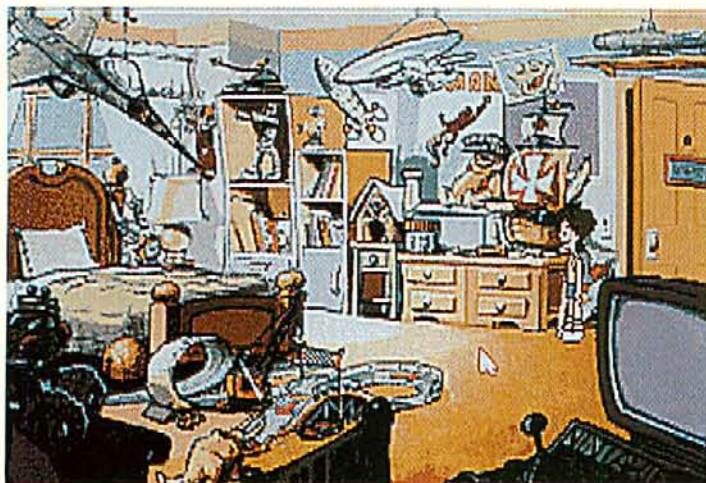
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Willy is a good kid but he's no angel. He lives in a fantasy world out of a 1950's sitcom (everyone seems to be white and upper-middle-class), but his world is not untouched by evil: his father loses his job; the town is at the mercy of a nasty, rich woman named Leona; and the plumbers go on strike, leaving the town faucets full of brown glop. Lots of the comedy is sepia-toned and sweetly nostalgic, but not all — there are also moments of satire that could come out of the pages of *Mad*, *Spy*, or *National Lampoon*.

In short, *Willy Beamish* offers a mix: things that a nine-year-old player will enjoy, things a nineteen-year-old might, and things that only a person even older than that will appreciate, such as an encounter with a street gang that saunters down the street snapping its fingers a la *West Side Story*. This mix worked fine in the original because the player was free to read the game's text at his or her own pace and to take away from it as much as he or she understood.

Alas, in deciding on a set of voices to use for the game, Dynamix also had to decide on a single tone for the game to have. They could have chosen subtle, quick, ironic readings, but they were probably concerned about alienating younger gamers. Or they might have done a straightforward, child-oriented reading; while that would have sacrificed a lot of the game's humor it would, at least, have been bearable. Instead, Dynamix went for something in between, and the result comes across as, at once, insulting to children and inconsiderate of adults, whose skin it will make crawl.



There is little in the world more cruel to the ear than the sound of presumably normal adults gurgling in thick-tongued googly-woogly voices. The worst offender here is the Narrator (played by Ed Ragozzino, further proof that in the Ragozzinos Dynamix has turned up a family whose calling ought to be mime). The Narrator manages to put exactly the wrong emphasis on every word he speaks, mis-read jokes so that they are no longer funny, and affect a voice that makes Pee-Wee Herman sound like Sir Ralph Richardson — all at the same time.

Oh, Frabjous Day

Of course, not everything about the CD-ROM edition is terrible. There is the game's story, for instance, which hasn't changed a whit from the original. Willy's main goal is still to help his pet frog, Horny, win a frog jumping contest so that he (Willy) will have enough money to go to the Nintari videogame championships. Along the way he still has to contend with the school bully, boring teachers, a sinister babysitter, his deceased but talkative grandfather, a family of Japanese tourists, and any number of other fun, oddball characters.

Gameplay, too, is the same as before: rather than a complex interface, the player just moves a cursor around the screen, clicking on hotspots to get information about, or to interact with, parts of the environment. Most puzzles demand only simple interactions ("Use item X at spot Y"), but they do require enough thought to be challenging even to

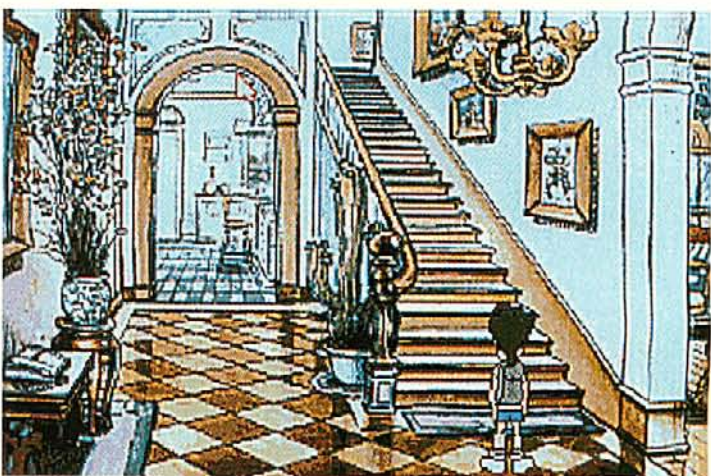
older gamers. Sometimes the game doesn't play fair, by having objects show up without warning in places they weren't before (so the fact that a cabinet is empty at one time is no reason to assume that it will be empty at another); but this resembles real life, especially for a child living in his parents' house, so I think it is acceptable.



The game's graphics and animation are neither better nor worse in the CD-ROM version, though there is slightly more of the latter, including a new opening sequence. Willy's features still devolve occasionally into a two-dots-and-a-squiggle smiley face, but none of the other characters suffer from this odd malady, perhaps because they have less screen time. The animation is not breathtaking, but it is funny, abundant and well-executed.

One of the original game's more peculiar quirks that has survived into the new edition is the characters' emphatic sexuality. Between the huge-breasted school nurse, an impossibly well-endowed volleyball player, Willy's rank-topped mom, and teenaged Tiffany who (at one point) leaps out of her bath to towel-whip Willy, a person might wonder whether he is playing a Steve Meretzky game rather than a game intended for young people. This is not a bad thing per se, but it is odd for a game about a pre-adolescent hero to have such an adolescent sensibility.

It's all of a piece, though. The smirking, adolescent sexiness goes hand in hand with the self-indulgent, immature performances of the actors, which are no better than what one might expect from a high school drama club. The only mature performance in the game comes from Andrew DeRycke as Willy's beleaguered dad, and given the company he keeps, it's no wonder that the guy is beleaguered.



Willy Beamish deserved, and Dynamix could have done, much better. This is a game best played with the voices turned off. Given that it is a CD-ROM game, that's saying a mouthful. **CGW**

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Gentlemen, Start Your Simulations!

How the Pentium™ Processor Will “Hot Rod” Gamers’ Computers

by Johnny L. Wilson



Today's games eat up processor time with the same kind of ravenous zeal for feeding shown by the title character in Spielberg's *Jaws*. At the same time that computer pilots are looking for more sophisticated shading techniques with no degradation of performance, even the efficiency of the fastest 486-based processors is topping out. At a time when new genres are moving to the 3-D environment with increasing speed, the processing power of existing machines is being tested to its limit.

So, it is very likely that gamers are wondering what the next generation of microprocessors will do for them. Will it help them handle memory more efficiently? Will it speed up frame rates? Will it speed up floating point calculations so that sophisticated shading techniques won't cripple the frame rate?

The good news is that the *Pentium* processor will most definitely speed both floating point and integer calculations. Obviously, this means that the calculations required for dynamic 3-D environments can be completed very quickly and the visual effect will be faster.

How did Intel manage to speed up the processing power in this next generation of computer chips? First of all, the secret is to be found in its superscalar structure and use of branch prediction. The superscalar structure means that the CPU has been redesigned to function almost like two Intel 486 processors. It has a true 32-bit CPU and bus, *plus* separate 8K caches for data and code for double access (the former with a 256 bit bus and the latter with a 32 bit bus).

Further, the new design features built-in multiply, add and divide features. Most chips use a proliferation of add functions to multiply such that each addition function requires a clock cycle. With the true multiply function, Pentium-based computers will only use one clock cycle to multiply any two numbers.

Branch prediction means that the computer predicts which direction the program will go next. When it's right, it speeds processing. When it is wrong, the program simply backs up to the last known stage, but neither affects the answer to the calculation nor adds to the processing time over what the non-predicting chip would have used. This fea-

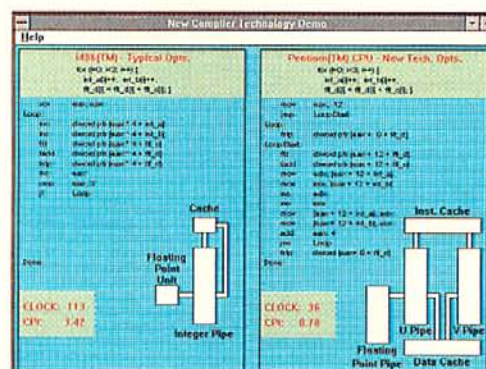
ture in itself adds a 25% performance boost over the highest rated 486.

The screen shot provided with this article illustrates the way the *Pentium* processor optimizes its processing. Earlier processors funneled all data, whether required as part of the program instructions or as data for a given calculation, through the same bus. As illustrated on the color-coded screen shot, the *Pentium* uses a bus for both sides of its "brain" and the branch prediction further speeds the process.

How Fast Is The *Pentium*TM Processor?

For those who want to know exactly how much faster this new generation of chips is likely to be, consider the following. Not only will the *Pentium*-based computers run at 66 MHz and process 112 MIPS (million instructions per second) compared to 54 MIPS at 50 MHz for 486 DX2 machines, but they will utilize optimization tools which Intel has worked out with compiler publishers. These are software solutions that allow programmers (and hence, gamers) to get more performance out of the chip. Interestingly enough, the optimizers are so useful that code compiled using the new compiler options will run significantly faster, even on a standard 486 (the new code will not affect 386 owners either positively or adversely). This means that the *Pentium* processor runs more than twice as fast as today's fastest PC processor. In addition, the company plans to upgrade their technology in order to surpass the 200 MIPS mark by the mid-1990s.

Consider also how fast the new chip performs in comparison with industry standards. A non-profit organization called the Systems Performance Evaluation Cooperative (SPEC) has developed a standard group of benchmark programs to measure the performance of computing systems with actual applications. *SPECint92* is a numerical rating based on performing the same calculations using six real-world applications in: circuit theory, LISP interpretation, logic design, text compression, spreadsheet calculations and software development. *SPECfp92* is a numerical rating based on 14 real-world



application benchmarks which require floating point calculations.

A SPECfp92 number of "1" would be roughly equivalent to the performance of a standard VAX 780 mainframe performing the same benchmarks. For comparison, consider that an Intel486 processor running at 33 MHz performs at 8.5 SPECfp92 and the new *Pentium* processor performs at 58.6 SPECfp92. Comparative SPEC performances are presented in chart form on these pages. Note, however, that the best performer on the SPECint92 chart runs at 133 MHz compared to the *Pentium* processor's 66 MHz; the *Pentium* pulling less power and creating less heat. Intel's marketing department insists that the *Pentium* processor will be the first chip to provide performance for under \$1.00 per SPEC point.

In a similar fashion, Intel uses a group of benchmarks for internal testing. The goal is to significantly improve performance on these benchmarks over previous processors. Using the same battery of applications, the new processor (at 66 MHz) was 14 times faster than the Intel386SX (at 25 MHz) and almost twice as fast as the Intel486DX-2 (at 66 MHz).

What Won't The *Pentium*TM Processor Do?

Unfortunately, the new chip design won't do anything about memory problems that chain gamers to the 640K barrier. It won't handle those memory management problems that seem to be driving gamers up the wall. Apparently, many of those problems are a result of 16-bit compiler code being written in such a way that part of the program uses DOS and the rest of it uses the processor's protected mode. It is possible that new 32-bit compilers like the one from Watcom and those expected from Microsoft and Borland (among others) will solve much of the problem, but the chip cannot fix this.

Intel's Director of Engineering (for microprocessor design), Avtar Saini, explains that designing the architecture so that it ignores the arbitrary 640K low memory limitation would make future chips incompatible with existing chips. The *Pentium* processor's architecture has been designed so that gamers should still be able to use software purchased for older machines (286 up) with *Pentium*-based machines.

I Just Want To Upgrade

Alert consumers will remember that many Intel486-based computers have spaces for expansion. By next year, there will be an *Overdrive* chip for these upgradeable Intel-based computers that will enable computer owners to gain *something* of the benefits of *Pentium*-based processing. The override chip will not make a computer quite as fast as the true *Pentium*-based computers, but it is expected to boost 486 DX2 performance by at least 50 percent. In staying true to the architecture, it's nice to know that Intel hasn't forgotten its loyal customer base.

Further, the *Pentium*-based computers will also feature the built-in slot for an *Overdrive* chip that should allow *Pentium* processor owners to get a P6 (the next generation of processors) style of performance upgrade.

What's It To Me?

Intel's introduction of the *Pentium* processor means that an affordable rival to RISC-based workstations is in the offing. The high SPEC ratings mean that gamers will be able to count on faster frame rates, even on programs that use advanced shading techniques.

In summary, the upside and downside of the new processor are two sides of the same coin. With new processing power, we can expect games that push the limits of the new technology. This will antiquate the older generation of computers (forcing gamers to buy new machines) while simultaneously giving rise to a new generation of games that we simply *have* to have. That's a mixed blessing for all of us. **CGW**

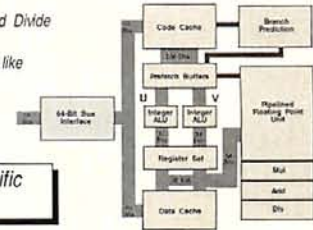
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 - 66MHz *Pentium* Processor SPECfp92: 58.6

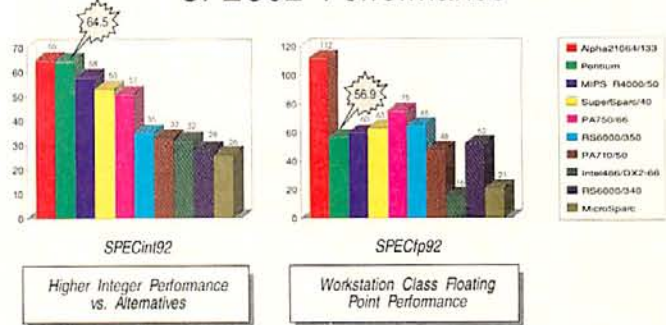
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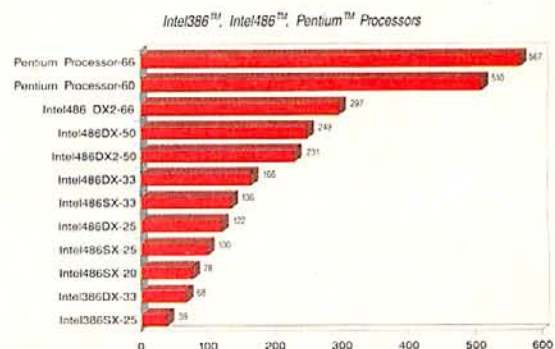


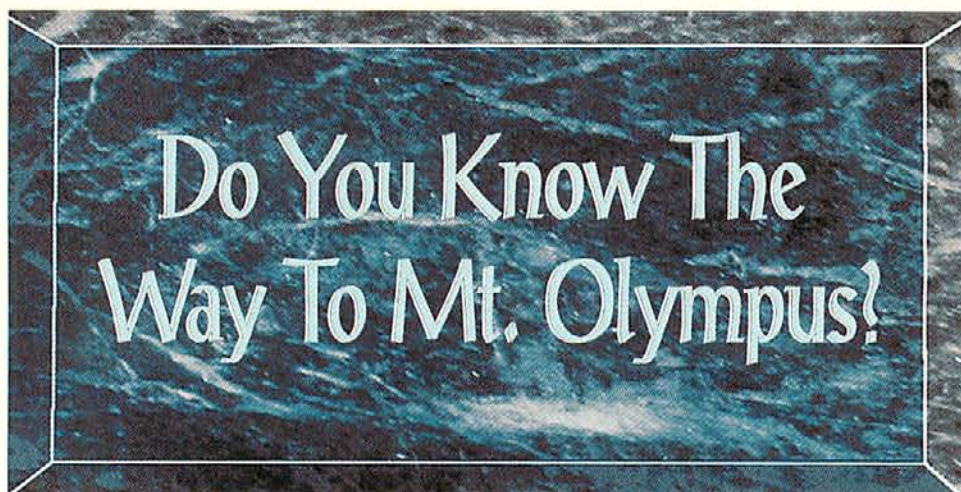
SPEC92 Performance



Source: SPEC Newsletter, December 1992
For Intel CPUs: Intel Corporation

iCOMPTM Index Summary





Electronic Arts Points the Way to *Populous 2*

by Allen L. Greenberg

“THE PANTHEON IS LOOKING FOR A FEW GOOD GODS!” reads a sign leading to the Mount Olympus Recruiting Center. Considering that the benefits of a career as a god — immortality and omnipotence — are among the most attractive in the known universe, one would easily expect the line of applicants to extend all the way to Asgard.

However, these aspiring deities must first face a series of daunting trials in order to be sure that they indeed have what it takes to be all-powerful. A thousand worlds must first be conquered by a cadet godling before he or she will be given a place among the other gods of Olympus. Those 1000 worlds, along with their populations and an assortment of miracles with which they may be influenced, have been neatly packaged in *Populous 2 (POP2)*, Bullfrog's sequel to its famous first opus.

The original *Populous* placed the player in command of a race of primitive tribesmen who were at war with a similar population; the latter under the control of an evil god. Armed only with a pocket full of miracles, players easily become intoxicated with the experience of leading armies of righteous followers to victory.

In addition to replacing the

stone-age civilization with one of ancient Greece, *POP2* has increased the number of worlds to conquer and provided a number of other innovations. As in the first *Populous*, the player looks down on a three dimensional landscape, home to his or her worshipers. Smooth, flat ground, provided by the beneficent player, allows the race to settle large estates with healthy families. Left alone, the people would be content to take their time and produce only the heartiest of settlers and warriors. Unfortunately, time is not a gift which the player may bestow liberally. In order to compete with the rival population, it will be necessary to shake things up — breaking up households to increase the number of settlements. The goal is to strike a careful balance between the quality and quantity of these households.

With this population comes “mana” — a measure of the player's strength. As healthy worshipers increase, so does the mana which, in turn, acts as fuel for miracle-working. Miracles may either benefit or damage a population, depending on where and on whom they are performed. It is this strength, in combination with a healthy army of worshipers, which will determine which god will earn vic-

tory. Without mana, a god is finished as is the game.

As in the original game, victory entitles the player to a password to the next world and each succeeding world is more difficult to conquer. More advanced worlds feature more aggressive populations, as well as more hostile

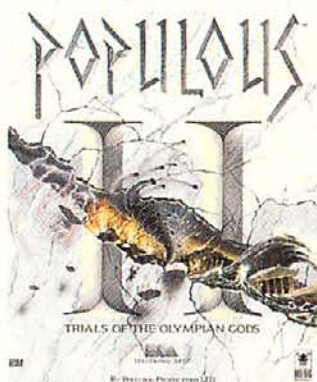


terrain. Of course, a keener adversary is also in control of the rival population. A different variety of miracles also becomes available to both the player and the evil god. Once the player has reached these more advanced miracles, they may then be used in “custom designed” worlds which the player is able to create.

Put On A Holy Face

Adding a role-playing aspect to *POP2*, players now assemble a personality for the god they wish to represent. Following classic Greek style, in which a book may always be told by its cover, this personality is clearly reflected in the god's face.

(Continued on page 24)



| | |
|--------------|-----------------|
| TITLE: | Populous 2 |
| SYSTEMS: | Amiga, IBM |
| PRICE: | \$59.95 |
| PROTECTION: | None |
| DEVELOPER: | Bullfrog |
| DISTRIBUTOR: | Electronic Arts |
| | San Mateo, CA |

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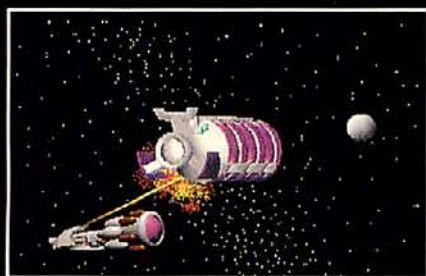
Impressions are delighted to announce an Omnitrend production - Rules of Engagement 2!

The original became an instant success - "one of the top 6 games of 1991" (Newsweek),
"involving, well-planned, entertaining, highest levels of intelligence and excitement" (Computer Game Review).

Now, the sequel surpasses even the original's excellence!

Rules of Engagement 2 is a real-time, strategic space combat game. The player commands a fleet of starships engaging enemy ships in campaigns composed of multiple combat missions. The attention to realism and detail (Omnitrend's hallmark) and the sheer size of the game are phenomenal, and are made accessible by the unique easy to use control system.

Rules of Engagement 2 is the latest Interlocking Game System module - and can link with *Breach 2* or *Breach 3* (coming this fall).



a still from an animated sequence

• Exciting animated sequences featuring 3D rendered spaceships relate the storyline at strategic points within campaigns. Players can create their own tree-structured campaigns with the world's first campaign-builder - and can even include their own PC Animate Plus animation files!



sample configuration of QuadPanels

to distinguish different control systems. The central control bar coordinates all activity between panels. Users can select which of the 28 QuadPanels appear on the main screen - and can even save several configurations for use in different situations.

• *Rules of Engagement 2* features an outstanding interface. Game screens consist of four QuadPanels, color coded

• *Rules of Engagement 2* offers a significant advance in artificial intelligence within computer gaming. Each starship captain has a substantial dossier complete with many personality traits which affect how he, she or it reacts to orders and situations which arise.



a starship captain's dossier

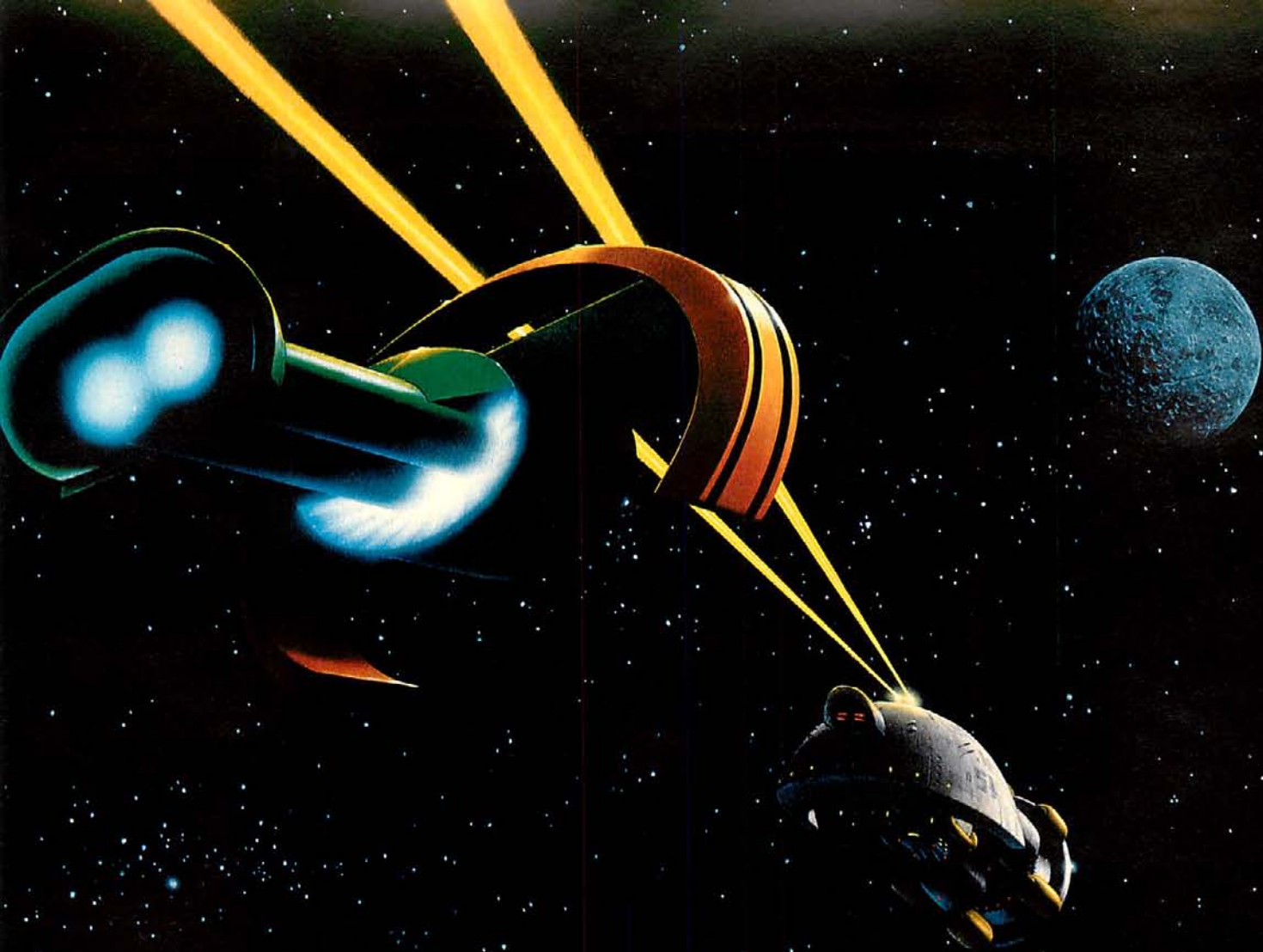


outfitting a ship in dry dock

• *Rules of Engagement 2* offers immense replay value, allowing the player to design and construct both friendly and hostile spacecraft and their captains, specify the physical and mental capabilities of the enemy forces -- and design solar systems in which the battles will take place!

Committed to Excellence in Strategy Entertainment

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RULES OF ENGAGEMENT 2



Impressions



(Continued from page 20)

Players choose this face by sifting through a variety of mix-n-match foreheads, eyes and mouths. A more aggressive or monstrous face will result in more challenging battles, while a serene or contemplative expression leads to a more strategically demanding game. In general, the nastier the god's face, the more difficult the game.

The number of miracles, or "Divine Intervention Effects," are now so great that they have been broken into six categories, much like spells in a fantasy/role-playing game. Each effect is now categorized as one which relates to people, vegetation, earth, air, fire or water. There are a total of 29 different divine effects, each with its own price tag. With enough mana, players will be able to shake up their worlds with such spells as "Tidal Wave" or "Lay Plague." In addition, there are now six

different "super heroes" into which a population leader may now be transformed, so that he or she may proceed independently in a berserk rampage directed at the enemy. All 29 special effects, however, are not available at the same time — each world places only a handful at the god's disposal. Note that the two gods do not necessarily have access to the same magic at the same time, and the player may not be aware of the evil god's abilities until they are used in combat.

POP2's main screen contains the same basic information as that used in *Populous*. Behind a close-up view of the play-area is a map of the entire world. Also included is a population indicator, cleverly disguised as a colosseum. Players may switch to an alternate close-up view which does not include the colosseum, but does display a larger area of land in greater detail. Lining both screens are icons representing the various miracle categories which, if selected, give the player access to other sets of icons representing specific effects.

The game may be played using either hi or lo-resolution. Hi-resolution produces a wonder-

fully detailed display, but slows down game-play quite a bit. Players with extremely fast, capable computers, however, may find themselves searching for ways to slow down their processing speed. A faster computer makes for a far nastier opponent who will build his population and cast his attacks at lightning speed. Mercifully, the game allows the player to adjust the speed

of both the enemy and game-play.

The graphics and animation continue to reflect Bullfrog's attention to character and detail. The individual members of each population are now given gender and occupation-specific characteristics. There are many noteworthy animation effects, including lightning bolts which attack their targets with savage precision, while other victims are carried away in a Wizard Of Oz-style tornado. Many of the warriors and transformed heroes have chosen to do battle with a minimum of clothing, and are easily some of the most virile characters ever to appear in a computer strategy game.

POP2's origins on the Amiga computer are immediately obvious. Game-play without a mouse is impossible, although keyboard commands may be used as an adjunct. Even with a mouse, IBM owners will not enjoy the same

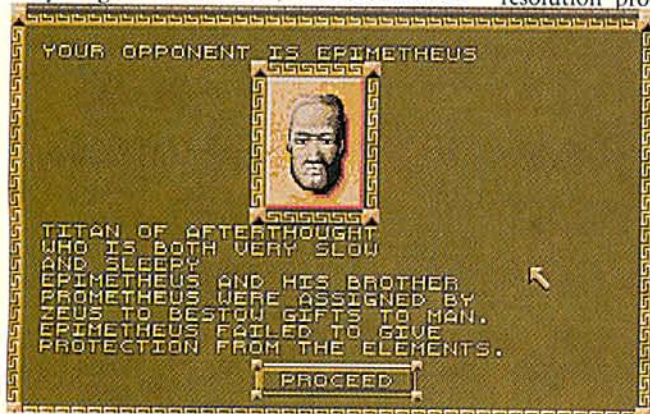



fluidness of motion as those who have access to the game on an Amiga. The most noticeable loss may well be the game's sounds, very few of which will be heard on machines equipped with a Sound Blaster-compatible board. Sadly, none of the game's famous breathing, heartbeat and ethereal chorus — all of which make the Amiga seem to pulse in life-like rhythm — appear in the IBM version.

Oracle By Icon

The game features a "Help" function, so that an on-line explanation of each of its many icons is available at any time during play. Any number of games in progress may be saved, although only one god may occupy the disk at a time. Two players may play against each other using two computers. These may be connected either by modem or a network system.

Playing the role of an army general may be fun. Pretending to be a king or emperor can easily become addicting. Godhood, however, has again proved to be a wonderfully intoxicating experience in this strategy exercise from Bullfrog. Amiga owners in particular should not miss out on this opportunity to apply to the Pantheon. The benefits of belonging to humanity, thus far, consist mainly of expendability and blind servitude. Why pass up omnipotence? **CGW**





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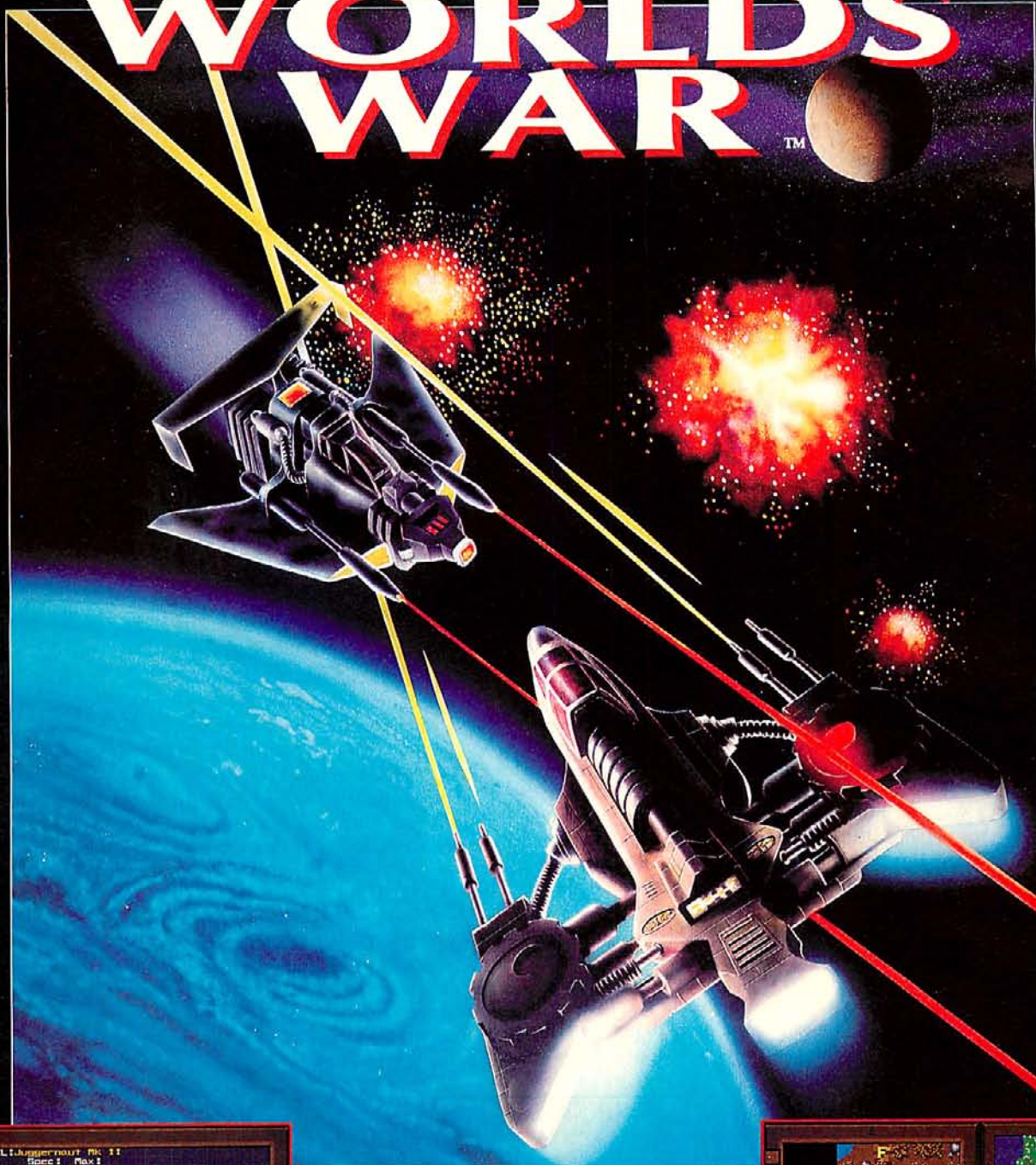
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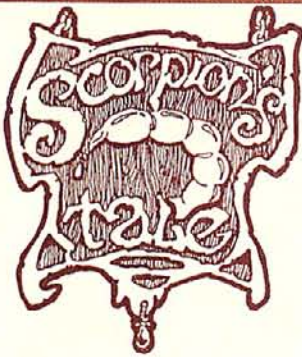


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Circle Reader Service #64



Scorpia Prepares Gamers for *Eric The Unready*



Warning: Although "The Scorpion's Tale" takes place in a warm and comfortable tavern of the mind, complete with a nice, cozy fire of vibrant images, our resident storyteller conjures up illuminating hints about games. If our readers eschew hints, let them beware!

What? Is it springtime already? Seems it was autumn just the other day. Time certainly seems to be passing faster than ever. Gotta find a way to turn the clock back. Back to those thrilling days of yesteryear, when knights were bold and went on quests joust for fun!

Of course, that's not quite how it is with Eric the Unready, knight errant. Very errant. Perhaps he should have been named Eric the Catastrophe or Eric the Jinx. Not that he deliberately does anything wrong; it's just that he tends to leave a trail of havoc and destruction in his wake, without hardly trying.

Having already left quite such a wake as the game begins, our hero is assigned a task suited to his abilities: visit a farmyard and kiss a farmer's daughter who has been turned into a pig. This is a mere bagatelle for Eric, and really so easy a sequence it hardly bears mention. Especially, since he has to go down a privy to get the job done (phew!).

In fact, much of this game isn't too tough, but it certainly is funny. The main things to remember are (a) grab everything that isn't nailed down and (b) *always* pick up and read the day's newspaper. This is a magical paper. It has not only that day's news, but the news from previous days, too. You don't want to miss the ad for *Cleric's Gossip Weekly* (heh)! More importantly, a couple of issues have clues for some of the puzzles. So, look over the paper from time to time.

Okay, so Eric has kissed the pig, and gets a lift back to the castle from the king's daughter. No snob, she! Not only does she allow the filth-covered knight into her carriage, she gives him

much encouragement to keep on with his duties as a knight. Right there, you know she's worth rescuing (and being rescued is the prime occupation of young, beautiful princesses the world over).

Being conscientious, Lorealle (the princess) allows herself to be kidnapped in short order. Naturally, our boy is assigned to go out and get her. There is a time limit involved; the king is scheduled to die in a week, and the princess by his side at the time is the one who inherits. Naturally, we all want Lorealle the Beautiful rather than Grizelda the Hefty to be the lucky lady. So let's get a move on, Eric.

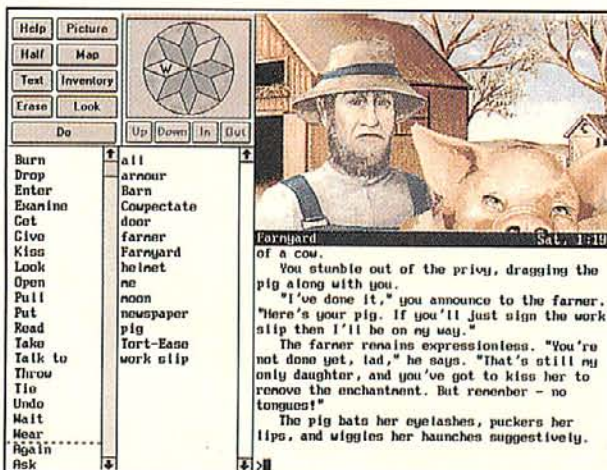
The first item of business is getting new armor (the old suit being in offal shape). This is really the game's copy protection, and you need the armor diagram from the manual or Eric ain't rescuing anybody anytime soon. Of course, armor takes awhile to make, so our boy gets a cloak to wear while he waits. Hey wow, there's a magic bean in the pocket! Just what he's always wanted.

Anyway, now Eric can bounce around the area and see what's what.

That tower looks interesting. No door, though, and no ladder in sight. Hmmm, wonder how Jack, err, Eric can get up there.

Once at the window, Eric meets Bud the Mighty Wizard, something of a football fanatic. What mighty quest does Bud have on tap? He wants a root beer float, and tosses a coin to our hero to buy one. Ah, the glories of knighthood!

No need to rush; there's time to look around, and possibly do a little favor for the guy in the Ice Cream Shoppe. And Eric's been wanting to hear that Epic of Baldur, right? Right? (Hey, Eric, you got a problem with your hearing or something?)



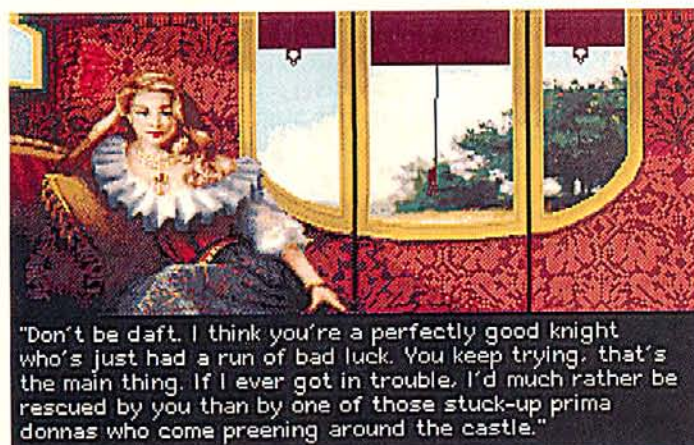
At least it gets him up the stairs, where he hears enough to know that nefarious plots are afoot! (Like we're all surprised by this). So, before long, Bud has Eric pull Bananacalibur from the stone, to prove he's the one marked by destiny (or at least by designer Bob Bates) to rescue Lorealle. Eric has to pick up five magic items that will get him past The Black Gate (this thing shows up everywhere, doesn't it?), and he's only got a week, so let's go do it!

The pitchfork is the first item on the shopping list, and Eric begins his search in the Enchanted Forest. That is, he will, just as soon as he gets past the nasty-looking tree. Looks dry, doesn't it? Anyhow, Eric waltzes past and finds himself in a clearing with branches. Of course they're meant to be moved (hey, there's a lot of obvious stuff in this game; keep that in mind).

Underneath is a trap door that leads to ... well, shades of the original *Zork*! Which is exactly what it is, white house, mailbox, and all. Okay, not really all, but the house is there and so is the mailbox, which contains a winner's sweepstakes notification. A pity Eric is human and not a dwarf, eh?

Onward he goes to explore the rest of the GUE, or what's left of it, which isn't much. A couple of Dwarven shops and that's about it. At least Fran (yes, DO talk to him) is helpful.

Getting back to the white house (no relation to the one on Pennsylvania Ave), Eric should have no trouble finding a way in, or doing what's necessary. Like I said, it's all obvious. Remember, though, a six foot man doesn't look like a three foot dwarf, unless he's willing to be humble.



So Eric collects the prize, a day at the fun park, which is built before his very eyes! Wow! That's service. Let's check this out. There's a game of *Concentration* off to one side, just like the one on TV (or used to be on TV; not owning one of those insidious devices, I can't be sure). And yep, Eric has to win to get that magic slingshot!

Then, maybe a ride on that neat Ferrous wheel (well, it IS made of iron) is order. After all, how else is Eric gonna reach the pitchfork in the branches of the upside-down tree? Speaking of down, the only way down is to jump (after taking the proper precautions, naturally). The rest follows pretty automatically, and it's time to move on for the crescent wrench.

So, Eric is now outside a tavern. This is a good time to open up the book, if he hasn't already. Then, he can go inside and try to capture the attention of Bruce the Waiter. When Eric finally gets a look at the menu, what to order should, by now, have been made pretty obvious. Then, it's time for a stroll to the castle.

Well, they aren't rolling out the red carpet there, so Eric is just gonna have to find another way in. Try something dangerous (hey, that's what *Restore* is all about, heh), but check out the bush first. In hardly any time at all, our boy has made it to the rear entrance where he is confronted by, oh no! Killer Turtles!! Good thing he has something to take care of these tortoises.

However, he's got nothing to cut the chain holding the door key.

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Circle Reader Service #64

Scorpion's Tale

Sorry, Eric, that's one item you can't get into your hot little hands. But hey, there's always a way around these little difficulties. Visit the stable. Visit the parapet. In no time at all, the problem should melt away like wax in a hot flame.

Then, Eric gets to play Wheel of Torture! Actually, this is more like *Jeopardy*, and our hero will have to guess at most of the answers. Fortunately, while the categories change, the questions don't, so sooner or later, Eric should be able to win the wrench. Ah, easy stuff!

Now it's off to the fair, to get the raw steak (yes, that's one of the five items). This one's a bit more complicated. Things to do: listen to the rules. Play a game or two. Talk to everyone. Visit the Pavilion of Tomorrow (for some reason, the words "babel fish" come to mind); Eric may incommode himself here.

Make a fool of yourself, in more ways than one. See all three shows at the amphitheatre. Get cozy with Lily (sorry to say, Eric won't be getting too cozy with her, since he'll never be finishing up that second errand ... besides, what would Lorealle think?) and try a couple of other things, which will be obvious when our hero has gotten this far along.

When all that's been done, Eric is prepared to take on the dragon that guards the Raw Steak, as well as the semiprecious ring. Since he listened to the dragon story, he knows exactly what to do, and in hardly any time at all, it's off to Godland for the crowbar.

Of course, he has to get there first, and getting there means proving he's a virgin. Eric did read up on this, I hope. Obtaining the first item isn't hard, provided Eric makes a display of himself. The second one is tricky, but newspapers are just so helpful in this game (by the way, you may want to save and try all the bells, just for fun!).

After passing the test, and stopping briefly to ogle the ladies in the Salon, Eric marches on into the Sanctuary, where the sacrifices are performed. Of course, no one's gonna do that while he's standing around. Remember Precious (yes, that ring). Remember what happened when someone wore it? What do you think might happen if someone wears a semi-precious?

After a short wait, a virgin is dumped into the room as the next sacrifice. Eric will have to calm her down before anything else. Then he can take her place, so to speak. Heroic actions just come naturally to knights.

In fact, there's no sacrifice involved, just a quick trip up to the top of the mountain where all the gods live. A little exploring is in order, and Eric should talk to any the gods around. That will make getting into the palace much easier.

After performing his little errand, our boy can wander about freely, noting in passing all the interesting items tacked on the bulletin board, as well as the "hard-working" repairgod. He'll fix the broken nectar machine just as soon as he gets around to it. Funny how you can help him with that.

The library can be difficult, as any book chosen only lasts ten minutes. Maybe they think Eric took a speed-reading course. Well, he didn't, but there's always speedwriting.

And hey, let's not forget that poor guy, err, god, in the cave. It's a special day for him, after all. No one else has remembered it, but knights are always thoughtful and courteous and all that stuff. Especially when they've read bulletin boards.

So now, Eric's read the right book, has all the stuff (he *did* deliver a second note to Morty, I hope), and, after making a complete fool of himself yet again (seems to come naturally to him), the crowbar is his! Only one more item to get!!

Our hero finds himself in a swamp. Oddly familiar music plays in the background. Yes, it's time for ... Swamp Trek!!! I have to say, being a fan of the original show, this section was my personal favorite, and I had a hard time getting through it, mainly because of hysteria. Some baaaaad jokes here, and lots of other fun stuff. So, I'm not going to say anything about the "Swamp Trek" parts; it's better if you come to it unprepared.

All Eric needs to do here is make a rum drink. That's really simple, as all that's necessary is visiting the various islands by raft, grabbing everything, and reading the sign on the Lilliputian lever carefully. This section is one of the

easiest, and more for fun than anything else.

Finally, with all the items collected, Eric arrives at the dreaded Black Gate. Yay! And about time, too, because Lorealle is about to be married off to a real beast, and we don't want that to happen (don't forget the candygram!). So, using the magical thingies one by one, Eric opens the gate...to be promptly captured by the wicked witch (who bears a startling resemblance to a certain other wicked witch). Before you can even say "Oz!", Eric is up in a tower room and the hourglass sands are running out pretty quickly. Nothing like a little tension to liven things up a bit.

Eric, being much brighter than any kid from Kansas (with or without dog), does the obvious thing, which gives him a little extra time to snoop around and find a way out. What self-respecting domain of evil doesn't have a secret passage somewhere?

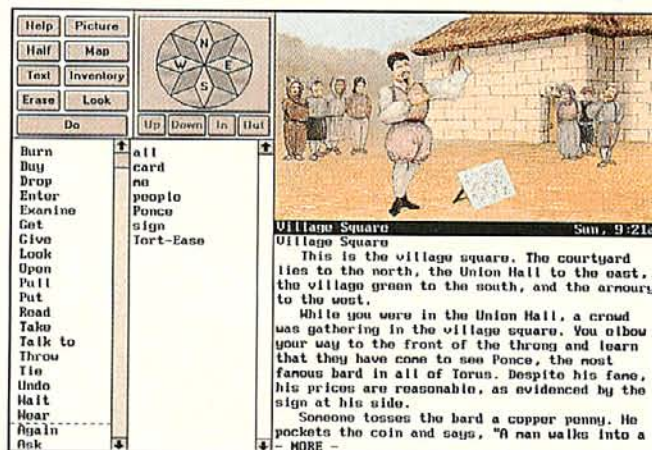
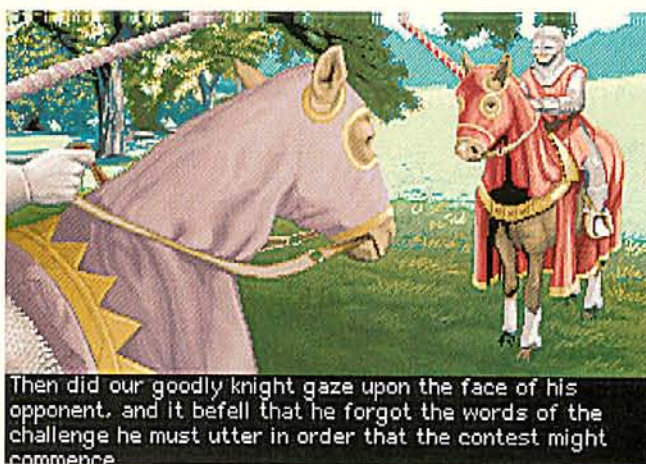
Meanwhile, down below, the wedding guests have all arrived, and the ceremony will be taking place soon. Better move fast, Eric. But not too fast. There's a little matter of proper timing here (always read labels!) if Lorealle is to be rescued from a fate worse than death (*much* worse).

All right! Everything comes off, the place crashes down, the wicked witch gets a bang out of it all, and Eric and his beloved fly off to the castle! Will they be in time? Will Lorealle inherit ... or is it already too late? Play the game and find out!

Whew! That's enough adventuring (easy though it may be) for now. In the meantime, if you need help with an adventure game, you can reach me in the following ways:

On Delphi: Stop by the GameSIG (under the Groups 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 United States): Scorpia, PO Box 338, Gracie Station, New York, NY 10028.

Until next time, happy adventuring! **CGW**



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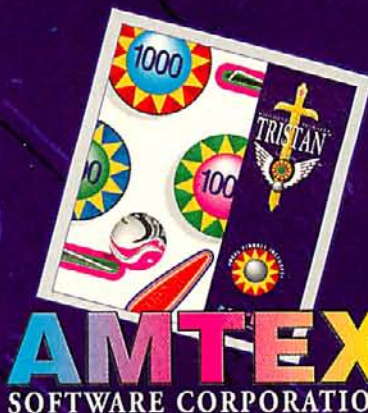
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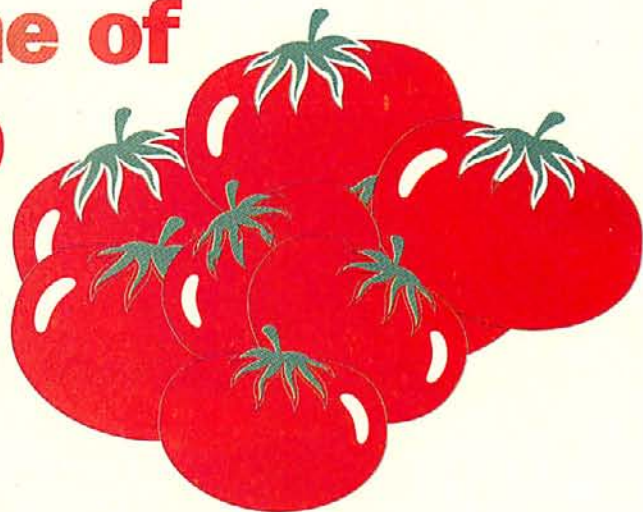


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Circle Reader Service #41



Playing a Game of Ketchup



Psygnosis Takes Up Gardening with *Bill's Tomato Game*

by Chuck Miller

The sun is brightly shining, the morning air is fresh and crisp, and the ACME delivery van is on its way to market with a truckload of juicy, ripe tomatoes. Just the start of an average day... or is it? Well, maybe not all that run of the mill, if one happens to be a tomato.

Terry and Tracy, our two red and round friends, have decided that they want more out of life than to be the main ingredients in a favorite condiment. Besides, they are in love and cannot bear the thought of being separated from each other (or stewed together for that matter). So, with escape the only chance to avoid any further strain on their relationship, Terry and Tracy become vegetables on the run.

Unfortunately, in their hurry to avoid puree, Tracy is tomatonapped by an evil squirrel and dragged up out of sight on a nearby vine. Not to stand idly by while his sweetheart is carted away, Terry sets off in pursuit, one branch at a time, in an attempt to either rescue her or become tomato sauce in the process.

No Time for Hanging Around

Bill's Tomato Game is Psygnosis' latest release for the Amiga. Though exhibiting some arcade leanings, it is primarily a puzzle-based game featuring 100 levels of conundrums that vary in difficulty from extremely easy to frustratingly difficult. While some are arduous enough to stay one's progress for a significant spell, none are so difficult as to cause the player to put the game away in disgust. Usually, when progress is thwarted for an extended period, the answer is to simply try a different approach.

Springing into Action

Ten worlds, composed of ten levels each, comprise the play environment for *Bill's Tomato Game*. The player, as Terry Tomato, begins at the vine where Tracy was snatched away. From here, one must guide Terry up the vine until he enters the first available world. When each ten-level section is completed, the next world appears.

Once one enters a world, the puzzles begin. Terry appears on the left side of the screen (normally, though, he can appear on the right side, too) upon a springboard. All one can do at this point is direct Terry to

bounce straight up and down. This, however, will not solve any puzzles. To progress through the levels composed of blocks, barricades, conveyors, spikes, spinning wheels and many other obstacles, one must employ the unique tools at Terry's disposal to construct a path of escape. These implements include the Frumulous Fan (which comes in two varieties — one facing left and one facing right), Tomato Trampoline, Jeremy Jack-in-the-Box and the Blocking Box.

Implements of Construction

The most useful item, the Frumulous Fan, is employed to blow Terry across the screen and past obstacles. Placement and number of fans affect Terry's travel horizontally and diagonally. The Tomato Trampoline allows the player to bounce Terry over obstacles. Too high a bounce, however, results in a small red pile of tomato pulp. Jeremy Jack-in-the-Box allows Terry to gain additional height during his travels across the screen, while the Blocking Box provides a flat surface for rolling upon or as a directional deflector.

Though all items are not available on each level, those used must be placed precisely if Terry is to clear all obstacles and safely reach the conveyor belt that transports him to the next level. Each level is also timed, allowing three minutes to solve the conundrum before the countdown timer reaches zero. As such, there is little room for error.

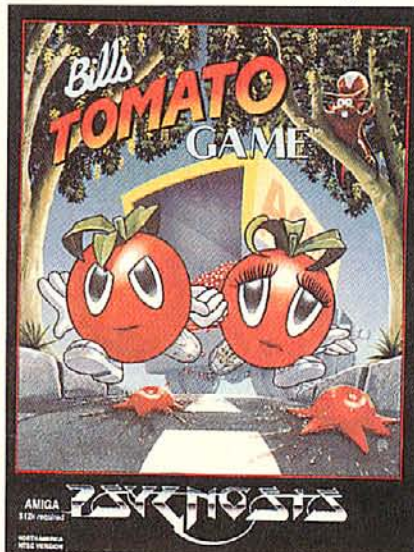
The Hunts is On

Once the player understands the use of each tool, it is time to begin the attempted rescue. From the Radio Screen (the initial screen presented upon loading the game), the player progresses to the vine and world one, level one.

The first puzzle is quite simple. Place three fans, then bounce Terry off a drum and onto a conveyor. Level two is just as easy. The third level, however, begins to add some challenge by providing several trampolines, plus a toy that pops open and squashes Terry unless he bounces off it at just the right moment. From here on out, difficulty increases and one's mind is really put

to the test. Fail too often and it's tomato sauce.

As in most games of this nature, a code word is provided upon completion of each level. Thus, when the player runs out of tomatoes



| | |
|-------------|---|
| TITLE: | Bill's Tomato Game |
| SYSTEM: | Amiga (512K) |
| PRICE: | \$49.99 |
| PROTECTION: | Disk- and Manual-based (Number Entry) |
| DESIGNER: | Bill Pullan |
| PUBLISHER: | Psygnosis Ltd. Brookline, MA (617) 731-3553 |

or has used all available lives, he or she can restart the game from the last completed level.

You Say Tomato, I Say Tomäto

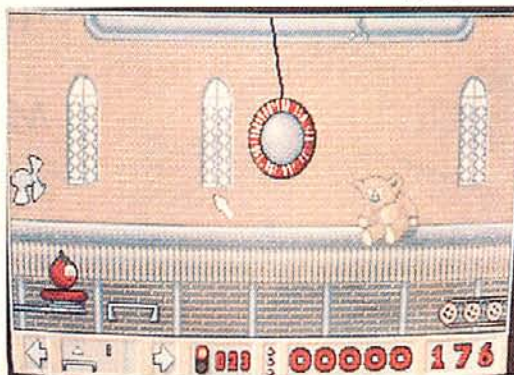
Psygnosis fans who have found pleasure in helping hapless lemmings find their way to safety will enjoy aiding Terry in the attempt to rescue his true love, Tracy. Although not quite as addictive as *Lemmings* or *Oh No! More Lemmings*, *Bill's Tomato Game* is still capable of capturing one's attention for hours on end. Except for several puzzles, difficulty builds well on a scale of increasing complexity. Playing time should extend for several weeks until one is able to master all 100 levels and rescue the damsel (or is that vegetable) in distress.

Those itching for joystick action, however, should avoid this offering as there is actually nothing to shoot. In fact, joysticks are not even supported. All input is accomplished with the use of either the mouse or keyboard in this game of logic and timing.

Plump, Juicy and Delicious

Graphics are a mix of high and low resolution images. Hires 16-color art is employed for the Radio and High Score Screens, while each level of puzzles makes use of 32-color low resolution images. Overall, visual quality is very high, providing an attractive environment.

Audio accompaniment is also of high caliber. Background music and digitized sounds effectively enhance game atmosphere and can be toggled on and off if desired. There should be no need to turn them off, though, as the catchy tunes and realistic sound effects add immensely to the game without becoming monotonous even after extended play.



In the Basket

Unfortunately, *Bill's Tomato Game* employs disk-based copy protection (as well as manual-based) and cannot be installed to a hard drive. Psygnosis promised almost a year ago that they would be moving away from disk-based protection and making provision for hard drive installation. So far, they have not made good on this promise. Still, the game loads quickly and, with 1MB of RAM or more, there is little disk access during play.

The documentation is comprised of Psygnosis' familiar four-language manual (English, French, German and Italian), its contents sufficient for instructional purposes and quite humorous. Also included is a handy "bookmark" which acts as a quick reminder of mouse controls and item descriptions.

How About a Game of Squash?

Bill's Tomato Game is one of Psygnosis' best Amiga offerings of late and is much more original and enjoyable than any of their other releases during the past six months. It is the most entertaining and addictive Amiga title I have played in a long time. Puzzle difficulty and variety is balanced, and evidently a great deal of care and thought has gone into its creation.

Amiga owners who have been longing for an excellent means of challenging their mental powers now have a valid reason to visit their local computer store. *Bill's Tomato Game* is more enjoyable than soup de jour or a fresh garden salad, and has fewer calories. In fact, spending time with Terry Tomato is guaranteed to get the juices flowing and paste a smile on your face. **CGW**

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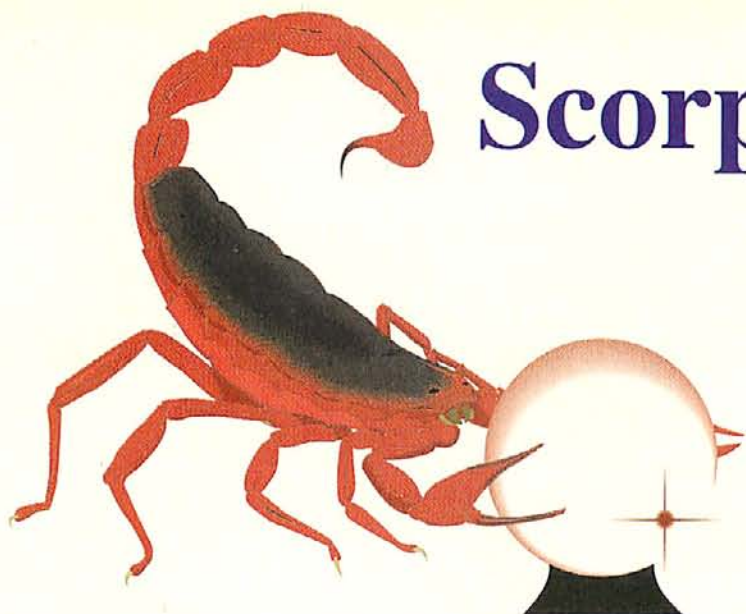
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Scorpion's View

Scorpia Orckiller Lights Mindcraft's Magic Candle III

Scorpia is an experienced and respected adventure game expert. CGW is pleased to provide this forum for her distinctive and often controversial perspective.

Magic Candle III brings us back to the town of Telermain on the island of Oshcrun, a place familiar to anyone who played *Magic Candle II*. This time around, Telermain is the starting point for an expedition to Solia, the collective name for the islands to the south, about which little is known.

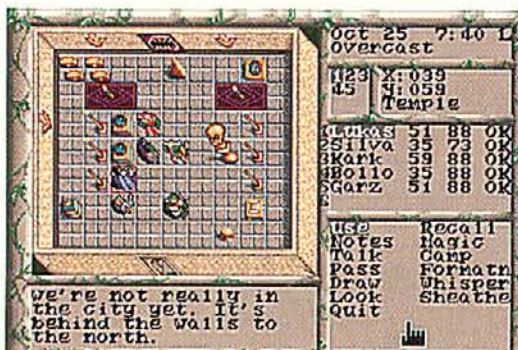
The problem is a mysterious blight that has already engulfed much of the islands and is even now spreading onto Oshcrun. It is the party's job to find a means of stopping and/or destroying the blight before it takes over everywhere, bringing an end to all life.

As with the previous game, there are many Companions and Hirelings along the way, eager to join the party and help save the world. Companions are full-fledged members of the group, willing to share and trade with others, as well as to be assigned to train or work. Hirelings are in it for the money; what they have is theirs, and they will not share or trade with anyone else. They also want to be in on the action, and can't be assigned to train or earn money at a shop.

In addition, there are three special Companions that you choose from a pool of eight at the start of the game. What makes them different is that they come with some extra points that you can put into their attributes and/or skills as you desire. This allows you to customize them, at least to a certain extent. In all other regards, they are the same as any other Companion.

Your own character, the "Lukas" hero, comes with his or her own set of attributes and skills, depending on the profession you choose at the beginning of the game. You can also transfer your character in from *Magic Candle II*. Unfortunately, I was not able to find my *MC II* save disk, and I cannot say what happens to your character when it is brought over.

After the three Companions have been chosen and customized, the game proper begins with the party in the middle of a small, blight-stricken forest outside of Telermain. Here you meet Garz, an Orc prince who offers to join the group. This is the true purpose of being in the woods, as there is nothing else of interest here, and it is best to



get out of the forest as quickly as possible once Garz has been accepted into the party.

Once out of the woods, you have some time to reconsider the party's composition. Several old friends, namely Tuff, Sakar and Rimfiztrik (Fiz), are waiting eagerly to go adventuring with you again. Since there can be only six in the party, and you do need Garz in the group for awhile, you'll have to make some decisions on who stays and who leaves. Garz, by the way, is rather like a Hireling; while you don't have to pay him, he won't share or trade with anyone else.

After settling on the party members, and doing some shopping, it's time to set sail for Kabelo, the Orc capital city. The king is not exactly thrilled over your appearance (it was his calling me "Scorpia Orckiller" that gave me the clue), but for the sake of his son, he'll at least talk to you.

What he wants is for you to recover the royal sceptre from the goblins who live on an island a little further south. Relations between the two races are a bit strained at the moment, so the King expects you to do his dirty work for him.

When you arrive in Serivu, the goblin city, you come into a situation that is both a poor piece of game design and a poor piece of programming. The very moment the party walks into the mayor's room, Garz pipes up with a request to be assigned to stay as a hostage for the sceptre — before you have said a word to the mayor.

Worse, if you don't assign Garz to stay immediately when he asks it, you can't finish this part of the game. Should you talk to the mayor first, he'll mention the sceptre and the goblin charter (which the Orcs are hold-



| | |
|-------------|----------------------|
| TITLE: | The Magic Candle III |
| SYSTEM: | IBM |
| PRICE: | \$59.95 |
| PROTECTION: | None |
| DESIGNER: | James Thomas |
| PUBLISHER: | Mindcraft |
| | Torrance, CA |
| | (310) 320-5215 |

ing), but that's all. Nothing about trading the items, nothing about wanting a hostage, etc. If you then assign Garz to stay, and talk to the mayor again, nothing changes. Nor does the Orc king realize that Garz is gone from the party should you return to Kabelo. The action just isn't noticed at all by the program.

Therefore, you *must* assign Garz to stay as soon as he requests it. Then the mayor, when you talk to him, will babble on about accepting Garz and hand over the sceptre. This you can take back to Kabelo and exchange for the charter, which you then bring to the mayor, who releases Garz.

Not only was this poorly thought out, but it is a pointless exercise. You simply bring one item here and take another there. Nothing special is required beyond having Garz in the party. Neither the goblins nor the Orcs give you anything for returning their respective items. The entire sceptre/charter sequence does little to further the storyline. While it does serve to introduce Garz, and you do need an Orc in the group at the end, something better than this could surely have been devised.

Past this, the game falls back into the familiar *Magic Candle* mode. The party visits the various towns and islands, talks to people, picks up information, gathers crucial items, rampages through dungeons and towers, and finally performs the necessary ritual to cleanse the land.

Little has changed in the game mechanics since *MC II*, but there have been some improvements. The notepad is now a much more refined utility. The pad is saved when the game is saved, so nothing is lost. You can call up the notes anytime and scroll through them, from either the top or bottom, and even search for individual words. Also, there is an option to delete notes and another that lets you add in notes of your own. Continued from before is the ability to set the detail level of the auto-notes, from taking down virtually everything to only the most vital information.

Party movement is also better. There were many complaints about having to always change the formation when moving through tight spots and narrow passageways in the previous games. Now the party members automatically change their positions temporarily, making it easier to maneuver in most of the difficult areas. They don't always rearrange themselves perfectly, however, and from time to time you may need to change the party leader to get the group moving again.

The blight is a different and interesting menace. It is something you can actually *see* on the move, which produces a certain amount of urgency. As you re-visit areas over time, the spread of the blight grows. Oshcrun is relatively clear of it at the start of the game, but by early spring, the blight is almost on Telermain's doorstep. If nothing else, it is definitely an incentive not to waste too much time.

For all that, *MC III* is a game with problems. The biggest one is lack of money at the start. You don't have much, and even with Tuff in the group to do the trading, prices are high, especially for the magical herbs and mushrooms.

As an example, nift, the invulnerability herb, costs 120 coins for six (that's with Tuff and his 75 trading skill doing the buying). Gonshi, the speed-up mushroom, is 105 coins for twelve. These are two things everyone in the party needs, and even a small supply for six people eats

up the cash supply quickly. Add in armor and spellbooks, and the money practically melts before your eyes.

This is all the more serious as the first dungeon in the game, the Tower of Qaldiur, is crawling with Fermigons, both in the rooms and lurking in ambush in the corridors. One or two hits from these things can put down anyone in the group. Walk into an ambush with six or seven Fermigons, and it's time to restore the game. Even knowing about them ahead of time doesn't help much if you don't have enough protective herbs to go around, and Qaldiur has six levels to get through, with other creatures besides, which are just as nasty.

So, you are pretty much forced into money-grubbing at the beginning. Instead of getting right on with the quest, you stick people in shops to earn coins and sit the rest of the group in front of Ketrop to hunt for food. Every so often, you duck into the village to sell most of it, then hunt for more.

This is *boring*. It is also ridiculous. Here we have a party of heroes out to save the world, but they can't get on with the job because they have to make some money first — and *this* with the blight always on the move.

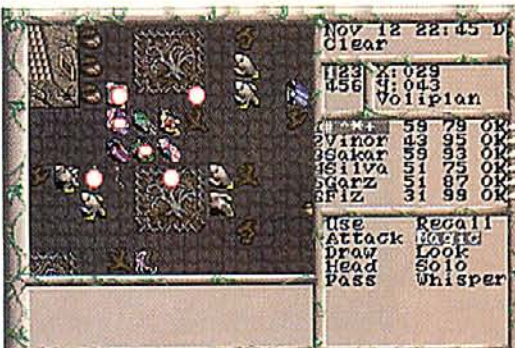
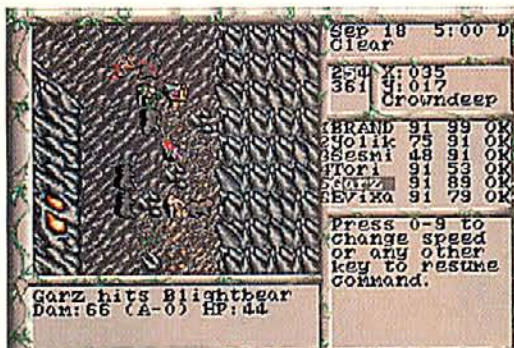
Keeping money in short supply and the prices of important herbs high, was deliberate on Mindcraft's part as a way of making the game "more challenging". What they overlooked is the fact that anyone can make the game as challenging as they wish by simply purchasing fewer herbs in the first place. The previous two games had that flexibility; *Magic Candle III* allows you none, thereby making the game unnecessarily difficult.

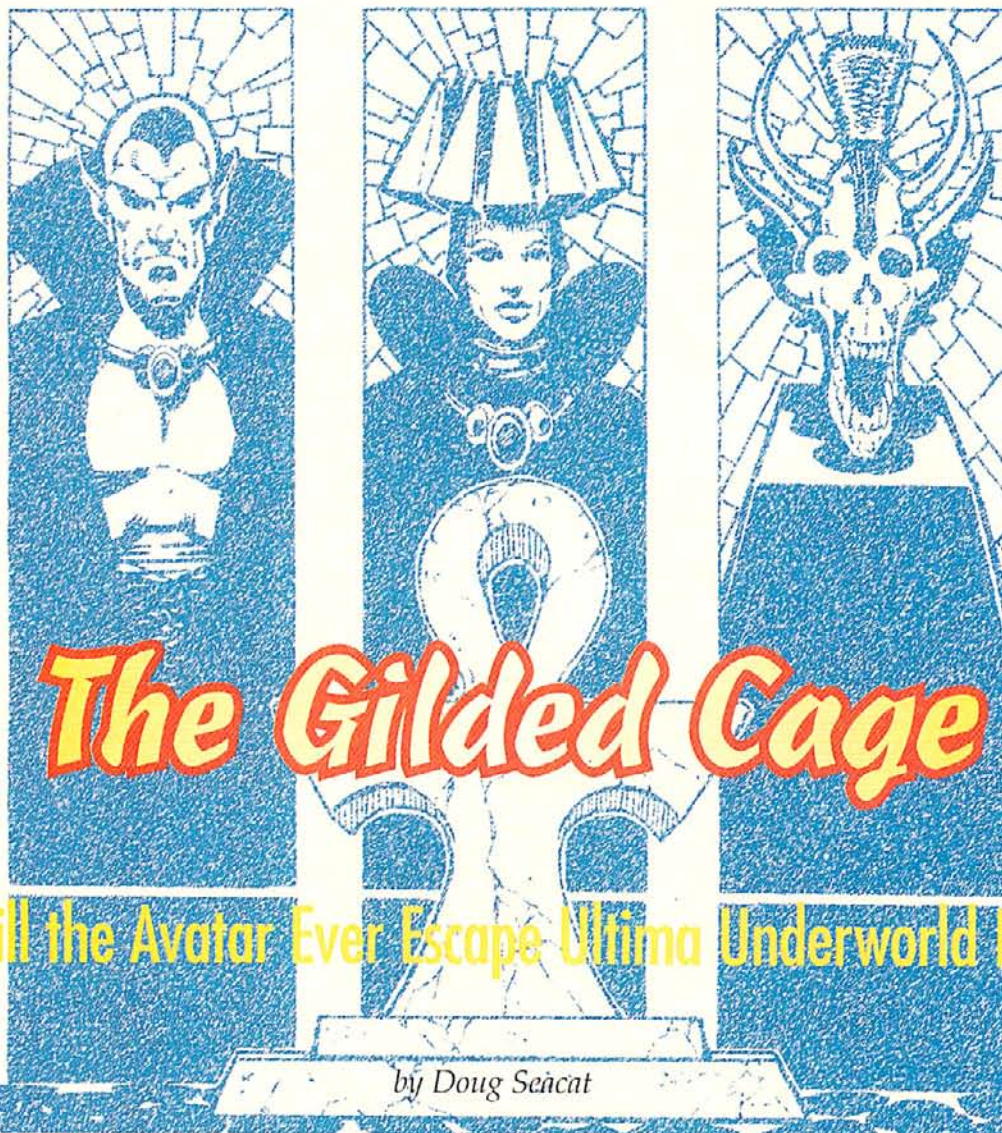
If the entire party dies or your character dies and is not resurrected, the game ends. *Ends*, mind you. A screen is displayed saying how the great hero failed and how the world was destroyed, followed by a drop to DOS. Not a menu for restoring the game — a drop to DOS — forcing you to reboot. By now, you'd have thought game designers would know enough to avoid this!

Dungeon design was not well-coordinated. The earlier dungeons were generally much harder than the last one. True, by the time I reached the endgame, the party had finally accumulated a reasonable supply of herbs, all the spellbooks, and a few suits of methreal, as well as having wakened all the gods, so it was a pretty tough group.

Still, you would expect that six levels of caves, followed by ten levels of tower, would be a difficult proposition, when in fact the whole thing turned out to be pretty much a romp. Most of the critters encountered were relatively low-level monsters, and even the supposedly all-powerful blight lords proved to be no challenge at all. The "big confrontation" in the final room was amazingly easy.

Overall, in spite of the neat blight idea, *Magic Candle III* is a dull game. I had a hard time getting into it, and slogged on mainly to get it over with. We've all been here before and there isn't anything really new or exciting. The game is unnecessarily lengthened by the constant need for money, and, overall, one is left with the feeling of doing things by rote rather than going on a grand adventure. It is all very depressing and rather a shame, as the first *Magic Candle* held much promise for the future — promise that has yet to be realized. **cgw**





Will the Avatar Ever Escape Ultima Underworld II?

by Doug Seacat

Ultima Underworld II: Labyrinth of Worlds, is the second of Origins' and LookingGlass Technologies' 3-D dungeon games. With the success of their first "you are there" environment in *Underworld I*, the folks at Origin have gone on to a more ambitious plot within the same environment.

Surprise, surprise, the Avatar is needed again. The rubes in Britannia can't seem to do anything for themselves. So, they are once again a potential target for destruction. Fortunately, they have the Avatar to save them, on his supposed ninth quest for them.

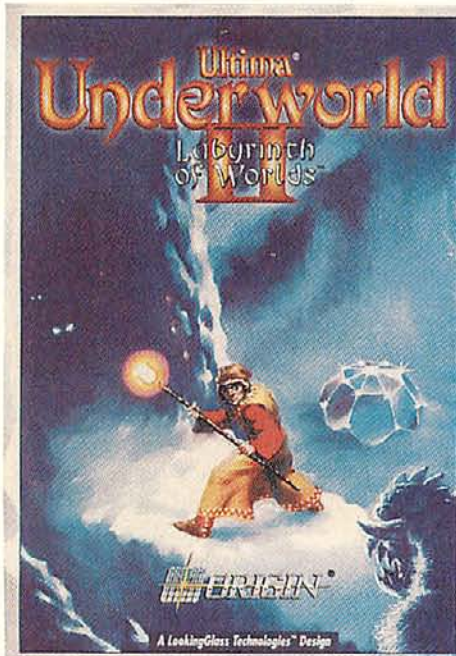
This time, the Guardian of *Black Gate* fame has reappeared (as I'm sure most players of that game certainly expected). This enigmatic red-faced nemesis has decided to stop Lord British's interference in his works directly, by sealing off Castle British entirely from the outside world. He has surrounded the castle in Blackrock, a substance impervious to magical and physical manipulation. The imprisonment will isolate both the heroes of Britannia and the Avatar himself, while the Guardian

wreaks havoc outside, converting followers, inciting warfare, and in general doing nasty, evil things.

There is hope. The Avatar must descend into the centuries-old dungeons of the castle in search of clues about the Guardian's sources of power. Before long, this search takes the Avatar on a multiple-world quest of exploration to eight centers of the Guardian's strength, each of which must be nullified to save Britannia, and the Multiverse, from the Guardian's manipulation.

The Rudiments of Disbelief

Character creation is a short and simple process, since this is a solo-adventure. The player can choose among eight classes (Mage, Fighter, Ranger, Shepherd, Bard, Druid,



| | |
|-------------|---|
| TITLE: | Ultima Underworld II: Labyrinth of Worlds |
| SYSTEM: | IBM 386 or 486 with 2 MB RAM |
| PRICE: | \$79.95 |
| PROTECTION: | None |
| DESIGNERS: | LookingGlass Technologies |
| PUBLISHER: | Origin Systems Austin, TX |

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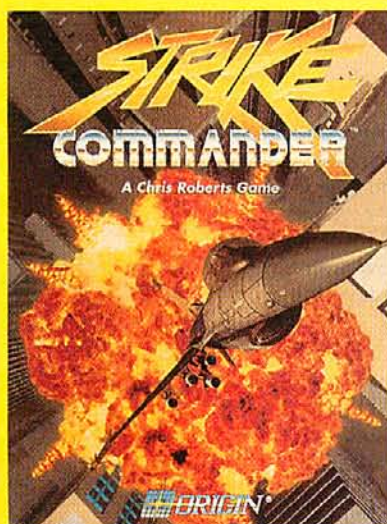
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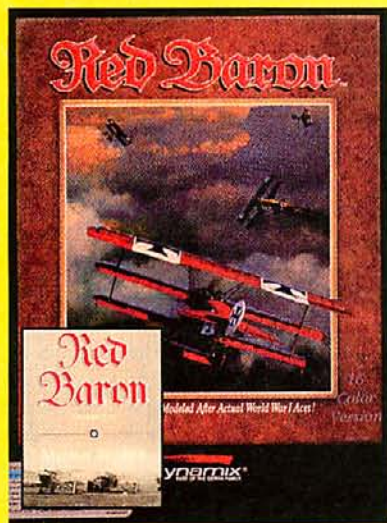
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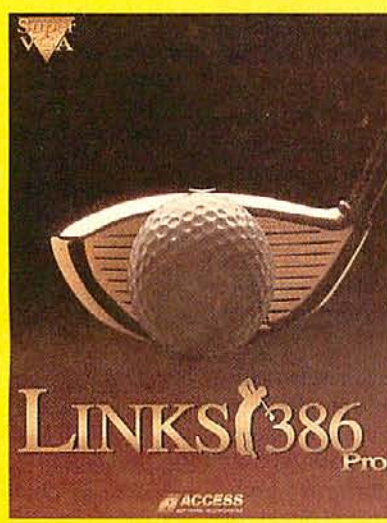
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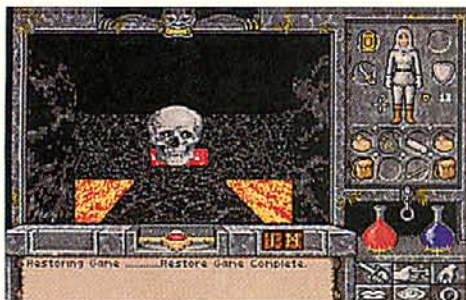
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Paladin, Tinker) and then, can customize the class by choice of skills. While each class has its own benefits and advantages, the game can be completed with any of them, and the skills-choice can allow a character to adopt a needed quality of another class. (For example, a fighter can still cast spells if he takes time to learn how, and a Paladin could repair items if he wished).

While there have been graphic improvements from *Underworld I*, the game's features and gameplay are very similar. Those who mastered the 3-D environment of the first will find an easy transition into this new storyline. Newcomers will need time to adjust to the mouse interface, which is less than intuitive. For example, the way the game handles left and right buttons for different functions is an acquired skill. Fortunately, there are keyboard equivalents to many of the functions.



It will also take time to adjust to the environment. The ability to move freely through 3-D space can make movement frustrating. Getting stuck on corners, whirling about too rapidly in place, walking too close to an object to see it, and missing a corridor by not turning fast enough are some of the more common neophyte mistakes. In time, however, it is possible to familiarize yourself with the Avatar's body, just as one would a new car. The game provides a well-written tutorial which assists in the transition, as well as giving some important game information.

Similar to all such 3-D dungeon games, items are handled by placing them in either the inventory or upon the body itself. Most items have descriptions detailing their current condition, which can erode over time and use. Items which have been subject to frequent abuse will eventually break or be destroyed, though a proficient character can repair items to full effectiveness.

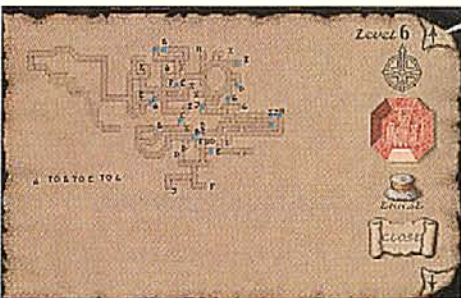
One nice feature of the game is the fact that items (except weapons) don't need to be "in hand" to be used. For example, a wand within a backpack can be activated simply by opening the backpack, and then left-clicking on the wand. This is welcome since moving items can be a tedious process. If the player wishes to move the wand from his backpack to a sack, he has to move the wand out of the backpack (assuming he left an empty spot in his primary inventory), close the backpack, pick up the wand, and then put it into the sack. Since there are many necessary items in the game,

the player is advised to organize his possessions carefully. Keeping several sacks and backpacks is recommended, enabling a division of similar items. Also, the player should stockpile certain heavy things (such as gold) in an easy to reach location.

Skills are handled automatically, with a few notable exceptions (such as Repairing, Picking Locks and Tracking). A player skilled with the sword will hit more often; an acrobatic character will jump better and take less damage from falls. The game allows even unskilled characters to perform actions involving those skills, though with slightly less success. Even a character with no swimming skill won't immediately drown.

Magic is handled via runes and each spell is a two or three rune combination. In order to cast any particular spell, the Avatar must be at a high enough level, have enough Mana (casting juice), and have the necessary runes. The rune aspect means that even a high-level character won't be able to cast a lower level spell if he lacks the proper runes. An important process of the game is adding to one's rune-bag through exploration.

Combat is simple — whip out a weapon, find a foe, and strike them. The combat graphics are well done, with three types of melee weapons (Maces, Blades and Axes), three strike types (Overhead bash, sidewise swipe or jab) each of which has advantages against certain foes and missile weapons. During battle, foes move about, and the player must keep moving to keep from getting attacked from behind or overwhelmed by multiple foes.

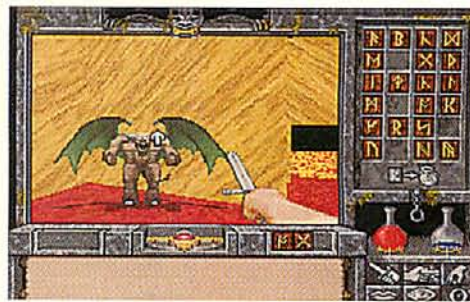


Lest the reader think this *Ultima* is merely a hack-and-slash, however, it should be stated that role-playing is a strong element here. Conversation is just as important, if not more, than having a good sword arm or spell book. There are many characters to interact with, be it in the castle, the dungeons, or the other worlds. The plot is rich with details and characters, and much is gained from trying a peaceful approach.

Throughout all of this, the Guardian continues to expand his multi-world empire, constantly taunting the Avatar in dream messages. Lord British and the other inhabitants of Castle British have to deal with their own problems, be it possible traitors, lack of water, or the Guardian himself, who offers bribes and power to subvert the good.

The Elements of Pleasure

There has obviously been a great amount of effort and time spent on this game. The 3-D movement, while perfected earlier, is just as impressive. This technique gives the player a strong sense of "being there." The screen bobs up and down as one walks, and footsteps can be heard as one moves. When the Avatar falls into a river or pool of water, he sinks down, and is caught by the current as the screen sways back and forth enough to give one motion-sickness.



This aspect of the game is further heightened by the many small details included by the designers. For example, the Avatar will become woozy and dizzy if he drinks too much. He can even pass out from such excess. Strange mushrooms will cause vision to distort, and the screen shakes when damage is taken. When the player sleeps, occasionally he dreams, and a night's sleep in a bed is better than in a bedroll. Further, sleeping without eating beforehand can result in a restless night. Before long, the player can become completely immersed in the fantasy world.

The graphics are well-executed. Animation is smooth, though slow on a lower-end computer, and the monsters and people have a good range of possible movements. Rats leap up at one's face, imps crackle with magical energy. Even death-throes are portrayed, as demons explode in colorful balls of power, or snow-cats flip over backward before dying in a pool of blood.

The spellcasting also deserves a note of praise. While not extremely complex or sophisticated, the spells are varied, giving a good balance of utilitarian, movement, informational, combat and defensive measures. Further, they are entertaining to cast. The Deadly Seeker spell deserves special mention. This spell is the Fantasy version of the Heat Seeking Missile. When cast, this spell causes a smoke-trailing missile to launch out and track down any nearby foe, even around doorways! It is not only diverting, but very viscerally satisfying.

Convenient for users with slow computers (such as myself), the graphic detail can be reduced, which greatly speeds play. Users may find it useful, even on a fast system, to use different modes of detail at various points in the game. Specifically, reducing the detail can speed movement considerably when one is returning to the castle after a long trek.

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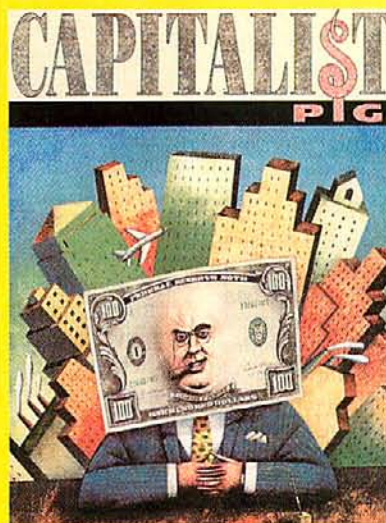
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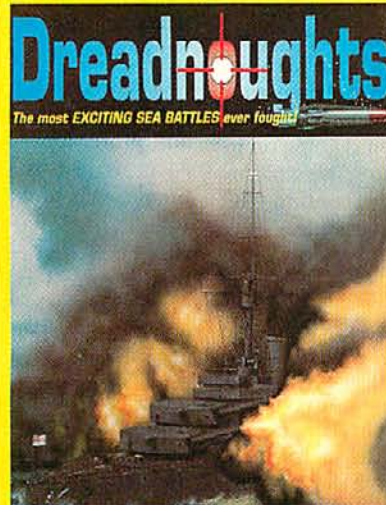
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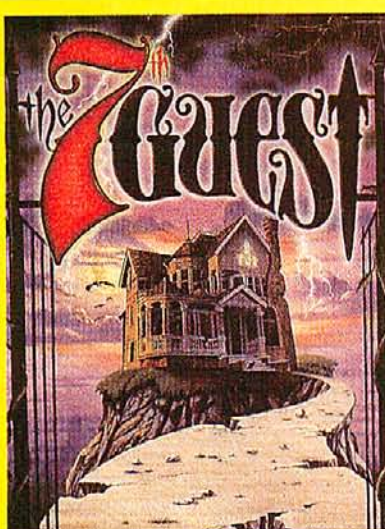
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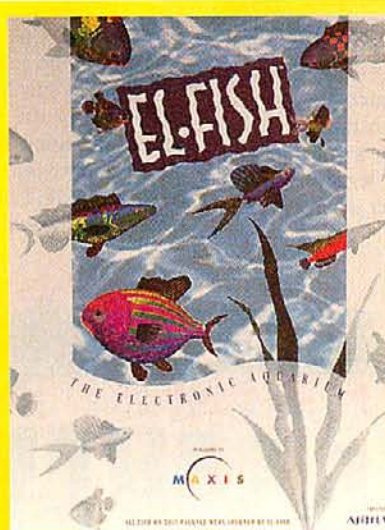
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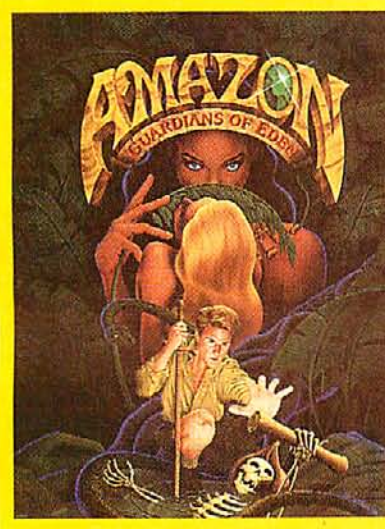


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tion of the game with little effort. Few players enjoy wandering through repetitive passages for hours on end, however. Granted, the game is titled "Labyrinth of Worlds" but I don't think this needed to be taken literally.

Further, the sheer scope of the game can be daunting. If the player feels stuck somewhere, he or she has practically miles of dungeon to check for one earlier mistake. This can be particularly annoying if the solution to the problem is something as small as examining a particular wall or device more carefully.

Some of these problems could have been solved elegantly by the programmers with more NPC involvement. It would have been nice if the members of the castle could provide more support. For example, if the player has been wandering around for hours getting absolutely nowhere, one of the NPCs could provide a clue, which could become more explicit if the player still doesn't make progress. This would be perfectly feasible since the entire population of the castle is supposedly working on the dilemma, together with the Avatar. This could ease frustration, while also making the NPCs seem more involved and alive. Further, the NPCs could, at infrequent intervals, descend into the Labyrinth themselves, perhaps to solve a class-specific puzzle. In the instance above, it would have been much more exciting and interesting had Nystul (the court wizard) assisted in the Academy Final, then allowed the Avatar to solve

the bulk of the puzzles. Having a dynamic game environment would have been the perfect compliment to the "you are there" feeling of the game, and would have provided a complete and total gaming environment.

On a different note, the basic plot has some problems. Why is it that every 3-D fantasy game has to take place entirely underground in dungeons? I became increasingly claustrophobic as world after world went by, never seeing the outside! Perhaps this was intended to keep the sense of being imprisoned, in which case it served its function well, but it would be nice to see a "you are there" game which took the player's character outside!

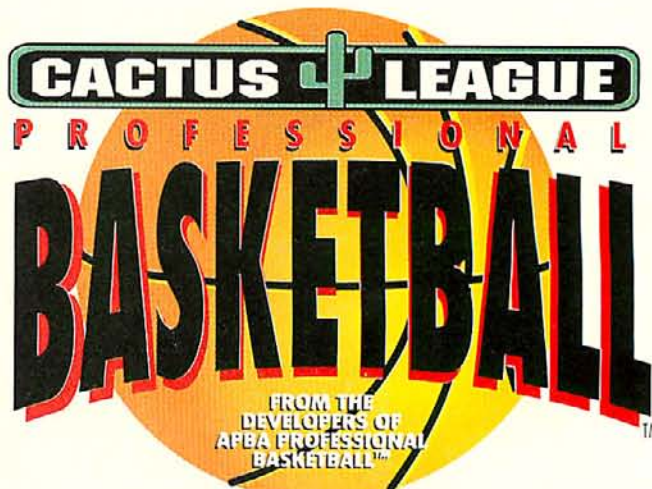
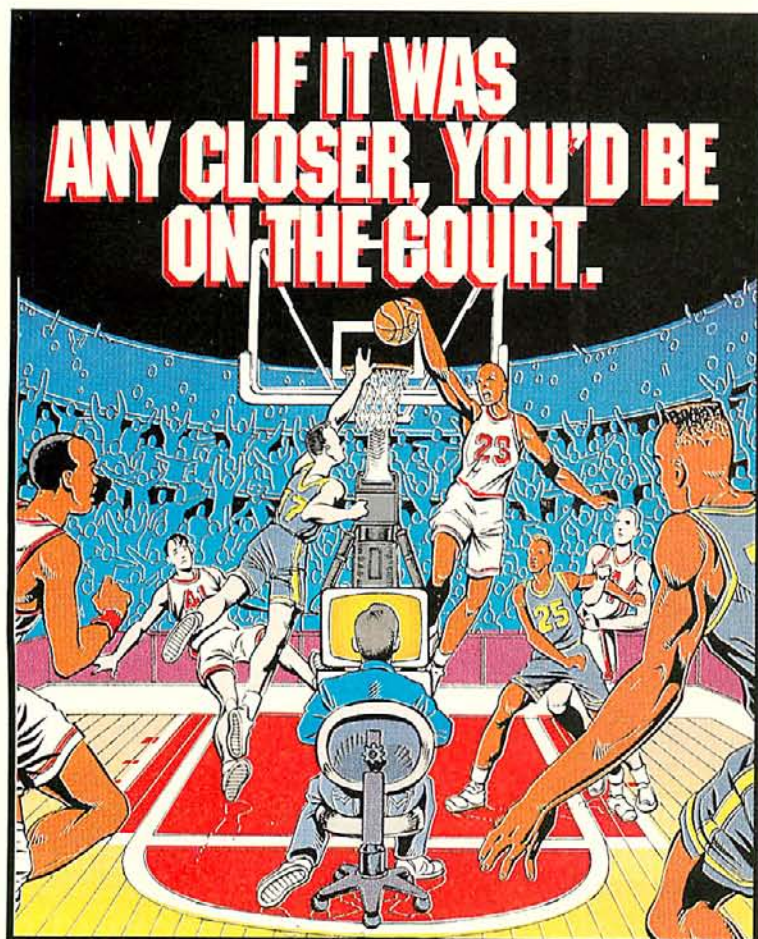


Finally, why is it that the Avatar, savior of Britannia eight times over, enters the game as a first level character? This constant restarting of the Avatar is ridiculous. The game does give the Avatar's name a heroic legacy, but the player feels none of that power when required

to start from scratch. *Ultima* has abused the Avatar long enough. If they want to keep him, they should at least give him some sense of power and grandeur. If they want a first level character, have it be another follower of the Virtues, a new novice who will rise and save the world in the Avatar's name. I know it'll be hard for Origin to let that plot-gimmick go, but I think it's long past due.

The Final Analysis

Despite the problems, *Ultima Underworld II: Labyrinth of Worlds* is a relatively high-quality game. However, I can recommend it only with reservations. Hard-core *Ultima* players will definitely want to play the game to continue the Avatar's exploits. Further, those who love 3-D dungeons will find much enjoyment. Still, those who purchase the game should be aware that they are in for a long and grueling quest, which will task their patience. While testing their stamina is a good test of the Avatar, it won't suit all gamers. Further, the game is in many ways a gilded cage: it looks very nice, and is in many ways comfortable, but it is still a cage. The contrived plot and setting have the player imprisoned, forced to follow a certain set path to freedom. By the time I finally saw daylight again, emerging from the *Labyrinth*, I must admit that it wasn't exultation I felt, but sheer relief. Frankly, I don't want to go back to that prison again. **CGW**



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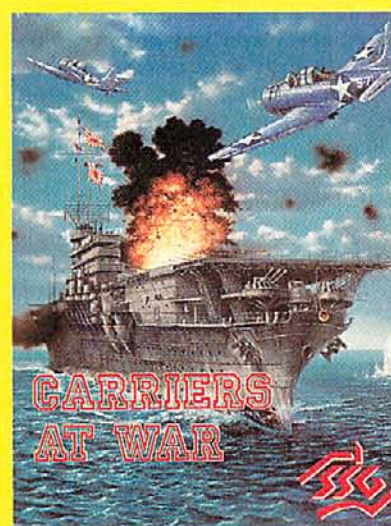
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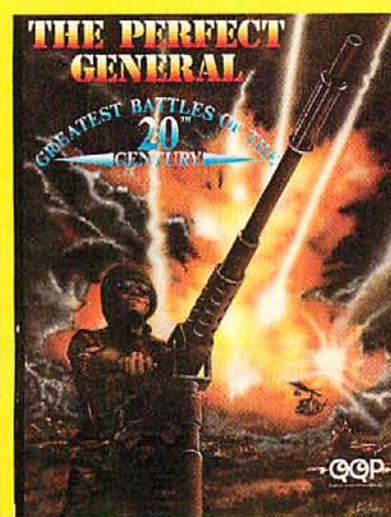
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Is Wisdom the Greater Part of Valour?

SSI Introduces U.S. Gamers to *Legends of Valour*

by Chuck Miller

Mitteldorf, a massive city, teems with activity. Busy streets abound with local merchants, travelers and, potentially, fellow adventurers. Of course, the local inns and taverns attract their usual clientele. So, be ready at a moment's notice to become the focal point of a friendly brawl. Also be prepared to spot a bargain and don't hesitate to accept an errand or two in order to earn a few extra groats. However, remember that legends are not made of mundane toil. There is a mission to fulfill — find a missing cousin named Sven.

His last letter reached his family quite some time ago and, understandably, they are worried about Sven's condition. Thus, the immediate goal is to try and discover where he is and what has befallen him. Beyond that, the game hasn't offered so much as an idea of what adventures lie in store. Though, ultimately there is the prospect of slaying an evil demon and restoring a king to power.

Stuck in the Mitteldorf with You

Legends of Valour, a 3-D fantasy role-playing game similar in many regards to Origin's *Ultima Underworld*, claims to rewrite the standard in 3-D adventures by offering "the hottest, smoothest 3-D scrolling ever seen in an underworld, or any world!" A few minutes with *Legends of Valour* substantiates the assertion concerning its extremely smooth 3-D scrolling graphics. Its claim of rewriting the standard in 3-D adventures, however, must be challenged.

Seldom do I begin a review focusing on the negative aspects of a game. I felt it appropriate to do so, though, in this case. SSI has long been respected for the quality of their games and their commitment to meeting customers' needs. I am convinced this has not changed. Nonetheless, I am concerned. *Legends of Valour* is SSI's second out-of-house product released since December, the first being *Pirates of Realmspace*. Unfortunately, *Legends of Valour* (like *Realmspace*, which appeared to be a last ditch effort to market one final Gold Box-style product) has placed SSI in danger of soiling their reputation by publishing games of an inferior nature while making grandiose claims about them. I know these words seem harsh, but SSI's long-standing reputation for quality is not evidenced in their two latest role-playing titles.

One should not assume from these statements that *Legends of Valour* has no value. Game design is good, play is somewhat enjoyable and the game system holds great promise for the future. However, implementation of and weaknesses inherent in this fantasy role-playing adventure cause it to come up short in overall atmosphere and playability.

From Generation to Generation

Character generation in *Legends of Valour* is a simple and painless procedure. While races are limited to human, dwarf or elf, a great degree of customization is provided for altering the appearance of one's on-screen persona through a type of character portrait construction set. When facial features are to the player's liking, the process moves on to selecting armor, goods and weapons. Up to eight characters can be created, though only one is employed during play.

The downside is that only eight save positions are available. In addition, the player can only save his or her progress at specific locations, namely inns, taverns and hostels. This unfortunate carry-over from early RPGs means that one must locate an appropriate place to save their progress on a regular basis or face the inevitable Restore-and-Replay Syndrome, one which quickly robs the game of its pleasure.

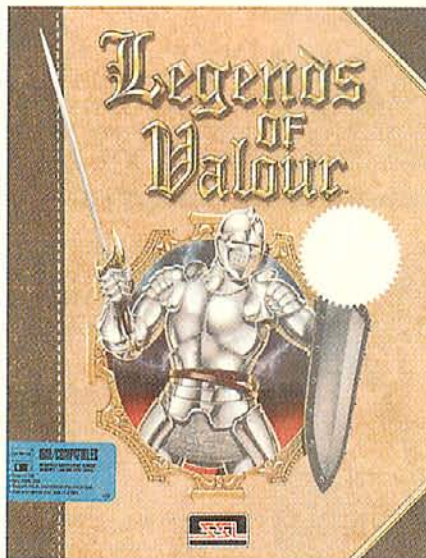
A Knight on the Town

Legends of Valour takes place, as mentioned, in the town of Mitteldorf and its dungeons beneath. Basically an immense above-ground maze, Mitteldorf offers well over 100 locations to visit, from taverns and shops to guilds and temples. Many dwellings have second story accommodations, too. In all, a great majority of early game play revolves around identifying and investigating the numerous establishments in this thriving city. To aid in this procedure, a copy of Ye Olde Mitteldorf Town Map is provided for the player, listing the major locations but requiring one to place them on the map. In addition, a rather primitive automapping feature is available which identifies one's general location in the city or dungeons below.

Unfortunately, the player will probably also have the opportunity to kill some time in one of several prisons. In fact, it is extremely easy to get arrested in Mitteldorf. About a dozen specific crimes are listed. However, the whole process appears to be unrelated to actually committing a crime. For example, while standing in the street, I was arrested for "assaulting an officer" and was promptly dumped in prison, fined and released the next day a much poorer individual. Is there no justice in Mitteldorf?

Tourist Distractions

In addition to the random nature of criminal arrests in *Legends of Valour*, there are several other major distractions with which to contend. Acquiring one's daily sustenance is more of a battle than most of the violent encounters. The need to eat, drink and sleep is emphasized so greatly that it is



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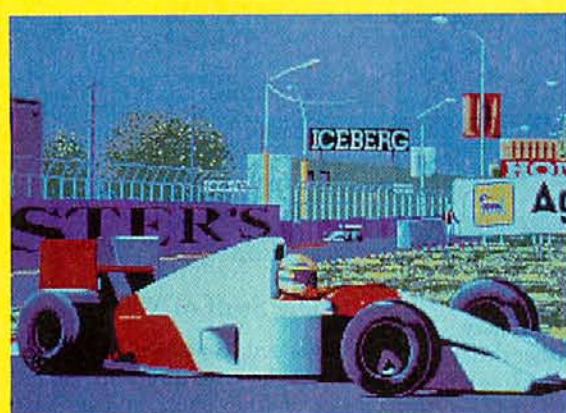
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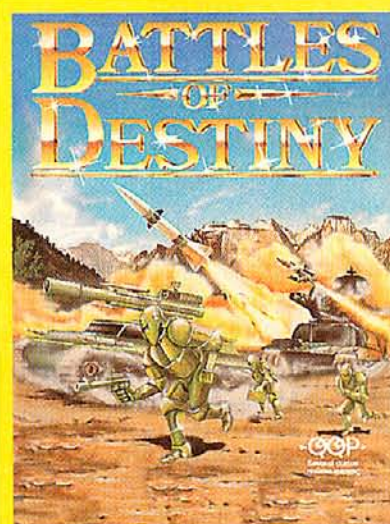
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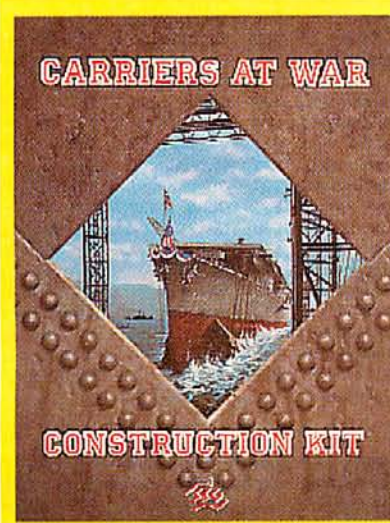
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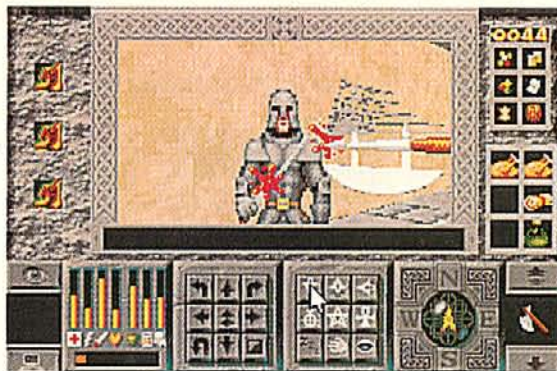
overly distracting to play. I died from lack of food and poor health so often just when the game was getting interesting that I soon tired of the whole process. Fantasy adventures should remove one from the distractions of real life, not impose an overdose of these minute distractions upon them.

Another distraction to the flow of the game concerns interaction with the NPCs encountered. More often than not, conversing with the local inhabitants is a repetitive process of issuing "What is" and "Where is" questions which result predominantly in the same pithy answers (though insults do show greater variation).

A general lack of atmosphere also prevails in *Valour*, the primary culprit being the background music and sound effects, or rather their dearth. Sound effects are sparse and music is almost entirely lacking.

Is There Any Value to *Valour*?

By now, one must be wondering if *Legends of Valour* has any value to offer. In spite of all its failings, yes, it does. The interface, though a trifle cluttered, is well designed and offers good mouse and keyboard support. Smooth scrolling 3-D graphics, as claimed, are exceptional and provide the player with a well detailed window on the world of Mirteldorf. The size of the display window is adjustable (reducing its size makes play acceptable on slower systems), though, even at its largest size the view provided is about 50 percent smaller than that of *Ultima Under-*



world. Still, when approaching an object, texture and detail remain amazingly intact, more so than the competition.

Clearly, smooth 3-D graphic scrolling is *Valour's* key selling point, enhanced by the overall quality of its 256-color VGA graphics. However, next to graphics in caliber is the game's documentation. Both creative and entertaining, the manual is written with just the right amount of information and humor, making the experience of pouring through its pages an enjoyable one.

The Stuff of Which Legends are Made?

As already stated, *Legends of Valour* suffers from a significant number of weaknesses. Its restrictions on game saves, numerous distractions, general lack of atmosphere, and absence of sufficient audio enhancements all contribute to an overall lack of enjoyment and staying power. While the graphics are as good as claimed, they cannot make up for the game's numerous deficiencies.

I have high hopes for SSI's upcoming releases: *Dark Sun*, *Eye of the Beholder III* and *Veil of Darkness*. All portend to be excellent products. As far as *Legends of Valour* is concerned, though, I believe the wise choice would be to leave the task of discovering what legends are made of to some other adventurer. **CGW**



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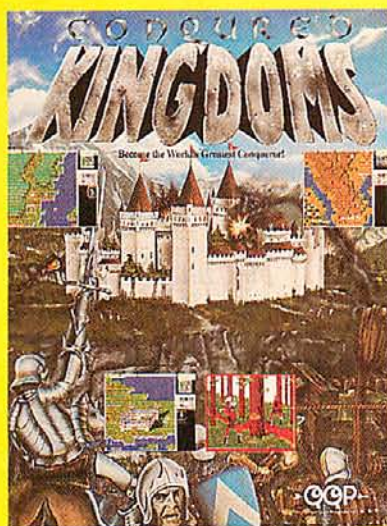
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The world of shareware

Wolfenstein 3D from id Software is one of the best known shareware games of recent years. It shattered the popular conception of shareware games as low quality productions with its smooth scrolling, 256-color VGA graphics and its high caliber music and sound effects.

Most gamers, however, are unfamiliar with another title by id Software that was actually *Wolfenstein 3D*'s predecessor, *The Catacomb Abyss*. *Abyss* was developed by id Software for Softdisk Publishing before the release of *Wolfenstein 3D* (while id was still a part of the Softdisk development team). In this installment of "Best of the Rest," we will examine *The Catacomb Abyss*, in addition to a similar release from Ken Silverman at Advanced Systems, *Ken's Labyrinth*.

A Brush with Death in the Catacomb

Though Softdisk Publishing is best known for their *Gamer's Edge* monthly disk subscription service, *The Catacomb Abyss* [IBMPC RT #31173] is a shareware release. The story is of the traditional search-out-and-destroy-the-evil-minion variety, with the player assuming the role of a great wizard. Play begins at surface level, with action drawing the player into the depths of the labyrinth below. Puzzles consist primarily of finding the keys necessary to unlock doors leading to successive levels of the underground maze. Other objects must also be collected in order for the player to survive and succeed in this quest. Zappers and Xterminators allow the player to fire powerful weapons at enemies, and Curing Potions keep the player alive, while magical items such as special gems help the player identify the number and position of opponents.

Combat is very basic. The player must destroy all enemies encountered (there are no friendly NPCs in this game). Three weapons are available: Magic Missiles, a single shot spell; Zappers, a continuous stream of magic missiles; and Xterminators, a circular dispersion of magic missiles. While some creatures can be disposed of with several missiles, many require a constant barrage to stop them in their tracks.

Graphics and sound effects are minimal by today's standards. Only 16-color EGA graphics are supported, though the game can be played with any EGA or better graphics card installed. Graphic detail is good, but modest, while sound effects are limited to simple explosions, thuds and the like. Music is nonexistent. Still, the game is very enjoyable despite the austerity of its presentation.

The only other notable problem in *Abyss* (which holds true for all 3-D smooth scrolling products) is that the game's smooth scrolling, which so readily allows dungeon walls to speed

DUNGEONS MAKE ME DIZZY

by Chuck Miller

by at a rapid pace, may cause some players to experience excessive eyestrain, headaches and even motion sickness after extended play. Limiting the amount of time spinning through labyrinths to shorter sessions will prevent most of these problems from arising. However, there are some gamers who cannot stomach such rapid motion on-screen. A game as addictive as *The Catacomb Abyss*, though, is hard to pull oneself away from.

The shareware version of *The Catacomb Abyss* is available on the Software Creations BBS at (508) 365-2359 and (508) 368-4137, and is available from the Download Superstore on the PRODIGY Service. Those who do not have access to a modem, can order *Abyss* direct from Softdisk for \$5.00.

The registration fee of \$14.95 purchases an on-line hint book that includes maps of each level, object locations and several helpful Cheat Keys. Sending in a registration fee of \$29.95 entitles the player to all three *Catacomb 3-D Adventures* including the sequels *The Catacomb Armageddon* and *The Catacomb Apocalypse*. For the investment, this bundle is a very good value. An MS-DOS compatible computer with 640K RAM and an EGA or better graphics card is required. Mouse and joystick are supported as are Ad Lib and Sound Blaster sound boards. For more information, contact:

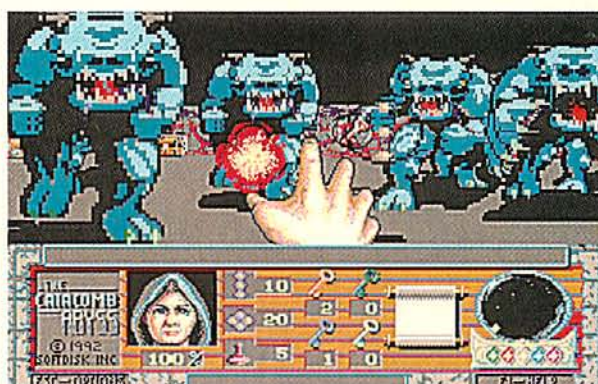
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Ken's Labyrinth [IBMPC RT #31470], like *The Catacomb Abyss*, employs 3-D technologies to provide the player with smooth scrolling graphics in a first-person perspective adventure. Like *Abyss*, the labyrinth walls pass by quickly and smoothly. However, graphics in *Ken's Labyrinth* are of much higher quality at 256-color VGA. Detail is very high.

Another area in which *Ken's Labyrinth* differs from *Abyss* is in its audio accompaniment. Though sound effects are



Asking for trouble in *The Catacomb Abyss*

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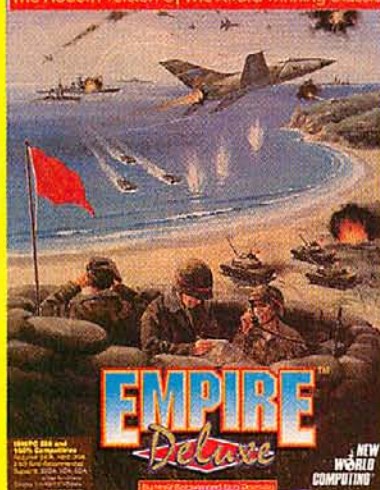
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clearer, the outstanding background music really stands out. In fact, each of the 27 levels in the labyrinth offers an original soundtrack.

At times, *Ken's Labyrinth* almost seems to be a parody of its competition, placing signs on the walls that read "WALK THROUGH THIS WALL" and by depicting food that looks suspiciously like that of *Wolfenstein 3D*. Nevertheless, the game has much to its own merit.

A registration fee of \$15 provides the player with Board Pack 1 that adds an additional 10 levels to the game, plus a Bonus level. A second Board Pack is also available for \$15 adding another 10 levels and a Boss level. Both can be had for a registration fee of \$25.

To play *Ken's Labyrinth*, one need only possess an MS-DOS compatible with 965K of RAM (210K conventional memory, plus XMS or EMS memory) and a VGA graphics card. A 386-based system is recommended. Support for a mouse and Ad Lib compatible sound cards is provided. Those desirous of venturing into *Ken's Labyrinth* should send their registration fees to:

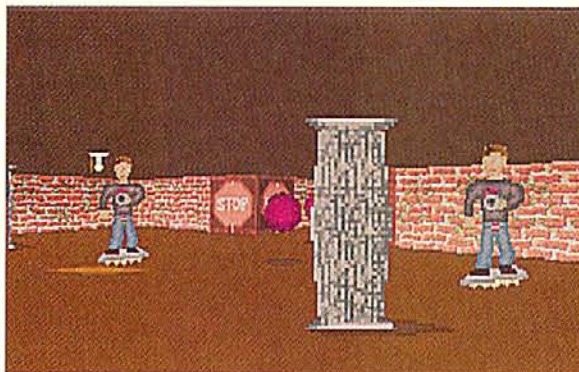
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Attn: Ken Silverman

Out of the Depths

This concludes our look at shareware games for another issue and

continues to prove that computer entertainment does not necessarily have to offer the best in graphics and sound to provide one with an enjoyable playing experience. Nor does one have to part with \$40 to \$60 to acquire a worthwhile game. Shareware offers a viable source of entertainment, especially for the gamer on a budget. So, until next we meet, great gaming to one and all!

Games reviewed in this column are available through numerous distributors of shareware and public domain software, as well as on many national and private telecommunication services (GEnie RoundTable locations and file numbers appear in brackets when available). If access to these services is not available, it is possible, in most cases, to write or call the game developer for an evaluation copy. Remember, shareware games should be registered with the author.



Ken's Labyrinth

Send Us Your Best

Those who have authored a shareware or public domain game and would like to have it considered for review in this column, please send two complete copies (preferably on 3.5" disks) with documentation and a cover letter to:

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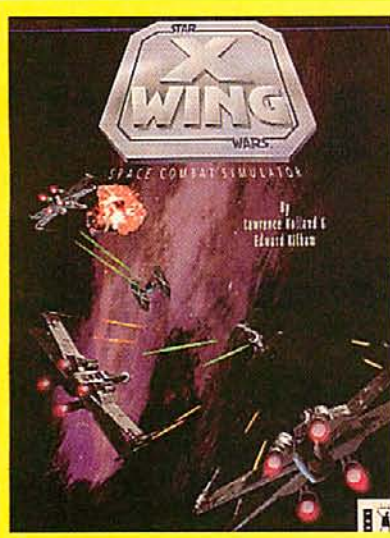
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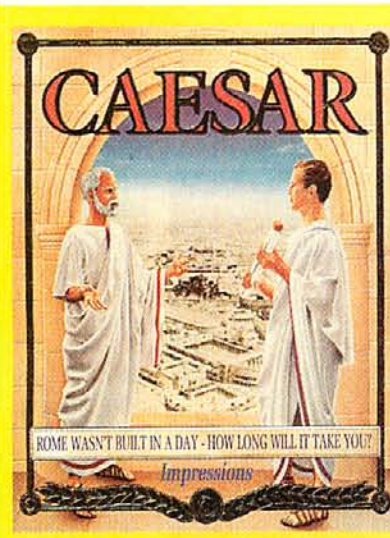
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Over There

The Comet Cometh

by Robin Matthews

This should be a very busy column this month, since software is appearing from almost every direction. The French Franc may be tied to the Deutschmark, but the Software *maison* Chez Infogrammes is one of the most original and prolific ensembles around. Their innovative title *Alone in the Dark* (AITD) was initially pencilled in as a genuine horror/thriller adventure in an agreement with the estate of the late Howard Phillips Lovecraft.

That project, however, became a technical crusade in its own right, with its dynamic and haunting movement system becoming the main thrust of the software. It was decided to postpone the genuine H.P. Lovecraft project and to concentrate on the radical design of AITD.

Having successfully completed AITD, the company has now returned to the drawing board, and its designers are hard at work on the original game storyboard — provisionally entitled, *Shadow of the Comet*. The plot starts some 76 years ago with the visit of Lord Boleskine, an eccentric British scientist, to a small fishing port in New England, called Isthmuth.

Upon gazing up at the night sky, he notices that the stars are arranged in a different fashion in a specific place. Then, during the passing over of Halley's Comet, he experiences a strange and peculiar phenomenon that sends him quite bonkers and totally doodle alley. Two years later, he dies locked up in an asylum in London. Since that time his works, sketches and writings have faded into obscurity.

Scroll forward to the year 1910. A young British Astronomer, John T. Carter becomes interested in Lord Boleskine and decides to investigate the last few years of the mad scientist's life. Carter travels to Isthmuth and is warmly welcomed by its inhabitants, including Dr West and the local Public Records Official, Tobias Juggs.

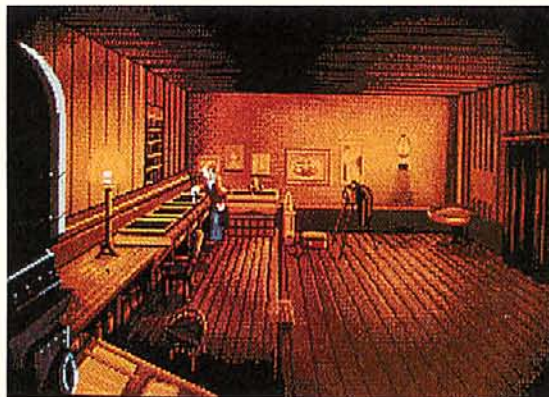
Carter discovers that all is not well in Isthmuth. Why, for example, is the Whatley name treated with such fear? What is this strange religious cult? What are these strange ceremonies being held in the forest? What is the strange old Indian Sorcerer Miskaquamus trying to do? Who are the ancient Gods who reigned over the Earth thousands of years ago? What is the *Necronomicon*?

This is the detailed background to *Shadow of the Comet* and may explain why Infogrammes did not want to risk combining such a rich storyline with the new AITD engine. *Shadow* is a full blown graphic adventure, using a development of the techniques used in their well received *Eternam*. Gamers control John T. Carter around the 100 or so screens that make up Isthmuth and will be faced with a series of puzzles and quests that must be solved by interaction with the 40 or so NPCs.

Each time one of these characters is encountered or one's on-screen persona enters a screen that has particular importance to the game (opening a lock, using items, unleashing incredibly powerful supernatural forces or omnipotent super beings), a fully animated sequence is presented. With NPCs this is normally a full close up of the NPC, with others full screen animation.

The interface appears simple to use, harking back to the halcyon days of adventures and limited to basic commands such as: talk, get, take, use and look. This normally would result in the game being linear or limited, but in *Shadow of the Comet*, Infogrammes hopes that the graphics and storyline are so impressive that the interface merges into the game, rather than being the most important feature.

A general information bar can be displayed or suppressed and an "Info" command gives access to Carter's diary which has a summary of the important stages of the adventure as well as conversations and happenings. This form of *aide memoire* is being used more and more in recent games and is a welcome feature.



Shadow of the Comet

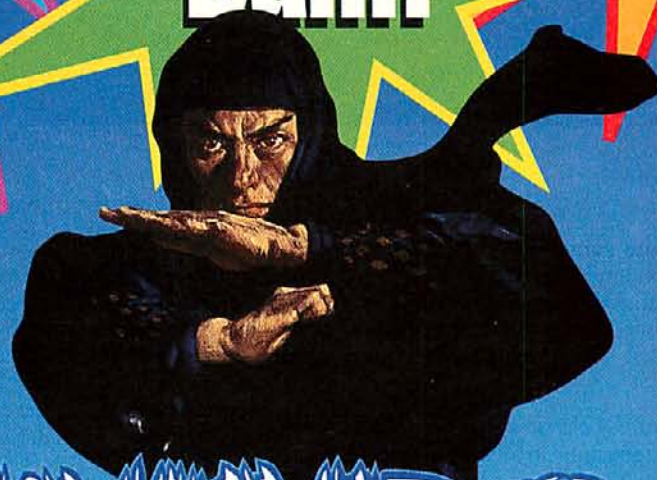
The graphics are about the best seen in 320 x 200 mode, with locations being separately drawn for day and night scenes, and utilizing sprite animations, vectorial full-screen graphics and close-up techniques. Movement is as sweet and rapid as in *Eternam*, but without some of the quirks. *Shadow of the Comet* looks very promising, is due for release on MS-DOS platforms later in the year and will support VGA/MCGA graphics only, as well as all major sound cards.

The last few years have been the era of the *big* game. Games like *Ultima Underworld*, *Ultima VII* and the very dark

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Ouch!



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Darklands. As a departure, the remainder of this month's "Over-There" looks at some lighter software that may, or may not, end up travelling across the pond.

One of the big European software houses that does not figure too often in the "Over-There" column is the UK's Ocean Software. Based in Manchester, Ocean is well known in Europe for several things — some home grown superior shoot-em-up's, various film tie-ins and importing some classy US software. Their own software development boys have gone berserk over the last few months with a series of new releases. These include: *Elf*, *Wizkid*, *Zool*, *WWF European Rampage Tour*, *Cool World*, *Robocop 3* and shortly, *Lethal Weapon*.

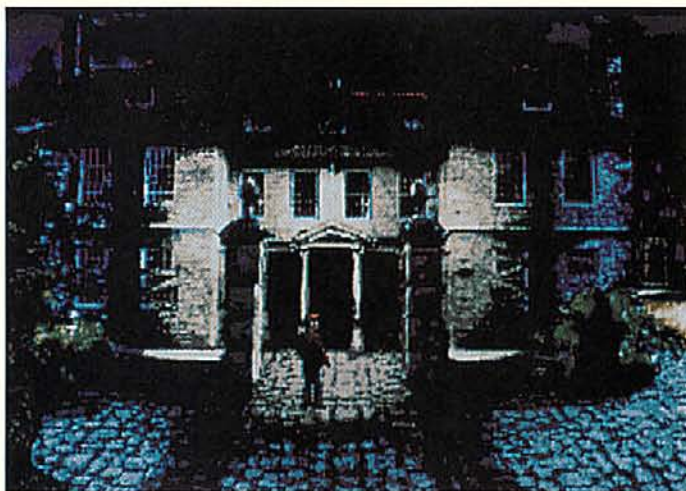
Elf is a good looking adventure game with a heavy dose of the scrolling platform game. Gamers control Cornelius the Elf and travel through some wonderfully sculptured back drops, casting spells and disposing of an indeterminate collection of goblins, gooks and castle guards. With lots of good puzzles, the system has some quirks, but generally works well.

Wizkid is Ocean's follow up to a UK classic called *Wizball*. This was an early piece of very odd programming involving bouncing a ball around a platform type environment. *Wizkid* is almost equally as weird, but far more playable. Set in a strange adventure world, there are links back to *Wizball*, since *Wizball* and *Wizard* have been kidnapped and imprisoned by the evil Zark. So has the family cat, Nifta, who is locked up in Turtle Jail. Okay, most of the newcomers to this bizarre game universe are now skipping this article and moving off down the page. Hopefully, they will hang on for a minute, because there is much more to come and, with a plot this convoluted, the game must make up for it!

Wizkid consists of two phases with additional bonus levels thrown in. Phase 1 involves controlling the *Wizkid* as he bounces around the screens. As he bounces about, one not only destroys the minions of the chief nasty, but also earns some hard cash in a very unusual way! As the character knocks out the baddies, a musical note is created and floats across the screen. If the *Wizkid* can grab this, some musical notes are written to a musical staff. If one collects enough notes to make a tune, this invokes a most welcome rainstorm of money. Naturally, the *Wizkid* must quickly collect said funds or the entire exercise is worthless.

Still reading? Now, the *Wizkid* can take the money to the shop and use it to purchase lots of very strange odds and ends that function as useful tools in the next portions of the game. Once all the screens have been cleared of Zark's minions, one of Nifta's kittens appears and the player can then move into the second part of the game. Each kitten needs to be rescued, which is achieved by solving various logic-type puzzles.

The graphics are very good, sound support is OK, and the interface is involved, but once learned is pretty good. *Wizkid* is an original and unusual game. It is European in flavour, very European; in fact it could even be French. This will not be everyone's pint of beer, but it is



Shadow of the Comet

different and, with the tactical and puzzle aspects is far more than an arcade game with some frills bolted on. It is currently available now on Amiga, ST and IBM.

Zool is another superior puzzle/platform type, worthy of a short mention purely because of the recent hype about consoles. *Zool*, currently available on the Amiga, but shortly to be produced on the IBM, is considered (by those who profess to know) to be all that Sonic Hedgehog — the animal that launched a thousand consoles — should have been! That is a big compliment for this graphically superb addictive joystick waggler. "Over-There" will keep you posted on the IBM PC version, but when the console explosion subsides, it may be this type of product that will draw those users to proper machines, and real software.

World Wrestling Federation: European Rampage Tour is Ocean's follow-up to the original WWF product. It is a wrestling 'simulator' that allows gamers to pit their favorite WWF Superstars, such as Hulk Hogan and The Ultimate Warrior, against their European counterparts, such as Natural Disasters and the Nasty Boys. Graphics are purely average and the controls are all right, but let me put my cards on the table, this is definitely *not* my sort of game.

In fact, it wouldn't even appear in this column other than it allows me to ask US sports fans everywhere to kindly keep the "heroes" of the WWF well and truly locked up in the USA, in their cages, or their television sets or whatever. If this is available on import in the US it will be a fitting revenge!

The two other US inspired products from Ocean are *Lethal Weapon* and *Robocop 3*. The first is almost a straight platform tie-in with the Mel Gibson/Danny Glover smash film. Early screenshots look good and the company really knows how to produce this type of title as a winner.



Shadow of the Comet

Robocop 3 is, however, much more than a mere shoot-em-up film tie-in. One of Ocean's big early hits was the UK distribution of the old Data East four color CGA *Robocop*. They did not handle the later EGA versions, but have now produced, in-house, this excellent product. *Robocop 3* is based on a film yet to be released, but the basic backdrop of the plot is of OCP, the company that built Robocop, being taken over by a Japanese conglomerate. Crime is still rife in town, with Splatter punks and official vigilante groups declaring war on each other.

Robocop 3 puts the player in charge of old tin legs and can be played on one of two levels, Arcade or Movie. The Arcade game consists of five different modules, the Adventure game is more of a graphic adventure, weaving the type of challenges found in the arcade games into one story line. The separate games within this mode involve either having the player on patrol and driving a Police Turbo Cruiser, cleaning up drug gangs and rescuing hostages, testing out the new gyropack, or going head-to-head with another cyborg. All the action is seen through Robocop's perspective, but there are also a series of selectable fixed and floating camera angles.

That's the story of what's available on this side of the Ocean. We'll try to have even more surprises, next issue. **CGW**

SCREENS SHOWN: IBM 256-COLOR VGA.



Return To Known Space

Tsunami's *Ringworld: Revenge of the Patriarch*

by Charles Ardai



Larry Niven's *Ringworld* is enormous. Not the novel, which weighs in at a tidy 342 pages, but the *Ringworld* itself, the huge alien artifact which gives Niven's best-known work its title. At one point, Niven likens the *Ringworld* to 50 feet of Christmas ribbon circling a candle. Only, in place of the candle, imagine a sun — and suddenly one is dealing with a Christmas ribbon that has three million times the surface area of the Earth.

The size of the thing is one of the crucial points of the book, and it is inevitably the one that suffers in the computer game adaptation from Tsunami. There are only so many screens of the *Ringworld* wall that one can scroll past before getting bored. "How could Speaker stand it?" Niven writes. "Hour after hour of driving...beneath the belly of

this...artifact." So Tsunami gives us three and lets it go at that. With so much room, the *Ringworld* is home to an unimaginably huge number of alien cultures; Tsunami shows us five, and shows them to us briefly.

There is probably no way of getting around this limitation, short of putting the game on a couple of CDs and spending a decade or two writing it. Still, Tsunami has to face the fact that it has chosen to adapt an essentially impossible-to-adapt work. One could create a comprehensive simulation of *War and Peace*'s Russia before one could exhaust the slightest fraction of the *Ringworld*'s surface.

Readers might wonder why I mention this at all — surely Niven himself didn't exhaust the possibilities of his creation in his novel, and no one gets on his case about it. Yet, as I keep stressing in my reviews, there is a difference between a novel and an interactive game. A novel, like a film, is an author-directed journey through however immense a landscape. A game, on the other hand, is supposed to be a player-directed journey. In a game, the entire landscape, or as much of it as possible, must be accessible.

Not here. In *Ringworld: Revenge of the Patriarch*, Tsunami has taken the opposite tack, shuttling the player through a storyline so rigidly constructed that one might as well be in the hands of an intrusive, Dickensian author who says explicitly, "Now, Dear Reader, I shall take you to see the colony of the Canyon People..."

Never before has there been a game so movie-like in its construction. There are great stretches of action during which the player literally does nothing. The last several minutes of the story contains several events in which the player could participate, but he is never given the chance to do so. Even when the player's input is requested it is often irrelevant (i.e., all of the player's choices produce the same outcome), or else it sets in motion an animated sequence over which the player has no control.

The animated sequences are well done (though the graphics sometimes become embarrassingly rough when the characters ap-

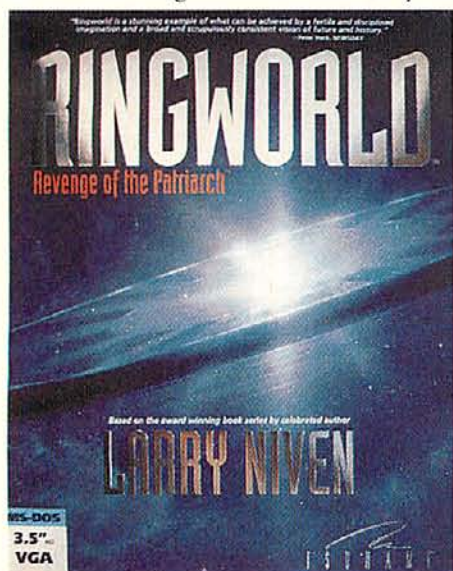
proach the extreme foreground), and the game is relentlessly faithful to Niven's conceptions; but this is all beside the point. The point is that the game resembles a cartoon. One does have to solve puzzles to "unlock" each section of the game, so the player does have *something* to do, but Niven fans should not come to the game expecting to have a chance to roam free on their beloved *Ringworld*. What they should expect, instead, is a single, new tale of the *Ringworld*, with them participating minimally in the telling.

Chmee For Wu and Wu For Chmee

The story picks up shortly after the end of the novel and, in fact, maps itself to the novel quite well. In place of jaded adventurer Louis Wu we get jaded mercenary Quinn, a friend of Louis Wu's. In place of the nameless Kzin, Speaker-To-Animals, we get Speaker's son, Seeker-Of-Vengeance. In place of sassy, sexy Teela Brown we get sassy, sexy Miranda Rees. In place of insane Puppeteer Nessus running the mission for his own purposes we get a different Puppeteer, also "Hindmost" (that is, pulling the strings), though this one only appears in holographic form. In short, we get a new (but not very) band of four adventurers out to reclaim Slaver technology from the backward *Ringworlders*.



The two humans and the Kzin go off to the *Ringworld* under the Puppeteer's coercion, hoping to track down the missing Louis Wu and Speaker-To-Animals, as well as to restore the honor of the Chmee family. (Speaker-



TITLE: *Ringworld: Revenge of the Patriarch*
SYSTEM: IBM
GRAPHICS: VGA
SOUND SUPPORT: Ad Lib, Pro Audio Spectrum, Roland, Sound Blaster
PRICE: \$59.95
PROTECTION: Documentation Look-up
DESIGNERS: John Jarrett, Chris Hoyt, Robert E. Heitman
PUBLISHER: Tsunami
Coarsegold, CA
(209) 683-8266



To-Animals has been branded a traitor for cooperating with the humans and the game opens with an raid on his home.) There is also some business about the new hyperdrive ships that the humans and the Kzin are building and about a Kzinti plot to destroy the Puppeteer Fleet of Worlds...all in all, enough plot for several novels, or at least one very big one.

As noted above, though, the game is not very big. Most of the issues the game raises simply go unresolved. What became of Wu and Chmee? Will the order of execution against Seeker be lifted? What will become of the artifacts found on the Ringworld? Were the Puppeteers ever in danger? If not, why not?

These questions and more like them are just dropped unanswered at the game's close. There is an explosive climax and a rousing chorus of the theme music, and then there's the DOS prompt, blinking merrily and leaving the gamer without so much as a promise of a "Part Two."

Within individual sequences, the player is asked to solve puzzles (and, at one point, to go through a mercifully optional action sequence) in order to find high-tech items that are in the hands of some very low-tech aliens. One stasis box is held by the superstitious, drunken Canyon People, and Quinn has to sleep with the daughter of the Chief to get it. Another is in the cavern of the Flesh Eaters, where Quinn and Seeker get captured and almost eaten. Still another is at the bottom of the ocean and its acquisition, strangely, takes place offscreen. The last, longest, and best sequence has Quinn infiltrating a Kzinti castle on the Ringworld to steal a Slaver helmet. Then, finally, there's a trip back to the Canyon People for an encounter with one more alien and that's it — that's the whole game.

Along the way, buddy-buddy relationships build up among our three heroes. We know this because they start the game snarling at each other and, bit by bit, snarling gives way to amiable sniping. The banter is on the level of a Saturday morning cartoon, and the simplistic, one-dimensional relationships make the original novel, somewhat pulpy itself, look like a Henry James psychodrama.

There Ain't No Justice

The player puts the characters through their paces using a pop-up interface of command icons which appears wherever one clicks the right mouse button. The icons include no surprises: one can Talk, Walk, Look, Use/Touch, access one's Inventory, or access the disk. This interface works well, and I like not having to go to the top of the screen to do everything.

There are some quirks in the gameplay, however, which make the game occasionally unbearable. One of the worst is in the Flesh Eaters' cavern, where a helpful alien instructs Quinn to push on a stone pillar. The first problem is that there are many stones and many pillars, pushing on any of which but the right one produces no result. The bigger problem is that if one pushes on the right pillar in anywhere but exactly the right location, there is also no result.



What ends up happening is that one pushes the right pillar, sees no result, and writes that pillar off as the wrong one. Hours later, after trying to push everything on the screen, one may return to the right pillar and accidentally hit the right spot or, then again, might not. Less annoying, but only slightly, is a scene where one has to touch exactly the right book on a crowded bookshelf.

Movement is another source of annoyance. One clicks on the spot where Quinn should go and, as often as not, he promptly goes somewhere else. Sometimes he even wanders onto portions of the screen where one cannot see him at all and stays there while one clicks wildly to get him to reappear.

You Gotta Niven To Hold 'Em...

There is one area in which the game is unequivocally successful, and that is in conjuring up Niven's creatures and environments. This, presumably, is what most gamers who buy *Ringworld* are paying to see, so it may be that other players will be happier with the game than I was.

The aliens Quinn encounters are drawn meticulously and always in keeping with Niven's descriptions from the book, from the two-

headed, ostrich-like Puppeteers to the ferocious, feline Kzin, first cousins to *Wing Commander's* Kilrathi. If the aliens Quinn meets in the flesh aren't sufficient to glut the appetites of hardcore Niven fans, Quinn's lander (transparent, bubble-shaped, just as Niven wrote) contains a computer terminal which can access a sort of Encyclopedia Nivenica which includes text about the inhabitants and history of Known Space, plus pictures of almost all alien races.

The spaceships in the game are not entirely satisfying (the super-duper hyperdrive vessels look like the nacelles of the Starship Enterprise), the human beings could be drawn better (Miranda looks distractingly like a young Barbra Streisand), and the animation is jerkier than one would like. However, the aliens, the props (flycycles, pressure suits, sleep plates, autodoc) and the Ringworld itself all look just the way fans would expect them to.

Unfortunately, I suspect that it will be exactly those players who love the game for its recreation of Niven's world who will hate it for its negligent storytelling. They are the ones who will really want to find out what happens next, and they are the ones who will be the most disappointed when they discover that the answer is "nothing."

...Niven To Fold 'Em

As with most adaptations from literature, this game is obviously a labor of love, created by people with an affection for Niven's universe but too little story-telling talent to do it justice. Science fiction fanzines are full of stories like this one, the work of fans who try to write new adventures of Tarzan, Dr. Who, Captain Kirk or whomever. Such stories are almost always sub-professional, at least in terms of technical skill. Writing is tougher than it seems.

Ringworld: Revenge of the Patriarch is a disappointment in exactly this way. It looks and sounds good but is very poorly written. *Ringworld*, the game, is to *Ringworld*, the novel, what the *Ghostbusters*, *Back To The Future*, and *James Bond, Jr.* cartoons are to the movies that inspired them: more colorful, perhaps, but flatter, dumber, smaller, and in every way lesser. **CGW**



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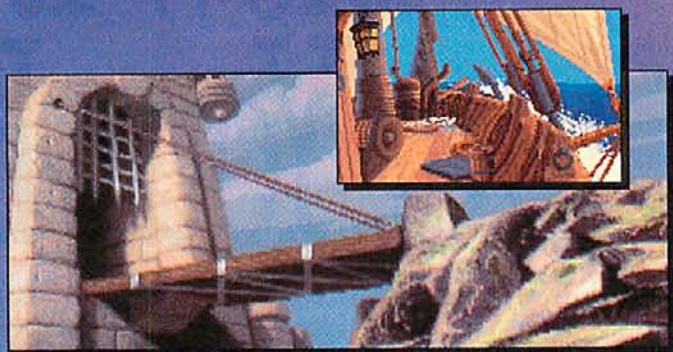
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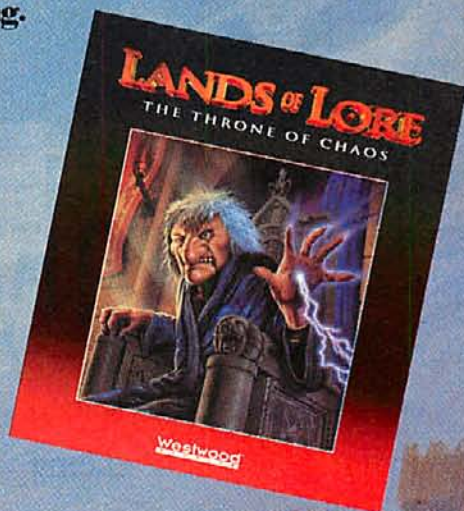
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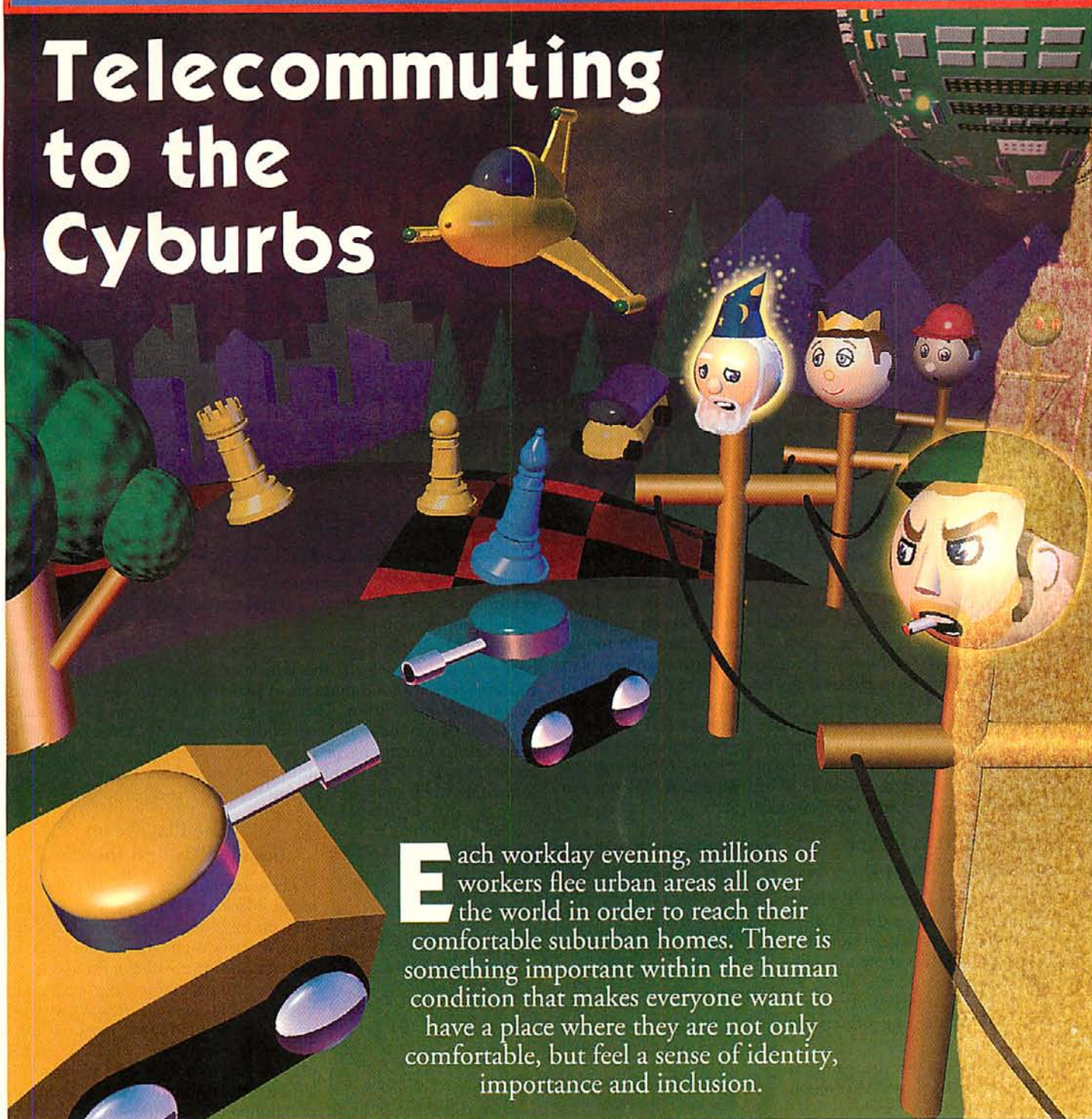


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Telecommuting to the Cyburbs



Each workday evening, millions of workers flee urban areas all over the world in order to reach their comfortable suburban homes. There is something important within the human condition that makes everyone want to have a place where they are not only comfortable, but feel a sense of identity, importance and inclusion.

For many computer gamers, the commute to more comfortable surroundings is both faster and further than ever before. Instead of commuting to and from the suburbs, they compute to and from the cyburbs. What are these cyburbs? They are communities of on-line gamers where one's neighbor may be geographically located a full continent away.

They are both real and imaginary locations where gamers can find a sense of identity (or another identity), importance and inclusion. They are cultures and sub-cultures with their own social dynamics of language, ritual and politics.

According to a recent *CGW* poll, almost 40 percent of our readership is connected to one

on-line service or another. So, it is very likely that many are already effecting their own great escapes, and others will be interested in what it means to do so. With this in mind, we have created a survey of on-line games and a host of special features for this month's theme section. This is our on-line world and welcome to it.

Illustration by Hank Dawson



Cyber Rockets Through Fiber Optics

Genie's CyberStrike Makes Gigantor Strides in Multi-player, On-line Gaming

by David M. Wilson

First kills are sweet. After half an hour of madly dashing about dropping energy relay towers, picking up expansion modules, jumping over buildings with a single bound and getting blown up, I finally had the turkey in my sights. He had drifted a bit too far from his energy towers, and I took the opportunity to open fire, blast after blast pummeling him. He tried to run, but jammed himself in between the corners of two adjoining buildings. So, I moved in for the kill, savoring the sweetness of revenge (after all, he'd killed me two or three times already that day). His air support dropped an energy tower, so I turned and blasted it, lowering his available energy. Swiveling back to face him, I finally had the pleasure of watching him blow up and received the message, "Earned kill recorded!"

Driving Miss Cyber (Game Concept)

CyberStrike is a fast-paced multi-player action game where players drive Cyberpods — robotic, two-legged vehicles. The goal of the game is simply to establish control of a city. This is done by establishing fortifications and power centers as well as fighting off enemy teams.

The primary focus of the game is power. This power is provided through relay towers. Players have to rely on these towers. They must call their air support planes to drop towers at strategic points and eliminate the enemies' towers. I found myself occasionally straying too far from one of my team's towers. At such times, my energy level would drop rapidly, and a teammate would radio me, "Get closer to the towers, Butcher." The result of running out of energy is instant destruction. Fortunately, players who are killed are instantly assigned a new Cyberpod (devoid of any modifications that had been made before being destroyed) back at

the team's start point. A two-minute shield protects the player until he gets oriented or decides to start offensive actions before the two-minute grace period is completed.

Driving these two-legged vehicles is not very difficult if one remembers several things. First, the vehicles don't stop on a dime. They continue forward for a moment or two after slamming on the brakes due to their momentum. This forces one to try stopping a bit ahead of the actual spot desired. Second, the display will show a player who jams against a building or other object which leg is jammed. Pay attention to the display and it is easy to work free. Also, jumping will sometimes free a jammed Cyberpod, as will a rocket module.

The Play Team (Game Play and Interface)

There are four teams in each game: red, green, black and blue. Four players can play on each team. Each unit has a distinctive stripe on its side so that it can be distinguished from other units on a team. A player can attempt to "lone wolf" a bit, but play is more effective and satisfying when one is working as part of a team. The game is well-balanced so that if other players on a team quit, and one player is left by himself, he still has a good chance of standing off the other teams.

There are also "neutrals" in the city. There are tower munchers which attack towers without demonstrating any color preferences and sentinels which sit on strategic points and fire upon any approaching team. Fortunately, these neutrals serve as an automatic balancing factor. If one player suddenly finds his buddies have logged off, the tower munchers will pick on the towers of the opposing teams who outnumber him until some degree of balance is restored.

One of the goals David Whatley had in de-



| | |
|----------------------|---|
| TITLE: | CyberStrike |
| SYSTEMS: | IBM |
| PRICE: | Genie Value Service (\$6 per hour non-prime time usage) |
| SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS: | VGA 386-20 MHz or faster, 2 MB memory, and modem (2400 recommended) |
| DESIGNER: | David Whatley |
| PUBLISHER: | Simutronics |
| AVAILABILITY: | Genie 1-800-638-9636 |

One of the goals David Whatley had in designing this game was creating a multi-player universe that was easy to learn but difficult to master. *CyberStrike* excels in its simplicity. The keyboard controls are easily mastered and the game mechanics uncomplicated. The only necessary option I find missing is a timer display that shows how long the player has been on-line. At \$6 per hour there will be some real surprises at the end of the month. Of course, once I got in, my friend and I played for nearly twelve straight hours. I *do* understand the meaning of the term "game-lock."

Although I spent the majority of my time for this review in ALPHA, the training city, and, as a result, was able to move about and survive pretty well in the beginner-level cities, I was usually instantly annihilated in the upper levels when Whatley jacked me into higher levels just to get a feel for the game.

The depth of the upper level cities is utterly amazing. I was really impressed with the graphic portrayal of fog. You can't get more real than this. The fog was the most believable effect that I saw, but I was dumbfounded at its ability to portray reality. The storms were well done, but I discovered it rains inside the tunnels just as hard as it does outside them (hopefully, that's just a beta-version quirk). One of the basic necessities of the upper levels is an Infrared module, which enhances images in dark or fog.

According to Whatley, there are over 50 modules which a player can pick up when another player is destroyed (those little suckers go everywhere) or purchase with points (earned for each second of sur-

vival). Each module enhances the player's ability by increasing fire-power, movement, speed or vision. The catch is that the player is limited on what kinds of modules he can carry. Each module bay is assigned a level, and only modules of that level or lower may be installed. As the player earns points, the level of the bays advances and the player can add modules on a higher level. Experienced players will assist the "newbie" in knowing what modules he needs for each individual city.



The Killing Yields (Conclusion)

I noted from the multi-player games bulletin board that I was not the only person who had problems getting into the game. My modem was not working properly with the software. The thing that some people are having to do, from terminal mode within the software, is to give their modem a direct command, "AT&C1" to wake their modem up. Then, the software is generally ready to call and connect, *if* the comm ports are set up properly. Simutronics cheerfully assists anyone having trouble getting into the game (not just reviewers).

Leave E-mail and they *will* assist you, I guarantee it's worth it.

CyberStrike is addictive, action-filled and downright fun. The violence is bloodless (since everyone immediately gets carried back to their bases and receives new Cyberpods), but the challenge is exhilarating. Since it is played against real people instead of artificial intelligence, it varies every time it is played. And it will be played a lot! **CGW**

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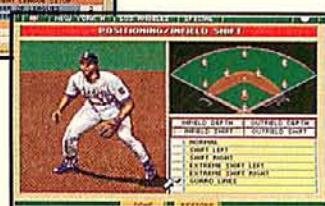
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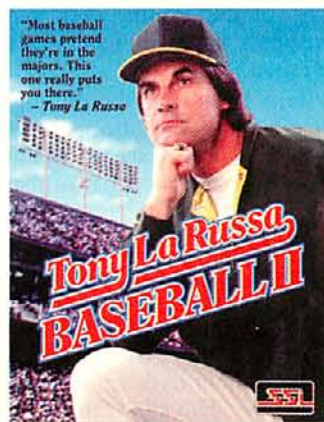
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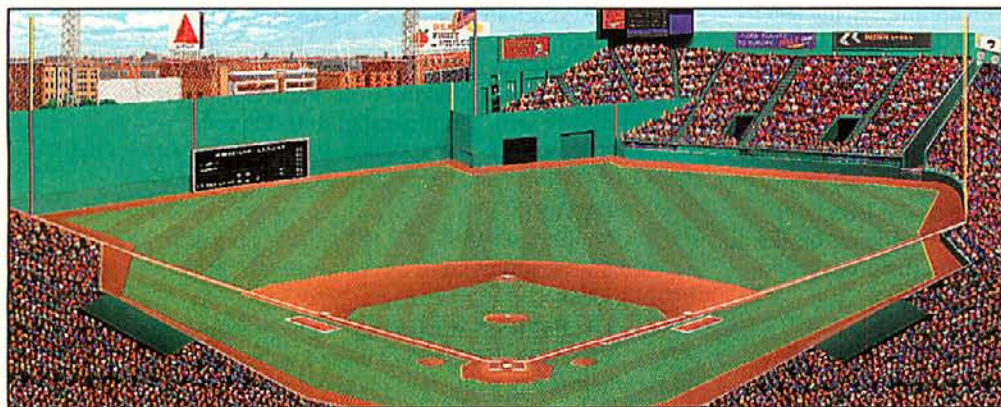
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Mining the BBS On-line Games

A survey of gems to be found
on private bulletin board systems

by William J. Shefski

The geology of the Bulletin Board System (BBS) scene anywhere is ever-shifting. Private boards come and go, and so do the games they carry to attract and amuse their faithful callers. Just as distributors of commercial games show little mercy towards an unsuccessful game, the cruel dictates of available hard-drive space cannot tolerate the presence of an on-line game which fails to attract players. The evolutionary pressures of the BBS world are strong, and only the fittest seem to survive.

This article covers some of the games suitable for use on local bulletin board systems. Even *CGW* readers who do not operate their own BBS may want to look for the same or similar games on local boards in their areas.

To offer some guidance in this maze of on-line games, I have rated the games on a three point system. The highest number represents games which are so interesting that a gamer could fill his/her whole time ration with it, if the BBS set-up would allow it. The medium rating suggests games which are amusing enough to keep a player coming back often, but not necessarily losing any sleep if they missed a session here and there. The lowest rated games are probably best avoided.

Nearly without exception, these on-line games generate a bulletin that can be posted somewhere on the board. Some keep track of the high scores for the month, week, day and/or all-time. This is an important aspect, maintaining high caller interest through the gamers' desire for cyber-glory.

(Please note: Because of the shifting nature of the BBS scene, the telephone numbers and addresses listed here may have been changed by the time this issue reaches the stands. No guarantees as to the currency of the boards they may or may not reach is possible.)

BBS BOWL: (James Fair, The Fishing Hole BBS, 615-646-5550) This game features bowling on an unforgiving lane. Indeed, a real bowler might say it was over-oiled. Still, this features an attractive screen and it is likely that the smart-alecky commentary will bring the player back to try again. It has an increasingly more common "hold-back" enhancement for the registered version — make-up days. This allows the caller to play their daily limit of games from days they missed during the month.

BUGS! (Rick Salinas, Dark Side of the Moon BBS, 209-225-6824) This arcade game invites players to take on the role of exterminator and slaughter the crawlers. Gruesome ... and snooze-some.

CRUNCH LEAGUE FOOTBALL: (Stephen David, Crunchware, Temple of Nine BBS, 703-820-6824) Allows the board to moderate a full blown football league with divisions, stats and a Super Bowl game. Users can draft fictional players who

generate stats. This is a perfect use of the computing power of the host machine. This game and sports games like this generate a high degree of user interest. Sooner or later the big sports game companies will realize the potential of this forum and the deficiencies of *Crunch* will be apparent. For now, it's just about all that's out there.

DRAW POKER: (JNS Software BBS, 304-733-4148) This is one of a series of well-executed card games implemented by the prolific Rusty Johnson. Most of the others are solitaire, but *Draw Poker* is one step above that. It's five card draw one-on-one versus the computer.

GET OIL IN KUWAIT: (Gordon Wheat & Andrew Brown, Amoeba Ware, Nuclear Amoeba BBS, 410-479-1828) Although Saddam makes no appearance in this game, it is an interesting arcade-type puzzler. The gamer must pump the black gold from pockets of various shapes and sizes under the sands. Then, the oil must be removed before one's drilling rigs are destroyed by gas pockets and dynamite blasts.

GLOBAL WAR: (Joel Bergen, ProVision BBS, 206-353-6966) With a bit more than a passing resemblance to *Risk*, *Global War* provides a widespread and active door. The map is a bit different than the one in the boardgame classic, as are some of the minor rules. Many games can be played at once and there are provisions for team games. The computer resolves all combat and there is an interesting allowance made for missed calling days (i.e. Armies awarded at the beginning of one's turn are multiplied by the number of days missed.) Also available is a terminal emulation program called *GWTERM* which can, when running in the caller's computer, use the machine's graphics capabilities. Not only do the maps refresh almost instantly, they are much more attractive. It also allows the use of a mouse, a unique feature in an on-liner.

KANNONS & KATAPULTS: (Alan Davenport, Al's Cabin BBS, 717-686-3037) An entire game of *K & K* can be played during any logon. Player and computer are king or queen of an all-text kingdom, taking turns managing or defending kingdom and castle with cannon, catapult (oddly, more powerful than the cannon), soldiers and assassins. Beware, the computer fights back fairly well.

LABYRINTH: (Randy Hunt and Mark Goodwin, The Lighthouse BBS, 207-942-6575) Gamers looking for an interesting quest simply must wander through this 160-room text adventure game.

LADDERS: (Al Lawrence, Sunrise Software, Sunrise-80 BBS, 404-256-9525) This is a rather simple dice-rolling game where the possible rolls on two dice are ladders which have to be climbed in order to win.

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MAHJONGG PYRAMID: (Mike Wilson, Secret Service BBS, 304-429-6838) Unfortunately, *Mahjongg Pyramid* is no more than a variation on regular pyramid solitaire with uninteresting tiles used instead of cards.

MAT MANIA: (Hack, Spiko and Doctor Z, the Cutting Edge BBS, 203-233-8993) This is an all-text game where the player names, trains and manages a wrestler. Matches can be picked at random by the computer, or one can choose a grudge match against a particular baddie (or goodie). The wrestlers, computer- and human-controlled, are ranked according to whom they have beaten. The text of the action scrolls by, and one's wrestler finds himself in and out of hammerlocks, pounding his opponent with Brain Busters, and climbing the turnbuckles. Training allows improvement of attributes and even the invention of a trademark "rasslin'" move. There could be no better testament to how surprisingly entertaining the game is than when, while tolerantly looking over his shoulder while he played, a certain non-computer-game-interested spouse of a certain reviewer couldn't contain herself. "Go for the pin! Go for the pin!" she urged. It is truly an impressive little game.

MONTE CARLO SOLITAIRE: (Al Lawrence, Sunrise-80 BBS, 404-256-9525) Players try to match up card pairs on a square grid. Then, they consolidate. Frankly, there are better ways to waste one's valuable recreational time.

MC RACE: (Motor City Software) Drag racing is the theme of this text-based game where one is required to maintain and race a rod. The excitement level probably depends on how aroused one gets by the real ones.

ON THE EDGE: (JNS Software BBS, 304-733-4148) Rusty Johnson has provided an intriguing solitaire effort in this game which is built on a 4X4 grid of open spaces. Face cards are placed around the edge and, of course, the gamer turns over cards

and places them. Spaces open up by matching pip cards that add to a total of 10. No room for a face card? It's "Game Over!" Scored in the manner of duplicate bridge tournaments (as are many of the efforts from this company) where everyone plays the same hands. Thus, users are measured against each other using the same challenges.

POST TIME RACING: (Parole Software, The Parole Board BBS, 919-965-4696) If one is enough of a horse racing fan to thrill to the sight of three "horses" — represented by what appear to be hair pins — stutter across the screen, this game could be a good bet. Otherwise, one might be better off watching text phosphor burn into the monitor than trying to pick the winners in this one.

PUZZLE: (Rusty Johnson, JNS Software BBS, 304-733-4148) Consider this game to be an electronic version of one of those party favors where squares with numbers are moved around until the numbers are in order. Between the host board's computer, the home computer and the phone system in between, enough energy is burned in one play of this game to buy a six-pack of Cracker Jacks, in which the same game will likely be found as a prize.

SCRABBLE: (Christopher Hall, P.O. Box 26025, Austin TX, 78755-0025) Anyone looking for an excellent electronic rendition of "the word game by which all others are judged" will do well to check out this version. The host board houses the dictionary, adds up the points and keeps track of all the moves in up to 20 games at a time. The "challenge" rule is not invoked, but a player has only three chances to input a valid word or the turn is lost. Oddly, some proper names are acceptable in this version. That would take some getting used to for the *Scrabble* purist, but it's well worth it. Could there be any better glory than being listed as the leader in the *Scrabble* bulletin of one's local BBS? We think not.

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Circle Reader Service #66

SINK 'EM: (Jim Wilcox, IHS Software, P.O. Box 5103, Macon, GA, 31208) This *Battleship* look-alike allows "fleets" of 10 players plus the computer to shoot five shots a day at each other.

STACK 'EM: (J & W Software 9426 N. China Pink Way, Crystal River FL, 34428) Anyone who can spell Tetris knows the score.

SUPER SLOTS: (J & W Software 9426 N. China Pink way, Crystal River FL, 34428) Who could dislike a game that starts out with "The House will stake you to \$500,000"? This is a five-spot slot that spins cherries and lemons, bells and bars (not pictures, the words.) The progressive jackpot starts at \$100,000,000. Addicts might play all day, if the sysop would let them.

THE PIT: (James R. Berry, Midas Touch Software, MTS BBS, 806-797-2239) A tolerably interesting fantasy-themed work, this game might easily be labeled, "Let's Pound Each Other." This one at least tries to go beyond the text readout of how many hit points have been lost by letting the player's character maneuver around the arena with the number pad. There is nothing that will excite the hard core electronic dungeon diver, but it's a hair above the rest of the Pound 'em Pack.

TRADE WARS: (Chris Sherrick & John Morris, The Abandoned Land BBS, 702-746-1364 & 65) For many players cruising the boards, there is no other on-line than *Trade Wars*. Many versions are circulating and they are, apparently, highly configurable. Except for the core concepts and basic mechanics, no two boards seem to carry the same exact game. The basic format is that the galaxy has 1000 sectors to explore. The trader can build up his or her wealth moving commodities and building a fighting force. At

higher levels there are planets to acquire and even terraforming. Keep an eye out for the computer enemy and, of course, for fellow users. The beginning player has a long apprenticeship, but the persistent can build a large and complex empire. This game will be around for a while, in one form or another.

TRIPLE YAHTZEE: (Al Lawrence, Sunrise Software, Sunrise-80 BBS, 404-256-9525) The enduring poker-dice game has seen many a programming exercise. This is Yahtzee times three, where one can place one's dice roll in any of the three consecutive games. It could conceivably serve as a two- or three-player game, all at the same calling computer.

TRIVIA TIC TAC TOE: (Mike Wilson, Secret Service BBS, 304-429-6838) There are a lot of trivia doors circulating. This one does a bit more than just add up how many a player answered correctly. The gamer places an "O" in the square if an answer is correct. If not, X gets the spot.

VIDEO POKER: (Worldwide Programming, The Light-house BBS, 209-252-7968) Just like it sounds, *Video Poker* is a pleasantly-rendered Jacks-or-Better coin-eater. The computer keeps track of how many pairs, two-pairs, three-of-kinds, etc. the player scores. Then, it generates a bulletin with the records in each. As much action as any casino (or the corner bar), and one isn't likely to lose the rent money — unless calling long distance.

WHEEL OF FORTUNE: (Michael Goetz, The Speak Easy BBS, 407-291-4626) Vanna in ANSI? (No. But it had to be said, didn't it?) "The Famous Wheel" is not present in its familiar form. The numbers spin more like the "Showcase Spin" prop on "The Price is Right" but the word puzzle game is the same. For the solitary player. **CGW**



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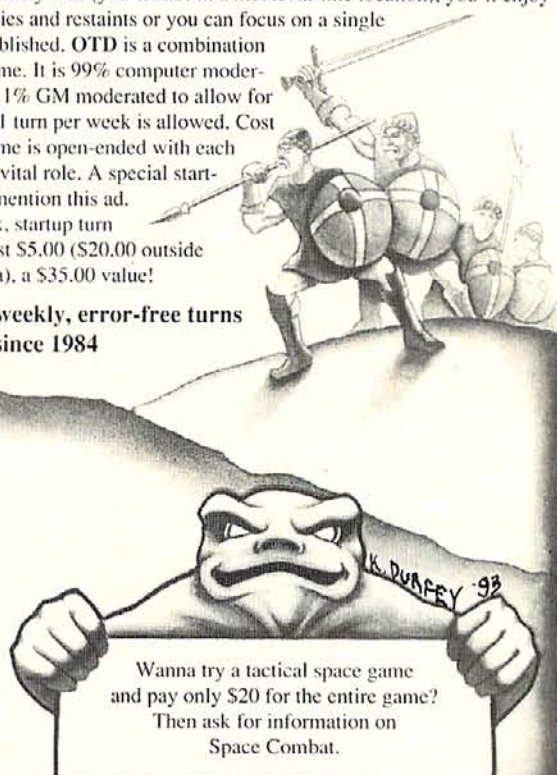
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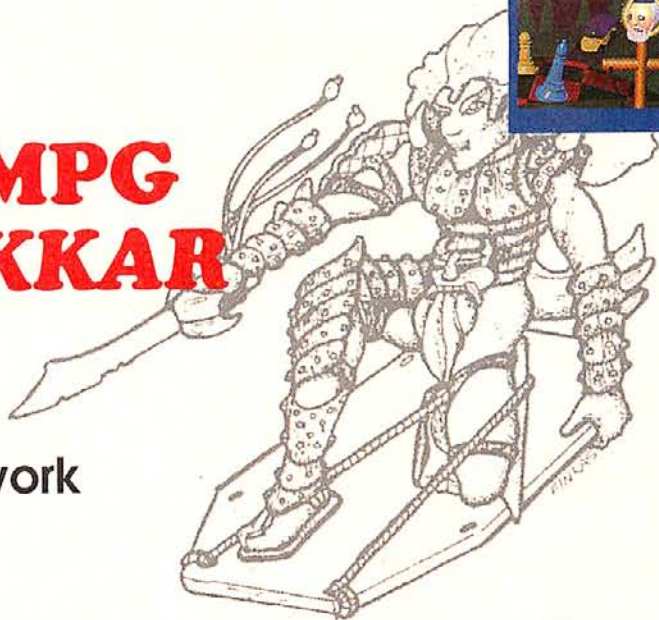
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Role-Playing on the Multi-Player Games Network

by Jasper Sylvester



I'm glad my parents didn't name me, "Mork." Imagine being known as Mork from Nork. It's bad enough being from a town that everyone knows something nice about. "Oh, yeah! I got my training as a Mentalist in Nork." "Nork? Explored my first dungeon in Nork." "Hey, do they still have the Steel Flower Tavern?" I get tired of hearing about it.

It's not that there's nothing to do in Nork. It's just that everybody seems to be doing it. There's just no sense of having been the first to have done something. Let me explain. Drakkar used to be one great landmass. Then, the Empress decided to release a bit too much of her psionic power and now, of the four habitable cities, only Nork is not an island in a sea of inhospitable terrain. All four cities are still connected, though, by virtue of a system of one-way portals, and it seems like everybody who wants to be somebody comes through here.

We get 'em all. From cities, woodlands, forests, mountains and caverns they come. As outcasts, they come. Male and female, they come. We must have a magnet for mercenaries. No matter whether they are high in Strength, Intelligence, Wisdom, Agility, Willpower or Constitution, they come. Whether they have a lot of Luck or a great deal of Charisma, they come.

I guess that makes sense. We have a Brotherhood of Fighters where a person can become proficient in weapon skills; a Brotherhood of Mentalists where individuals can discover psionic disciplines; a Brotherhood of Healers where one can learn to focus psionics for healing; a Martial Arts dojo where one can learn the traditional arts of hand-to-hand combat; a Thieves Guild where one can discover the more streetwise and slippery of disciplines; and even a Barbarian trainer outside of town. We even have the perfect training ground, right below our city.

The dungeon, as we call it, used to be the dormitory of the Elite Guard. When the Empress' mental powers went awry, so did the guard. In fact, they may be the source of the monsters that would-be adventurers fight below the gravel roads of our fair city. Whatever the

tale, there are riches aplenty and experiences galore to challenge novice to intermediate-level adventurers. When they get too strong for Nork's underground, they can also try their hand at the monsters outside of Maeling, Frore or the Volcano City. None of those cities is as light and cheerful as our fair environs, but there is certainly more action in their vicinities.

D is for Destiny

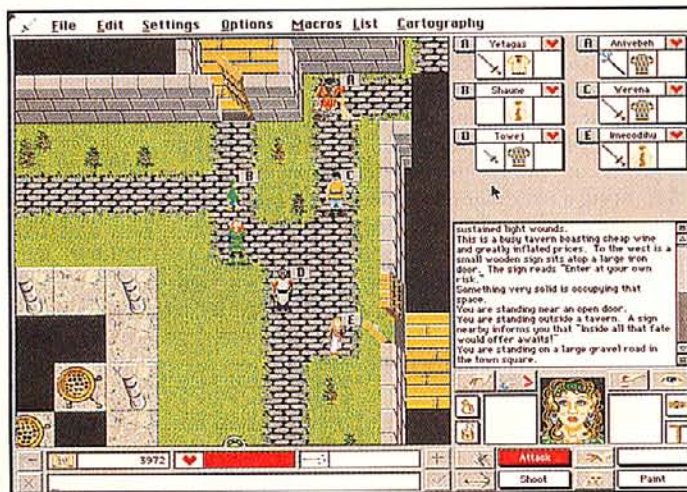
Once they get here, it's almost as if they are driven by forces far beyond our world. It is like their destiny guides them a move, two moves or maybe three moves at a time. I often get the feeling that someone is pointing a little arrow where they are supposed to go and clicking some magical artifact to get them to move along, as though they give up to three orders and wait for my friends and neighbors to carry them out. Sometimes, I even get the feeling that these forces even script out common actions in advance and invoke a special magic called "Macros" to get my fellow adventurers to act even more quickly.

Sometimes, I imagine that I am one of those forces that control adventurers. I look down on our town from above and click a hero or heroine through their paces. I use the "symbol" to put words in my hero's or heroine's mouth. I tell my adventurer(ess) when to attack

that orc, rockman or goblin by clicking my rodent-sized artifact or running my fingers over a rune-covered tablet that clicks as I caress it. I negotiate with shopkeepers by commanding my vicarious personage to place their loot on the counter and have it appraised. Sometimes, I imagine that other beings are trying to communicate with me through their representatives in our world.

R is for Rockman

I'm not sure it would be easy to control my heroes in combat, though. Since it seems like everyone is getting up to three orders in advance, it looks like some of our unique monsters (Rockmen, Sanquin and Yeti)



would be able to get into hand-to-hand combat with our heroes before we, as the controlling force, even saw them. Then, we would just have to keep giving the same scripted order over and over again till we quit getting messages that our hero was

getting hit. Hero and hobgoblin could even pass each other in the same maneuver. It would sure make it hard to maximize an adventurer's use of missile weapons. It would almost make it advisable to wait until the monsters attacked one's surrogate before attacking.

One thing's for sure, I would make certain my surrogates learned to search corpses. Some of the best treasure is found after a nice little dungeon scrap. In my imagination, I see little clouds of gleaming gold streaming out from under the piles of ordinary weapons, armor and bodies whenever there is treasure. I'd even make sure that they had a pouch, a bag and belt for holding gems, bottles, scrolls, weapons and gold coins. I'd even make them read the scrolls in the dungeon, if there wasn't an immediate fight at hand. That way, they could dump 'em if they weren't useful and save 'em if they were.

A is for Action

I'm sure I'd love watching the action from my god-like perch high above the denizens of our dungeon and citizens of our city, but I wonder if I would know more about why all this fighting's going on if I were a controlling force. After all, the dungeon dwellers seem to

leave us alone if we stay out of the dungeon. Is it just our greed that keeps us going down in the dungeon? Is it the only way we can gain status?

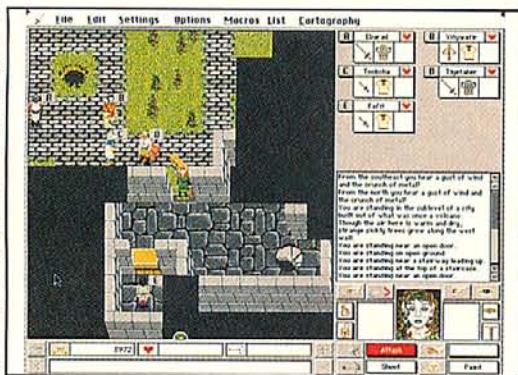
Sure the scrolls occasionally give us a hint as to where to find more dangerous and potentially more rewarding dungeons or nudge us toward hunting a red dragon in order to harvest the scales, but why are we here? Where is our motivation? People who come to

Nork can find armor lying all over the roads of our town. Where does it all come from? The dungeons are full of treasure. Where do these creatures get it? We seem to be here as someone's playthings. Shouldn't there be more?

K is for Keebler

I guess the best reason we're here is to get to know each other. It's kind of nice meeting lots of new people. Take those forest dwellers that were hanging out in the Last Chance Tavern, for instance. They called themselves the Keebler elves and said they looked like some merchants in a different town that sold cookies. I didn't understand them, but they did look like cute little elves and I would buy cookies from them.

They were all sixth level fighters and were looking forward to reaching the 13th level. If they could get enough 13th level fighters together, they can charter the powers that be in Nork to grant them a charter as a Guild. It's hard to imagine a Guild of Keeblers, but that's why they're in Nork. They're trying to make a name for themselves and their guild-to-be. I like that. Maybe I'll join.

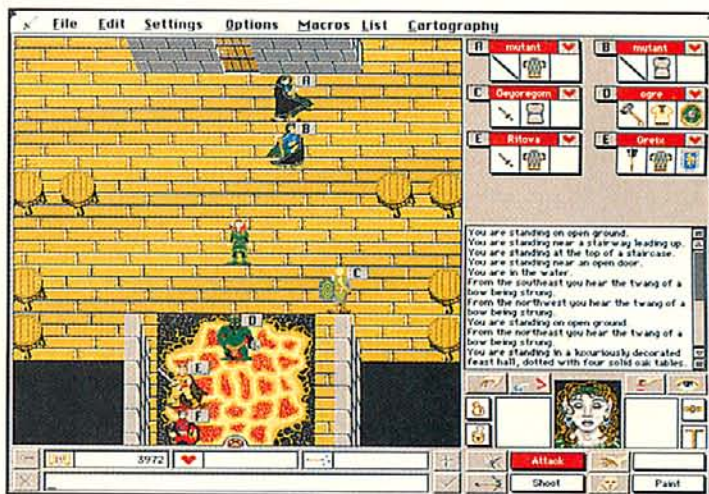


K is for Karma

One of the best things about this place is that it's possible to come back from the dead. Even a controlling force can't always bring his/her servants back to life, but in Drakkar, one always has a chance. I think the mantra is something like "Restore," and then the Healers use their karma to bring the heroes back to life. I think that's good. If a controlling force is going to invest his/her time in guiding an adventurer across the terrain (and under it) of Drakkar, they ought to be able to get another chance when things go awry.

A is for Assets

I also like the fact that any adventurer who doesn't use psionics can go to the Steel Flower Tavern and put some of his/her loot in a locker. This means that scrolls and gems don't have to be sold right away and that adventurers don't have to get burdened by carrying a lot of weight around. It also acts sort of like insurance. Should an adventurer die and not be restored to life, his/her heir can get the goodies out of the locker. The loot on the person disappears, but the treasure in the locker stays there.

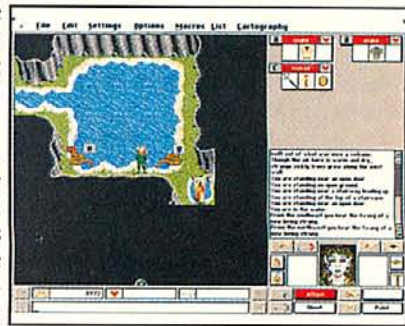


R is for Results

Yes, if I had the chance to be a controlling force, I think I'd like to control a person on Drakkar. I might have to appeal to other forces in order to open the gateway to reach Drakkar. The Kingdom of Drakkar exists on a plane called the Multi-Player Games Network. One must expend something like six gold coins per hour (\$6.00) to maintain a presence on that plane. For those who cannot reach that plane directly, there are portals known as SprintNet and Compuserve Information Service through which one can reach that plane for a few additional coins.

If I could remake Drakkar, I would give its citizens more of a reason for living. I would interweave a plot through its history. I would rework the monsters so that they are visible at all times. Yet, who am I to speak? I have yet to kill a Yeti and am yet to wed a wife. Still, I have told you of our city and I hope to see you here. Even, if your parents name you Mork.

[Translation: The Kingdom of Drakkar is a multi-player graphic role-playing game on the Multi-Player Games Network (1-800-438-4263). Gamers use a combination of an icon-driven and a command-line driven interface to react with the world - Ed.] CGW



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Publisher: Maxis

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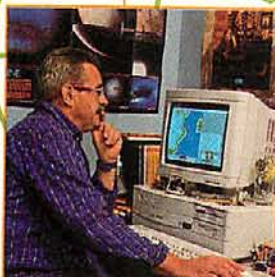
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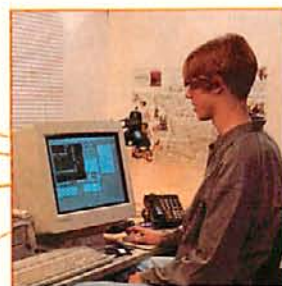
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ISLANDS IN THE INTERNET

A Navigational Chart for Gamers on the Internet

by John J. Brassil

The 10th anniversary issue of this magazine contained a brief review of the history of computer games. As observed in that article, the very first computer games were developed by computer scientists (a.k.a. nerds) who wanted to play with their new toys after they were finished working on them. Now, these mainframe computers are connected to one another by the thousands in a network of mind-boggling complexity. Toss in the government and commercial hosts and it totals about one million hosts attached to the Internet worldwide! (An article in the *Internet Society News* estimates 992,000 in June of 1992.)

Since that first game of *Spacewar* was played at MIT in the 1960s, there have always been games wherever there have been computers. Things have progressed far beyond the days of *Star Trek* on display terminals and the original Great Underground Empire (i.e. *Zork*). It is now possible to play computer games, talk about computer games, and even design computer games (in a fashion) on the Internet.

To give some sort of idea of the scope of interest, let's take a look at the Usenet newsgroups which deal with gaming on the three major home computer types. A Usenet newsgroup is very similar to the discussion areas found on the major on-line services such as CompuServe, Genie, America On-Line, and the like. Readers post articles which can be read by anyone who subscribes to the group and replies can be made via follow-up E-mail or posting to the group. One of the newsgroup hierarchies is the "rec" area, which deals with recreational topics. There are about 70 different areas under the "rec" group (the number changes as new groups are added and deleted — the Internet is a *very* dynamic environment!) One of these areas is rec.games, which in turn, has 29 of its own subgroups, ranging from rec.games.abstract to rec.games.xtank. In between are newsgroups relating to backgammon, the game of Go, *Empire*, fantasy role-playing games, board games, *Diplomacy* (more about that later), and even coin-op arcade games.

An area of special note is the rec.games.mud newsgroup. "MUD" is an acronym for "multi-user dungeon." Here, players get together in an electronic dungeon and interact in "real time!" There are several Internet hosts which provide these on-line dungeons, engendering several different styles of "muds." Needless to say, these types of adventures don't support the fancy graphics and sound support of commercial software, but there is the thrill of actually designing and defining the universe you inhabit!

There are also newsgroups under the comp.sys hierarchy which deal with the commercial, shareware and freeware games available for home computers. In the latest weekly reporting period, the comp.sys.ibm.pc.games newsgroup had 1,252 articles (1,864,624 bytes), comp.sys.mac.games had 440 articles (1,139,452 bytes), and comp.sys.amiga.games had 363 (536,494 bytes) articles posted. That's over 2.5 MBs posted in one

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| Railroad Robbery | 19 | Monoply | 25 | PGA Golf Complete | 49</ | | | | | | | | | | |

week without even considering the statistics for the Atari ST!

I read the *ibm.pc.games* group regularly, and the topics there range from benchmarking of video frame rate to the lack of sleep caused by playing *Sid Meier's Civilization*. The hottest topics right now are discussions of strategy (and cries for help!) in *Ultima Underworld II* and *Star Control II*.

The MS-DOS games archive is located on a computer at Lowell University in Massachusetts. (The internet address is <ftp://ulowell.edu>.)

All the shareware titles from Apogee and Epic are available, as well as demos of many popular commercial titles. There is also a directory of nothing but text adventures and a large directory of miscellaneous games which run the gamut from a primitive *Space Invaders* clone to the impressive "shoot 'em up" *Galactix*, which rivals many current commercial offerings. Directories for patches and utilities can also be found here, and there is even a comprehensive archive of the electronic magazine *Gamebytes*, which features reviews (including screenshots!) of new and existing products.

Files are compressed with PKZIP, although several other compression formats are also used. The archive is maintained by Brian

"Doc" O'Neill, who checks uploaded files for viruses and to make sure the software is not copyrighted material. In fact, uploading copyrighted material to any Internet host is a big no-no. A large repository for user-created *Harpoon* scenarios was shut down by the administration at Kansas State University due to complaints from Three-Sixty about one copyrighted program which had been uploaded by an irresponsible user.

In addition, there are big MS-DOS game repositories at the University of Michigan [ar-

chive.wustl.edu]. There is a daily influx of programs into the "MSDOS_UPLOADS" directory, and the latest demos and other new software are often posted there first. I recently downloaded a demo of the *Lemmings 2* game which was enough to revive Lemmingmania for an all too short while.

There was a promise to say something further about *Diplomacy* on the Internet, and while space prohibits me from going into too much detail, suffice it to say that e-mail is lots quicker than postal play, and computer adjudicators (programs known to the *Diplomacy* faithful as "the Judge") are available on hosts in the U.S., Australia, and South Africa to handle most of the bookkeeping chores. Now if only someone would write an SVGA front end for the judge output!

Well, that's a whirlwind tour of Internet gaming. We docked at a few of the major ports of call, but there are many bayous and backwaters to be explored, and the good news is that there will soon be easy access to all of them. The growth of the Internet ensures that this vast ocean of data, discussion and diversions will soon be lapping at everyone's lap-top, if it isn't soaking their shoes already. (So that's why my socks are so wet!) **CGW**

It is now possible to play computer games, talk about computer games, and even design computer games (in a fashion) on the Internet.

chive.msdo.edu] and Oakland University [oak.oakland.edu], among others, and a superb collection of *Windows* software at the University of Indiana [ftp.cica.indiana.edu]. There is even an archive at the University of Iowa which is devoted to game solutions, hints and walkthroughs! One of the largest general archive sites (probably the busiest as well) is the famous "wuarchive" at Washington University in St. Louis. [wuar-

QQP's

Strategies of the Month

Vol. 20

A monthly column to improve the quality of play

SOLITAIRE'S JOURNEY • Many games, like Klondike the "standard" solitaire, can't be won every game, but you will have to play with some level of skill in order to get your average above the standard averages that have been set-up. It may take some practice at the game.

CONQUERED KINGDOMS • Using a well mixed force is quite essential. It is important to support one type of unit with another that can eliminate their nemeses. This type of a combination can devastate your opponents onslaught. This mix is also vital when teleporting with a wizard. A wizard with only archers being teleported into an area in which you have not explored could quickly be eradicated by a few catapults. • A great challenge: Try not utilizing any dragons on map 5. This is a challenge that should only be tried after using all the unit types several times.

BATTLES OF DESTINY • Artillery is a very important unit type that can wreak havoc upon anyone's front lines. They are by no means the most powerful unit, but they can punch holes in that "unbeatable" defense that some speak of. • If you have not tried all three methods of starting, you may want to try some of the others. It is almost like playing a completely different game. The strategies you will need to employ change significantly if you are playing for a set amount of time or an unlimited game.

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Jacking into the Internet

Getting access to an Internet account isn't as easy as picking up a phone and subscribing, as with the commercial networks. Most users of the Internet have accounts through their association with an organization with Internet/Usenet access; usually a large company with government connections or a university. Some universities do offer accounts to private individuals for a fee, but most restrict access to members of the school.

The only other way for one to get access is through a private bulletin board system (BBS) that is an "official" Usenet/Internet site. Many private BBSs have access to a limited number of Usenet news groups and offer limited e-mail capability. Finding such a board is a matter of poking around the BBSs in your area. Phone numbers and information can usually be found in local computer weekly magazines and at local user-group meetings.

There are several good sources of information on the Internet/Usenet. A nice overview of worldwide networks is John Quarterman's *The Matrix: Computer Networks and Conferencing Systems Worldwide*, published by Digital Press, 12 Crosby Drive, Bedford, MA 01730 (800)-343-8321. Quarterman also publishes a monthly newsletter, *Matrix News*, which covers the Internet, among others. Contact Matrix Information and Directory Services, 701 Brazos, Suite 500, Austin, TX 78701, (512) 320-9031.

Other general sources include *Boardwatch Magazine*, 5970 S. Vivian St., Littleton, CO 80127, (303) 973-4222, and *Online Access*, which can be found on most computer publication newsstands. **CGW**

The Good...



The Bad...



And The Butt-Ugly.



In the Old West, you couldn't tell the bad guys from the good guys by how ugly they were (you had to rely on the color of their hats). But in *Freddy Pharkas, Frontier Pharmacist*, even a scrawny, sissified, one-eared Pharmacist can be a good guy.

Al Lowe, creator of *Leisure Suit Larry*, spins a yarn of school-marms and chorus girls with hearts o'gold, cowboys and Indians, and varmints and heroes. It's the brand-new, age-old tale of Freddy Pharkas, a gunslinger who gave it all up for his love of pharmacology. Together with his faithful Indian companion, Sрни Bagdnish, Freddy sets out to save bucolic, boring Coarsegold from a fate worse than Hollywood adaptation.



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Into the Volcano of Death

A Trip Into the Fiery Environs of TSN's Yserbius

by Samuel (V'ger) Baker II



Twinion was a lovely port, ruled by a king. All races were welcome and times were happy. Then trouble arrived in the form of Arnakkian Slowfoot, a wizard that the king invited to live in a castle on the island. Arnakkian didn't play nice and one night, whether by intent or misadventure, evoked a volcanic eruption. The volcano (named Yserbius) buried his digs in lava. Now the place is only open to the more adventurous tourist trade. That's where we come in.

The Shadow of Yserbius is The Sierra Network's entry into multi-player roleplaying on the computer. Each person can run one character at a time and be joined by up to three other friends to hack, slash and puzzle their way through the depths of the volcano in which the action takes place.

The game presents a 3-D you-are-there perspective a la *Dungeon Master* or *Ultima Underworld*. There are 11 areas in *Yserbius*, each identical except for name, and they serve to separate the players into communities of 50 to 80. One may have as many as six characters in the stables ready for play and simply select the desired character before entering one of these areas.

During movement, the screen is split into three sections. The upper left window shows what the party sees. Underneath this is a small text window where dialogue from the players and game messages appear. The right side of the text window has a scrollbar that may be used to review past messages. In the middle of this bar is a lock that, when clicked upon, freezes the text window so that an important message can be studied.

The right-hand side of the screen shows the portraits of players in the party. Each of the portraits may be examined to gain further information about oneself and one's fellows. A large area in the middle may be used to show player information, a map of the level the party is on, or the names of players who are on the map. The bottom part shows icons for player inventory, spells, skills and game options such as saving the player's position.

All of the artwork is static. Though the look of the underground is pleasant, but not spectacular, the still shots of the monsters are very beautifully drawn, with few exceptions. The same pictures are used for monsters of the same category. For example, the picture that represents the sabertooth also represents ice lions, manticores (yech!) and others of the cat family. For now, no sound boards are supported, but Soundblaster support is promised

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| TITLE: | The Shadow of Yserbius |
| SYSTEM: | IBM |
| # PLAYERS: | Unlimited (four in one party) |
| PRICE: | \$12.95/month for 30 hours on The Sierra Network, plus \$4.00/month for access to Medieval Land. |
| DESIGNER: | Joe Ybarra |
| PUBLISHER/HOST: | The Sierra Network Coarsegold, CA (800) SIERRA1 |

for a future version. I quickly turned off the sounds from my PC speaker.

Your Presence is Requested

The first order of business in playing *Yserbius* is creating one or more characters. There are six classes, eight races, and two alignments (harmony and chaos). The classes are thief, knight, barbarian, ranger, cleric and wizard.

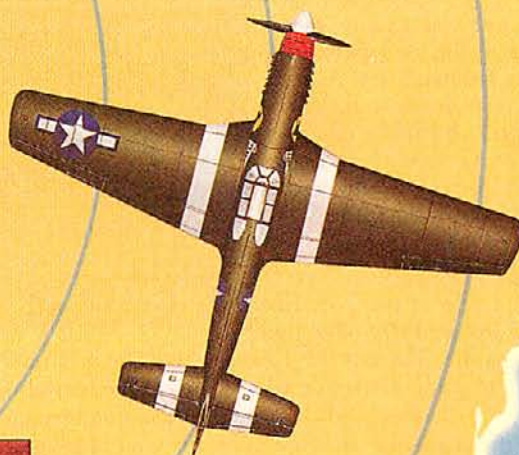
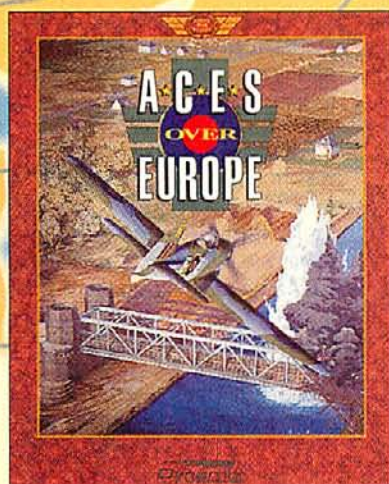
The seven races are elves, dwarves, humans, trolls, orcs, gnomes, gremlins and halflings. To create a character, one chooses a class and a race. Then one can choose the artwork that will represent the character or design the character in detail and leave the art work until later. The faces are very believable, but it would be nice to have a greater selection of expressions and hairstyles. The player may freely jump back and forth in the creation process, but once one leaves a section, the points one has spent from that pool are set. One allocates points from separate pools to stats, spells and skills. The stats that one may raise are strength (the better to womp on you my dear), defense, (the harder to be womped on), agility which helps one elude spell effects, and initiative which determines who womps when. Three other stats (dexterity, hit points and mana points) increase naturally as one advances in level.

There are three groups of spells: attack, defense and utility, which modify attributes, heal or provide information. There are 24 spells. When allocating points for spells, one should take care not to pump up the level of a spell too much before one can see how much that spell will cost to cast per level. There are 12 levels for each spell, and one can only cast the level that one has paid their dues to. That may mean that a spell may be ineffective at low levels, or it may mean that one cannot afford to cast it at higher levels until one has gained several more experience levels.

The 24 skills are divided into groups by character class. Each class has four skills which are defaults for that class. Then, some skills from other classes will be acquired as one rises in levels, and others may be acquired as the reward for completing quests. Some skills are active all the time, such as weapon skills, others must be invoked during movement or combat. For the starting player, the emphasis here should be on weapon skills at first, because hacking will be the primary means of disposing of monsters for the first few levels.

There are only 27 places to carry items. Six of them for items worn, one place where items





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exchanged between players appear, and 20 in two bags. This is not nearly enough to carry all the quest items one will acquire, special items that can cast spells, and potions to restore health points and mana. If it were not for the mana trick (explained later), players would be popping back and forth to the store after every other fight, a rather large nuisance and a process which I believe would quickly degrade the performance of the game.

The Reception

Upon entering the field of play, the first things one will see are the three structures that control a player's life. There is the Tavern where one may read posts from players and easily determine who is there. One may also converse with anyone in this area by clicking on their name and typing a message. Next, is the castle-like structure called the Guild Hall that serves as a training hall, general store and pawnshop. Before doing anything else, one should enter the keep and purchase equipment. Lastly, there is the volcano itself with a top and bottom entrance. The bottom entrance is for people who have saved their position and need to step out to the store to get a cup of mana or such like. One may teleport out and re-enter here without having to slog all the way back down on foot.

Combat works as a series of rounds, and each member of the party gets to act once every round. Each round one may hack with a weapon, cast a spell, use a skill or use something in one's pack. When all the party has been polled, their actions' results and those of the monsters are shown in the small text window below the picture of the monsters.

At this point, the player may be dead. A beginning player should expect to die a lot. However, in most cases, someone else in the party will be able to cast a resuscitate spell and bring the player back to life.



This spell will even work in combat, which is nice as one has to survive in order to collect the goodies. If all of the party dies, one is sent back to the opening screen and may enter again at the top entrance.

After a while, most fighting will become routine. All members in the party will cast death darts and most of the monsters will die. Those that are left will eventually succumb. Fortunately, most fights may be fled from. Since fighting takes more time than fleeing, this is welcome for those in a hurry to complete a quest before leaving. Except for location-triggered encounters, the number of opposing monsters is nicely tailored to the number of people in the party.

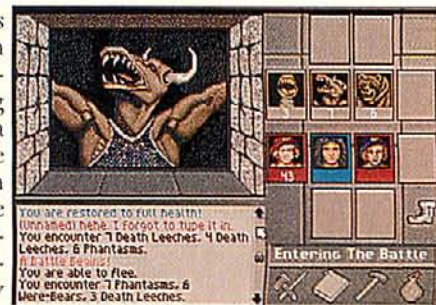
Quest for Story

This is not the case for quest encounters. Quests are the staple diet of adventurers in the volcano. The rewards for completing them are quite generous. In some cases, skills or stats are boosted or weapons are gained, rather than experience. Even at the highest levels, the later quests were quite exciting. I found my palms sweaty on several occasions, especially during the Quest of the Four Parapets. The final battle took about a half hour and was nip and tuck for a party of nineteenth to thirty-fifth level players. I was a level 19 wizard at the time. I did not die during the fight, but was occasionally down to under ten hit points. About 20 minutes into the fight, I had no mana points and was using items to cast spells. I had one charge left in a Staff of Life when Arnakkian finally expired. In the Enlikil quest, I was at level 25 and with a level 35 barbarian and a level 84 cleric. Several times during the running fights I was dead and these two players were down to 5,000 or fewer hit points. Since many high level monsters can deliver blows of multiple thousands of hit points we might well have all died. Most quests can be completed in one or two hours and may be resumed at a later time if necessary. A couple of the quests require the participation of another party. I thought this was a nice touch, and it was not hard to find another party that would cooperate.

Party Time

There is a social life growing under the volcano. This is assisted by the ease with which one may communicate while there. Just typing and hitting return sends a message to the party. One may speak to anyone in an area by typing their name followed by a colon. Messages may be sent to everyone on the same level by clicking on the map button with the mouse.

There are many guilds of players that hold organized events, and most of the guilds have staked out areas as "their" territory, where members of that guild may be found most of the time. A high majority of the people there are friendly, helpful and quite generous of their time. As a new player, I never had any trouble finding "older" players



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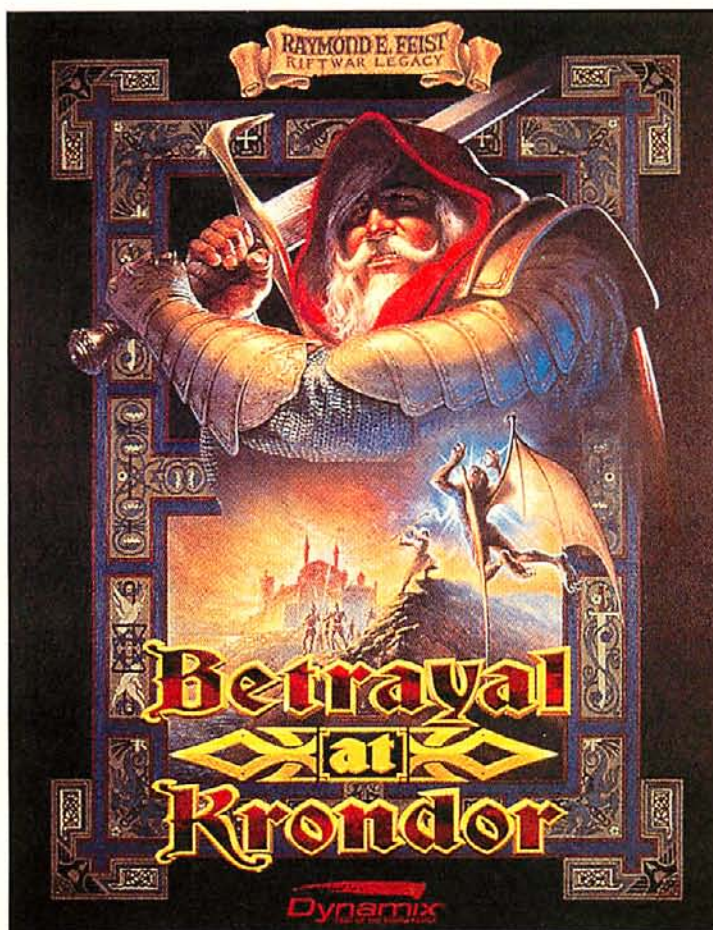


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to go out with. Older players will frequently adopt a newbie and protect them, letting them accumulate levels quickly and teaching them the short cuts to fame and fortune. While leading on quests, I had frequent occasion to ask other explorers where to take an item or the order in which to do things. I always received a response that was friendly and helpful.

Here, as elsewhere on TSN, romance blooms. Many players go around in pairs and flirt while playing. I must admit I was not immune to this aspect myself. Women can expect quite a bit of attention under the volcano, given a friendly nature. Most of the time, everyone conducts themselves within bounds. Of course, in any large group of people, there will be a few laggards who have not fully understood good manners. One has only to complain by hitting the complaint button that appears on the TSN menu and action will be taken.

There are also guild wars where more organized conflict takes place. As part of the map and party section of the menu, it is possible to challenge other parties. Challenges of this nature produce nothing of value, no experience for killing other players, and no items (unless one has the pickpocket skill). Some people still do it though. A way out for this has been provided, however; one may simply "mute" oneself and not be liable to being challenged. One may also mute oneself against being joined so that one will not be joined by others while waiting for a friend.

Brickbats of Outrageous Fortune

The great majority of my experience with *Yserbius* has been positive. As always, though, there are a few flies struggling in the ointment. After the first ten levels or so, money ceases to matter. I have millions now



and there is not much to spend it on. On weekends the system can be sluggish as it reaches saturation. Also, crashes will happen as the network drops users it can no longer support. Since TSN relies on Telenet to carry it across the country, Telenet's problems are also theirs. Over New Years Day, Telenet crashed, bringing down c.10,000 users of TSN. In the time since, things are still a little flaky around the edges. Periods of group crashes have occurred, but things appear to be settling down.

A new revision of *Yserbius* is coming that will fix some of the bugs in the game. During my play, I found no bugs that affected the players in an adverse manner. There are several bugs that may be taken advantage of by the players, however. One in particular gives players 15,000 experience points for repeatedly entering and leaving a room without fighting the monsters there. This has produced players with levels in the hundreds who have been playing only a few days.

Journey's End

The game can be entertaining, but what made this an experience to be savored are the many good people with which I ventured forth. There is no substitute for the companionship of others and *Yserbius* gives one all the tools one would wish for the interaction that is the core of this game. I now have a number of people whom I consider good friends, and I will be playing long after this article is submitted. Most of the people I met were thoroughly addicted to *Yserbius* and to TSN in general. Those who possess the money would be well served to try out TSN and *Yserbius*. Those who choose to journey there, be sure and look for V'ger (or V'ger elsewhere) and say hi. **CGW**


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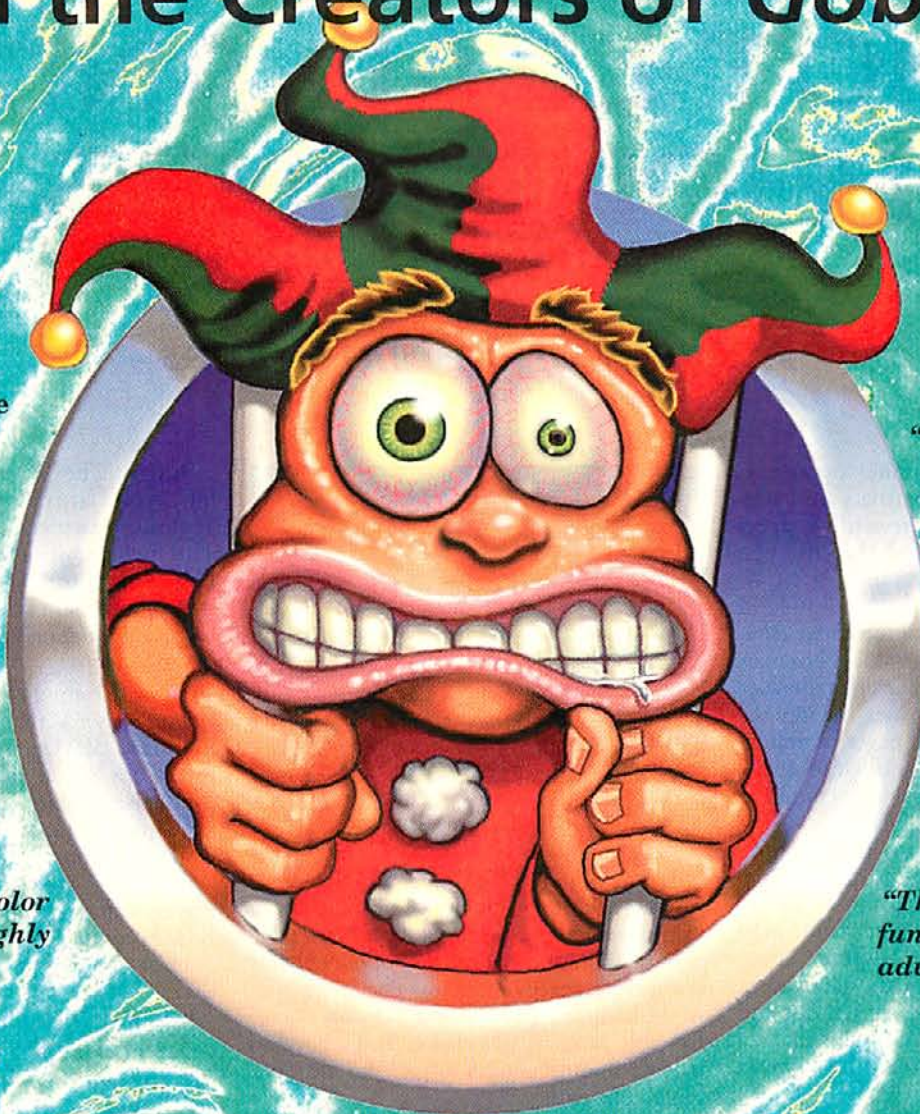
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HOT LEAD AND PHONE LINES

A Survey of On-Line Games

While artificial computer opponents and role-playing partners are a convenient and often rewarding aspect of computer gaming, we feel that the best opponent/partner is a human one. At CGW, we believe very strongly that multi-player gaming in virtual, tele-communicated environments is the future of the hobby. No matter how sophisticated the artificial intelligence algorithms become, or how user-friendly the interface, the computer will never be able to match the perverse gaming brilliance of the human mind. And besides, the computer doesn't care much if you gloat.

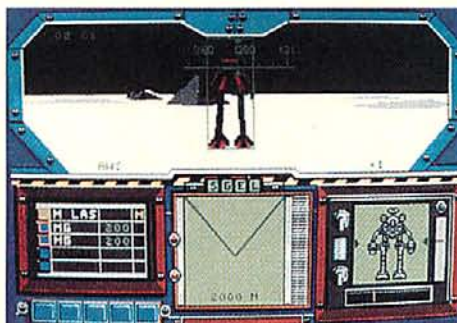
This listing of games is designed to give readers an overview of the multi-player experiences available on several commercial on-line services. We hope that these brief descriptions might prompt some of those gamers who have never had the pleasure of human-to-human gaming to "reach out and touch" fellow hobbyists. You might make a friend or two, and you'll certainly have a good time.



Air Warrior on GENie

When games are not part of the basic service fee, we will list the extra hourly/monthly costs separately.

Air Warrior (GENie): Kesmai's classic game of multi-player air combat, covering the era from WWI through Korea, was one of the first on-line games to use a graphic front-end. The latest version, *SVGA Air Warrior*, is reviewed in this issue. Word has it that the Air Warrior section of GENie is the hangout for air-combat jocks. \$6.00/hr.



BattleTech on GENie

Backgammon (The Sierra Network): Gamers who long for the good old days of gaming around the hearth or the kitchen table may be more inclined to find opponents for traditional strategy games on The Sierra Network. Included in TSN's extensive list of coffee-table games is this classic. You'll have no trouble finding players to role the old doubling-cube with.

Baseball Manager (Prodigy): Would-be baseball general managers should enjoy this new spin on the rotisserie/fantasy style of baseball. Gamers prioritize actual major league players for the draft, and rosters are controlled by the amount of money "paid" to the players drafted. Then, would-be managers set line-ups and line-up contingencies for head-to-head play. Rather than the weekly results one would get from a fantasy league, the on-line game uses a pool of statistics to figure out daily scores. \$100.00 per season, plus monthly fee.

BattleTech (GENie): With a role-playing shell that allows gamers to enlist in the armies of the various Houses of the BattleTech universe, or serve as maverick mercenaries, this version of BattleTech has possibilities that even the Virtual Entertainment BattleTech Centers don't have. The ability to participate, through the miracle of Kesmai's graphic front-end, in on-going campaigns from the comfort of one's own home is both addicting and satisfying. Fans of Activision's *MechWarrior* will not want to miss this next generation of the classic simulation. \$6.00/hr.

Bridge (The Sierra Network): In today's busy world, it is more and more difficult to get bridge partners together for a few hands. This highly trafficked service makes it easy to find both a regular bridge partner and an impromptu rubber. It is regularly frequented by players ranging in skills from beginners to grand masters.

Chess (CompuServe, The Sierra Network, USA Today): Many networks have chess sections for PBEM games. Compuserve boasts a forum for postal play, real-time chess and simultaneous chess (four players simultaneously play two games each). The Sierra Network has plenty of face-to-face action and USA Today features a chess ladder (where players compete to reach the top). All three systems can boast an active and ardent group of chess-players with a broad range of expertise.

British Legends (CompuServe): This is your typical text-based multi-player role-playing game with an emphasis on magic. The



The Sierra Network Main Menu

goal of the game is to rack up the treasures and points needed to become a Wizard. As Wizard, the player is granted special powers, the most potent of which is the gift of invisibility. The unseen gamer can then slink about the on-line world wreaking mischievous havoc on unsuspecting underlings. \$6.00/hr.

CEO (Prodigy): The basic monthly rate on Prodigy allows gamers to become the Chief Executive Officer of the company of their choice and compete with other Prodigy sub-

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| PRICE | ADVERT | MKT SHARE | PROD COST | |
| BRW | 20.0 | 150 | 20.0 | 12.64 |
| DBS | 20.0 | 150 | 20.0 | 12.64 |
| SLR | 20.0 | 150 | 20.0 | 12.64 |
| WUF | 20.0 | 150 | 20.0 | 12.64 |
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| Planets! Starbases! Battles! Four ships await your command REBEL SPACE | | | | |
| Next Menu Xref Jump Path Tools Help Exit | | | | |

CEO on Prodigy

scribers within that industry. Players manage their companies through on-line reports and budgetary expenditures and constraints, while they attempt to outpace the competition in both efficiency and profits.

Cribbage (The Sierra Network): The classic game is always accessible on The Sierra Network. All one needs to do is examine the interests of those on-line, find a prospective opponent, and invite them to the game. Best of all, it automatically keeps track of the *Cribbage* scoring system so that it is impossible to forget (or steal points for) unspotted points.

CyberStrike (GENie): Simutronics' new shoot-'em-up is described in the review on page 60 of this issue. The intense action, communicated through the graphic front-end, makes this an addictive on-line pastime. \$6.00/hr.

Diplomacy (GENie): Although play-by-E-mail *Diplomacy* (the Avalon Hill game of deal-making, back-stabbing and resource grabbing in pre-WWI Europe) exists on almost every network, *Diplomacy* games have been fully-automated on GENie. Not only can one find ready opponents for the standard game, but there are several game variants, including "Gunboat Diplomacy" (no negotiating), and several other options, as well. \$6.00/hr.

Empire Builder (MPG Net): The strategy game of railroad building/operating that spawned an entire line of railroad games (*British Rails*, *Euro Rails*, *Japan Rails*) is now undergoing beta testing on-line. The game runs under Windows and sports a sharp looking graphic front-end of the map used in the boardgame. The entire interface is point-and-click and includes an "auto-move" feature that should speed up play in comparison to the boardgame version. \$6.00/hr.

Fantasy Sports (CompuServe, GENie, NVtel, USA Today): Almost every major on-line network has fantasy leagues where players draft major league stars and total up the stats of their actual performances. NVtel features draft leagues where teams play head-to-head over the course of a week. CompuServe has draft leagues where players compete against the rest of the league during every week of the season. GENie and USA Today offer head-to-head fantasy leagues, but one must draft the team afresh each week. \$6.00/hr.

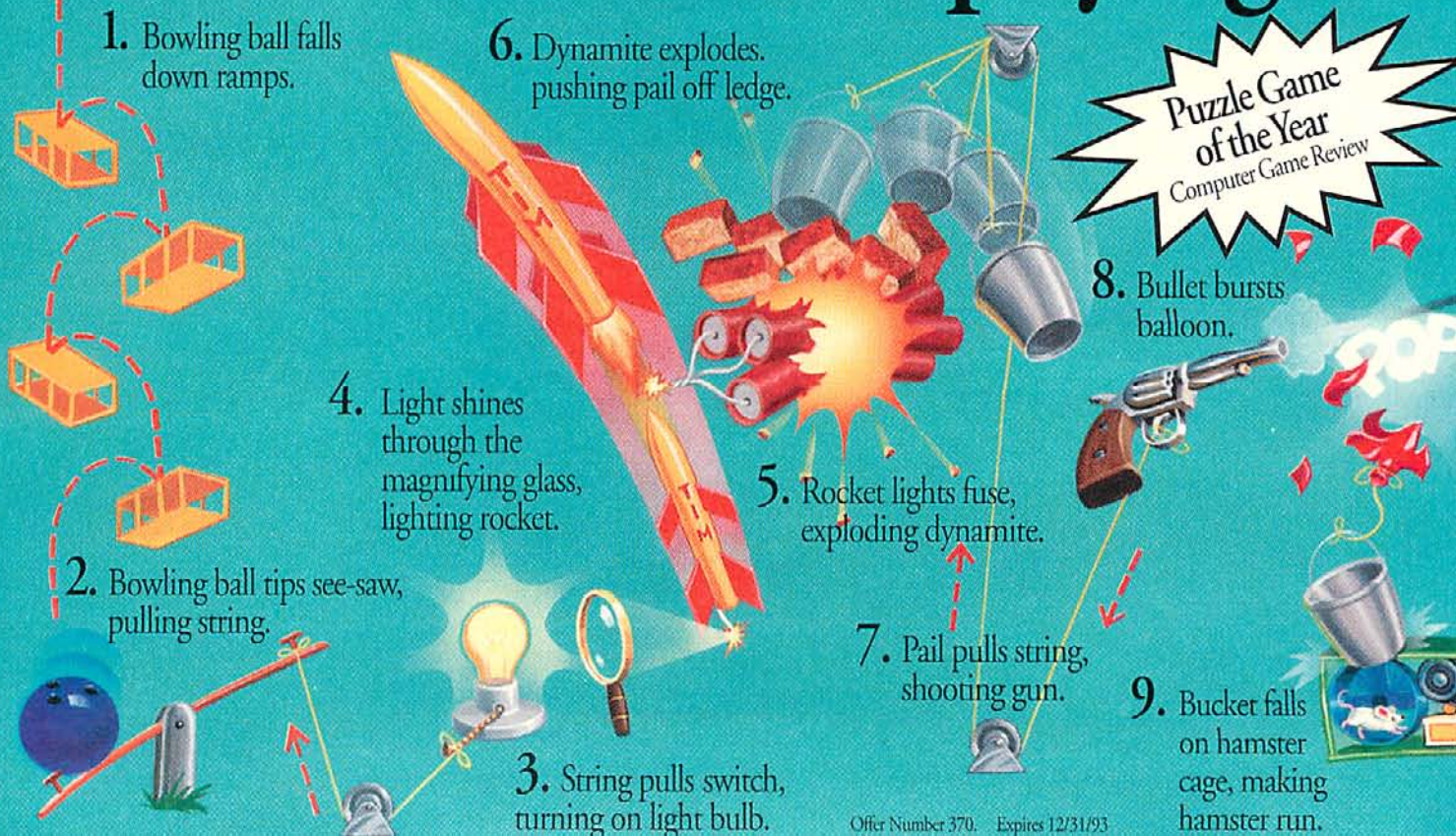
Federation II (GENie): Gamers become intergalactic traders in this text-based space trading game. The spirit of community among regular gamers is extremely high, and players who are promoted to the highest levels get to design planets upon which all traders may adventure. It is also billed as an "adult" gaming environment where risqué forms of textual interaction are less of an exception than a rule. \$6.00/hr.

Galaxy II (National Videotex): AUSI has used a similar interface to that in their on-line *Diplomacy* game (GENie) to facilitate this map-based space conquest game. Gamers get to establish both the history of their people (in terms of passivity and aggressiveness) as well as the current stance of said empire with regard to aggression. Then, gamers make economic and military choices that determine



Empire Builder on the MPG Net

How to STOP playing *The*





Kingdom of Drakkar on the MPG Net

how much of the game's universe they can conquer. \$6.00/hr.

Gemstone (GENie): Simutronics' highly recommended text-based game of multi-player, fantasy role-playing. The game uses Iron Crown Enterprise's *RoleMaster* rules. See the update that introduces the new graphic front-end on pg. 90 of this issue. \$6.00/hr.

Hundred Years War (GENie): Jim Dunnigan's extremely detailed game of medieval politics, economics and warfare is now available on-line. The game can be played strictly by E-mail or it can be played as interactively as one desires. See the update on pg. 96 of this issue.

Island of Kesmai (CompuServe, NVtel): This classic text-based fantasy game has stood the test of time. It was one of the first commercially available multi-player CRPGs and

is still worth playing. The game consists of two segments: the Basic Game, consisting of several "lands" for beginner and intermediate players, and an Advanced Game for veterans. New lands and challenges are added all the time. It is now available on U.S. Videotex, as well as CompuServe. \$6.00/hr.

Kingdom of Drakkar (MPG Net): Imagine a multi-player fantasy game where everything is graphically portrayed. That's *Kingdom of Drakkar*. See the brief review on pg. 69. \$6.00/hr.

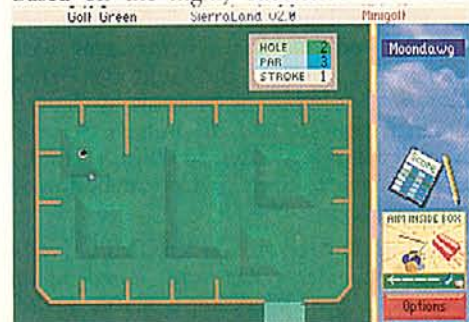
Legends of Future Past (Digital Dreams Network): This virtual environment is a text-based role-playing game which uses live Game Masters to keep the action moving and the "cyburban" populace working together. It is a rich, dynamic, and lovingly supervised world of the imagination. One can play a number of races with different skills, join special guilds and secret societies with secret agendas, and the system sponsors special "major quests" once a week where the whole populace of the realm may get involved in a large scale adventure. There have even been "wars" on the system, where an entire city was called to arms to fight off an army of baddies. Like most of these games, this one is extremely addicting — perhaps even more so. \$6.00/hr.

Miniature Golf (The Sierra Network): TSN provides a colorful playground in which one to four players can putter around and have a few laughs. Like their real-life counterparts,

the holes are wacky and often fiendishly devised, providing many opportunities for players to playfully jibe one another's shots. Beware: the course seems to have a law of physics all its own!

Modem-to-Modem (CompuServe): CompuServe provides this forum (GO MTM) for gamers who want to connect with other gamers in modem-to-modem games like *Knights of the Sky*, *Falcon 3.0*, *The Perfect General*, *Command HQ* and more. The new *Empire Deluxe*, in particular, was designed to work through this forum (but only for two-player, head-to-head competition). \$6.00/hr.

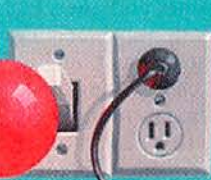
Neverwinter Nights (America On-line): This is the ever expanding AD&D Forgotten Realms universe custom designed for network, real time, multi-human player action. Based on the highly successful SSI "Gold



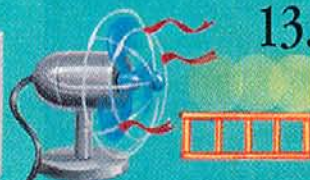
Mini Golf on TSN

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12. Balloon turns on motor switch.



13. Motor starts fan, pushing tennis ball off ledge.



14. Tennis ball trips see-saw, sending bowling ball crashing onto *your* computer.



11. Scissors cut balloon string.



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Operation Market Garden on the MPG Net

Box" series of computer role-playing games, *Neverwinter Nights* stays faithful to the universe and game system where parties of several players can roam together on quests. With a time limit element added to the tactical combat system and the ability to page other players anywhere on-line, the system seems well thought-out. Fans of the Gold Box series know what to expect as far as the mechanics of the system go, and the human element makes it that much better. \$6.00/hr. + \$14.95 for the graphic front end (which can be downloaded).

Operation Market Garden (MPG-Net): Board wargamers take note. Based upon Game Designer Workshop's classic board wargame, this two-player game based upon the famous airborne operation of late WWII, is the only game currently available of its kind. With hexes and counters and the traditional board wargaming symbology, this game is the game for the grognard who can't seem to find opponents. \$4.00/hr.

Paintball (The Sierra Network): This game features an overhead view of two teams maneuvering over a variety of terrain features. The goal is essentially, "Capture the Flag," but both sides have "paintball" weapons with which to blast each other for additional points. The interface and the graphics are fluid and elegant, but the TSN sound support (*splat!*) gives getting hit by "enemy" paintballs a whole new dimension.

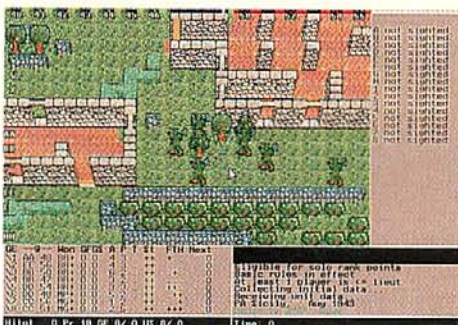
Poker (The Sierra Network, USA Today): USA Today has a poker ladder for those who wish to play poker by E-mail or compete for high scores in their video poker section. The



Shadow of Yserbius on TSN

Sierra Network offers "face-to-face" competition for Larry Bucks in Larryland under a dealer's choice system. \$6.00/hr. (USA Today), +\$4.00/mo. for all of LarryLand (TSN).

Rebel Space (Prodigy): Space marauders with a megalomaniacal bent will find many worlds to subdue in this turn-based play-by-E-mail game. Players can side with a universal cause as either Militarist, Environmentalist, or Scientists, or play the maverick as an individualistic Rogue. The game is very simple, and thus recommended for the newcomer to



Sniper on CompuServe

PBEM games. The player plots four moves for his four ships and decides what sorts of modules should be built on each ship. Daily, weekly, and bi-weekly turn games are available.

Red Baron (The Sierra Network): Based on the award winning Dynamix computer game (recently inducted into the *CGW Hall of Fame*), the on-line version of *Red Baron* adds the human opponent element that can never be matched by any artificial intelligence. Complete with a scoring system and weekly



Rebel Space on Prodigy

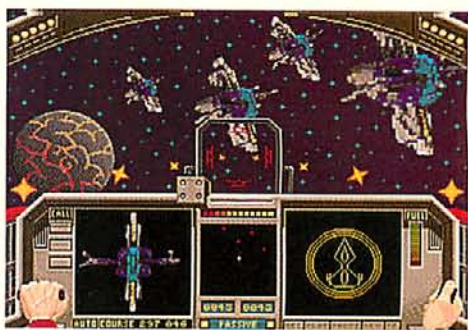
top rankings, each game can be played by 2-4 joystick hot shots. The person calling the game can designate player's airplanes, starting altitudes, weather conditions and more, so that each battle will be particularly interesting. Although some problems were found in earlier versions of the game, at press time TSN was about to release a major revision of their on-line *Red Baron* product which was supposed to address many of these problems.

Shadow of Yserbius (The Sierra Network): When TSN does on-line role-playing, every-

one wants to delve into their dungeon! Although there is an extra \$4.00/mo. fee to play in the Medieval section of TSN, the legions of eager *Yserbius* players find it well worth it. Each player becomes a single character from one of six different classes and can run through the ever expanding maze levels solo or in parties with up to three others. Using an interface reminiscent of other popular, first person perspective role-playing games, *Yserbius* has become a way of life for a very socially interactive crowd. See the article on pg. 72.

Sniper! (CompuServe): Roughly based on the SPI boardgame, this is a two-player game of small unit maneuver. Originally a game where players commanded ASCII characters to move through ASCII terrain, the game now features a graphic interface with full-color characters and terrain. As players are successful, they move through the ranks of the on-line elite. \$6.00/hr.

Star Cruiser (MPG-Net): *Wing Commander* on-line? Almost. While the action is a bit slower than Origin's space-combat action



Star Cruiser on the MPG Net

game, and the graphics are less detailed in many ways, *Star Cruiser* is still a hot multi-player shoot 'em up. The future holds many exciting things for this system. Within the next few months, a trade option will be added so that players can improve the technology of their ships. In addition, MPG-Net has plans to add a role-playing segment based upon the *2300 AD* people-and-paper RPG universe. \$4.00/hr.

The following are voice contact numbers for the services mentioned in this article:

America On-Line: (800) 827-6364

Compuserve Information Service:
(800) 848-8990

Digital Dreams Network:
(800) 274-2814

GEnie: (800) 638-9636

Multi-Player Games Network:
(800) GET-GAME

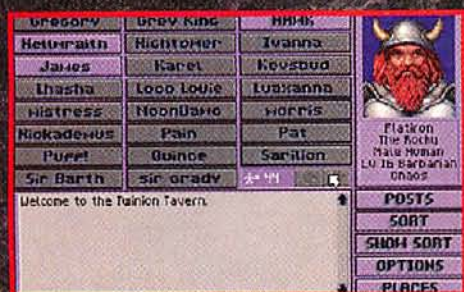
National Videotex (NVtel):
(800) 336-9096

Prodigy: (800) 822-6922 x566

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Gemstone Gets A GUI Makeover

The New Graphic User-Interface For GENIE's Multi-player Role-playing Environment

by Jay Kee



To the people who design them, and to many of the people who play them, on-line multi-player games (MPGs) may represent the first real glimpse of Virtual Reality. Current VR hardware relies on clumsy attachments to produce simple graphics that fail to deliver an illusion of reality. But MPGs like Simutronics's *GemStone III* — minus the hardware, helmet and gloves — have managed to create that illusion by focusing on the one sense that needs no bio-mechanical enhancement: imagination.

A fantasy role-playing game based on I.C.E.'s *Rolemaster* and *Shadow World* paper-and-pencil systems, *GemStone III* has achieved tremendous success without any graphics support whatsoever. Relying on a text-only interface, it has been the number one entertainment product on GENIE since its release over three years ago. Its success and popularity is, to some degree, a testimony to the quality of design and originality of scripting. But good writing and clever programming alone won't keep people coming back time and again to play a game at \$6.00 an hour (off-prime rates).

There's something more, something seductively different.

Power To The People

That something — the one thing that sets *GemStone* apart from conventional computer RPGs — is that all the characters a player encounters within the game are controlled by other *people*; not algorithms in a program. In *GemStone*, up to 60 people at a time can be on-line together, each playing their own character, pursuing their own goals, contributing their own perspective to an ongoing drama. Almost any kind of interaction that can be experienced in real life can be found in the game: talking, partying, fighting, making friends, making enemies, even getting married.

But characters are not the only element controlled by people. Simutronics employs the largest staff of designers, programmers and writers of any on-line game currently available: six full-time GMs, five assistants, two part-timers and a World Coordinator — enough to run a small country. They can create, modify or even upgrade the game environment in real-time, without shutting it down. Which means that new features can be added, special events can be introduced, and surprises can be sprung at any time, with all of it coordinated and controlled on-line. A recent enhancement to the *GemStone* system that factors role-playing ability into scoring and character advancement, could not be done without the participation of human controllers. As Simutronics CEO David Whatley points out, it gives *GemStone* a legitimate claim to being the first true fantasy role-playing game.

For the players, it's like being an active participant in both the writing and creation of a fantasy adventure. The only difference is that this story always starts in the middle, and never ends.

The Front-End, Top To Bottom

So why mess with success? Why introduce a front-end graphics interface, when the text-based game has been such a hit? The answer, simply, is "Why not?" Simutronics didn't replace the text-based interface with this new graphic front-end; they merely added to it, enhancing what was already there. The result is a slick terminal program with VGA graphics, animation, digital sound and a macro editor that makes playing the game a lot easier.

Although the *GemStone* front-end is still in the Beta stage (currently version 1.6), it's fully-functional and surprisingly bug-free. Unfortunately, it's only available for IBM compatibles at the moment, but

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Simutronics confirms they are considering the possibility of producing a Mac version.

The program is located on GEnie at page 930, in the GemStone Software Libraries, file #68. Download time will run about an hour with XModem at 2400 baud, but the package contains everything a player needs, eliminating the necessity of downloading any other files. Installation is simple: just type "GS3FEB16", and hit <enter>. The self-extracting archive will unpack and write all the files to disk.

From The Top

The first thing that needs to be made clear is that the *GemStone* front-end is not a stand-alone program. Although a player can change settings and use the macro editor off-line, the graphics displays, animations and sound effects only work on-line or in the *GemStone* area. The other point is that players do *not* need to have the front-end to play the game.

That said, let's take a look at what the front-end has and what it does. The first thing a player sees when running the program is a logo animation. But once the front-end loads, all that's left is a black screen and a cursor. It almost looks like the system's hung up, but there's nothing wrong; it's just the default off-line display. Hopefully, future versions will bring up something more interesting.

There are no mouse-activated menus, even though mouse support is included, so getting around is handled through the keyboard. Not a problem for someone raised on DOS, but a minor nuisance for those of us used to mouse-controlled environments. Of the several Alt-key combinations that access all the principle options, the most important is Alt-H. It brings up a help screen that displays all functions supported by the program and the key combinations that activate them. This panel can be called up at any time, on-line or off, so players don't need to memorize anything (just as long as they don't forget Alt-H).

Configuring the front-end is simple, once you know where to look. The Settings screen can be accessed from anywhere in the program by pressing Alt-S. It brings up a panel that allows the player to set everything from screen display and terminal preferences, to baud rate and network delay. As straight-forward as it is, first-time users will probably want to familiarize themselves with the rest of the program before playing around with it.

Down The Middle

The main screen, or Terminal, is automatically called up when the player enters *GemStone* or can be accessed by pressing Alt-T. It's divided into three sections, with the upper third of the screen devoted to graphics displays and the lower two-thirds dedicated to the main text display.

The text display is the central part of the system. It performs the same functions as any terminal program, but with a few interesting wrinkles. First, a separate command line, or Chat area, at the bottom of the screen permits commands and communications to be entered independent of the main text display. It will handle paragraph-length entries, eliminating the need to chop things up into short statements; maintain an easily accessed command-line history; and repeat the last two commands given simply by hitting CTRL or ALT-enter.

Next, a split-screen feature lets players control and monitor a Familiar (a cat, wolf, hawk or falcon), while maintaining the main text

display. Finally, a "scroll-back" feature permits rapid scanning of the review buffer with the arrow or page-up/down keys. Players can save the entire buffer to disk with a single keystroke, or toggle a "Chronicles" option to record and save selected portions. Since the front-end works as a terminal program, it can be used in any area, roundtable or bulletin board on GEnie. It can even be used on any other on-line service; a nice plus, and worth the download all by itself.

At the top-left of the main screen, a display panel with icons and bar-graphs gives the player a visual reference to their character's status and health. A tiny human figure reflects certain activities, such as hiding, kneeling, sitting or lying down. And a compass rose displays all visible exits.

One of the big advantages of the front-end is that players can move around without typing in directional commands. All they have to do is press a directional key on the numeric keypad and their character will automatically go in that direction. Having a compass on-screen at all times makes getting around in the *GemStone* universe much simpler.

Next to this panel, in the upper right corner, is a small section used for graphics displays. Although small, these images are beautifully done, depicting idyllic forest settings, spooky graveyards or rustic shops. Some scenes, like the forest or the armoury, are accompanied by digitized sound effects; others are animated.

The only problem is that there just aren't enough of them. Only a few areas have graphics and even fewer have sound effects. None of the player characters can be seen, only a couple of the NPCs are depicted, and (other than the Gnom) none of the monsters are pictured.

Of course, this is still a Beta version and Simutronics promises that future versions will include monsters and characters, plus extra

scenes, animations and even musical scores. On the plus side, players will not be required to download the whole program all over again every time there's an upgrade, just individual resource files that one can easily add to the main program.

One of the most impressive features of the *GemStone* front-end has nothing to do with graphics. It's the built-in macro editor. Although the front-end's macro language is small, the editor has almost unlimited possibilities, allowing players to build macros to handle everything from log-on to combat. Accessed by pressing Alt-K, the editor comes up in a windows-style panel with individual slots for each of the 12 function keys. The slots can be selected by the mouse or keyboard, and macros of up to 512 characters can be entered into each one. Each function key can be assigned to any one of four combinations: Normal, Alt, Ctrl or Shift. And these in turn can be assigned to any one of nine control-keys, providing a possible total of 432 macros!

The Bottom Line

There really isn't anything out there at the moment to use as a benchmark when evaluating the *GemStone* front-end. It has to stand or fall on its own merit, but has to be viewed within the context of the game it was designed to enhance. Within that framework, Simutronics has done an admirable job. It adds to the enjoyment of the game without getting in the way, and makes it easier to play.

For the price of the download — roughly \$6.00 — it's well worth having. New users can contact GEnie by modem at 1-800-638-8369.

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COMPUTER WARGAMING WORLD

"I Came, I Played, I Conquered"

Network Wars: CompuServe vs. Prodigy in CHQ

by Alan Emrich



Art by Rodger MacGowan; Copyright 1993 RBM Graphics

COMPUTER WARGAMING WORLD

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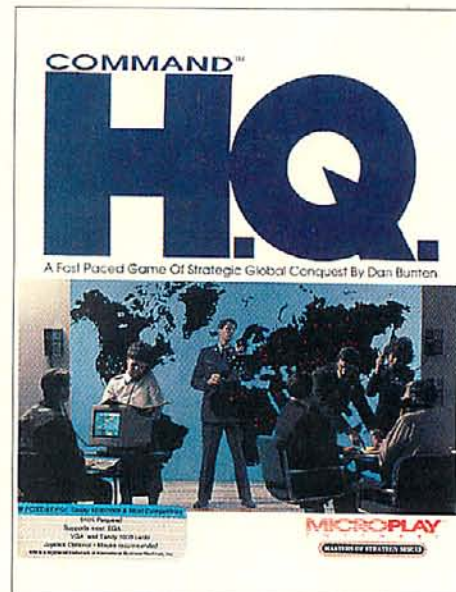
Before we move to the lead story, let me bring up one item of new business. An interesting product has just landed on my desk which, I'm sad to say, I have not had adequate time to thoroughly examine. However, *Aide de Camp* from HPS Simulations looks like a product that I've long dreamed about. It is a "design your own play-by-email kit" for board wargames. In other words, I could pull virtually any Avalon Hill, GDW, SPI, 3W or other board wargame off my shelf and, using this program, put it "on disk" for easy electronic transfer of my moves and combat. It takes some time to create the maps and counters (they are graphically represented, not just lists of hex numbers and unit IDs), but it is a product I've longed to see. Designer Scott Hamilton said he created it for his own personal use and has now marketed it. I can't wait to spend some time with *Aide de Camp*.

Battle of the Network Wargamers

Last issue, in the preface to the *Empire Deluxe* tournament announcement, I hypothesized, "Wouldn't it be great to get the *Command HQ* players on CompuServe to play the ones on Prodigy?" Well, the truth is that they actually have been. This issue, I'd like to report on it. *Command HQ* is a rousing, real-time game designed for wargamers connected by modem. The map represents the entire globe, and units represents armies, fleets and air forces in a grand strategic scale.

Each group of *CHQ* players had a leader emerge to parlay the ground rules for the competition. Representing CompuServe was BobP [76170,1537] while the legions from Prodigy selected "The General" Robert E. Lee, Jr [BSWW20A] (and, yes, that's his real name). They agreed to set up four teams of five players each. Each player would play two games against each opponent from the same team, for a total of ten games per player with each player initiating one phone call against each opponent (to keep the phone bills reasonable).

They agreed that all games would be the "?????" scenario, where each player begins with a capital on a world where the cities and resources have been placed randomly. Due to the possibility of beginning with an obviously unbalanced start, "restart" rules were created, agreed upon and enforced to assure



fairness for individual games played. Interestingly, both network teams had their own ideas about what the restart rules should be, so each devised their own set and whoever was the caller determined which set of rules would be used for that match.

The Call of Destiny

Both networks generated a lot of messages about this tournament. Mostly it was the players recalling their tales of games won and lost. Some of the stories were very amusing (so much so that many bystanders would stop in to read them on-line). The Prodigy Players got off to an early lead over the CompuServe Comm-rades, but shortly after the halfway mark, CompuServe had pulled up very close in the win/loss column. This inspired Prodigy leader R.E. Lee to post the following address to his troops:

"Team Prodigy, Fhail in! Atteeehhnnnn-SHUN! Har Ease.

"Men, I don't need to tell you the importance of our mission. The very fate of the free world lies on our shoulders, not to mention the braggin rights for *all* the *CHQ* players on our Prodigy ladder, which you represent.

"We have been chosen to perform a sacred duty for God, country and the Prodigy Information Service — and in this effort we must not fail! I know it's rough out there on

the CHQ battlefield, but no matter how rough it gets, *we must persevere*. Did we give up when the Germans bombed Pearl Harbor? [Germans? Well, he's on a roll. -Ed] No! Did Norman Schwarzkopf give up before capturing Saddam Hussein? Well, that's a bad example...

"The point is we cannot afford to fail. They are depending on us back home! We are CHQ soldiers, not heroes. A hero is someone who dies in cyberspace defending their information service. Our job is to make 'heroes' out of the enemy. The only thing we have to fear is fear itself — and a quick Cap Kill.

"You know the rules of engagement. Take no prisoners! You know how the dock scan technique works — use it! You know how to outflank your enemy — do it! You know the importance of defending your capitol from a surprise attack — defend it! You know the average airspeed of an unladen swallow in the '????' scenario... [African or European? -Ed].

"We are at a critical juncture. The battle is halfway over and there is still no clear victor in sight. We cannot lose sight of our goal. Of the 200 games to be played on the CHQ battlefield, we must claim victory in 101 of them or die trying. Now, go forth, secure in the knowledge that truth, liberty and flat monthly rates are on your side. We shall not let their hourly usage charges bankrupt our society. We must defend our honor against the Evil Compunist Empire. God is on our side. (I know. She told me.)

"That is all. Team Prodigy, Atteehhnnn-SHUN! Dhis-missed!"

C'mon folks, where else in wargaming can you read such wonderful stuff? Another Prodigy player, D. Dawson [PMRR89A] wrote that he discovered a new disease: CHQitis. He listed symptoms as including a reduced ability to type due to hasty messaging back and forth during a real time game (sighting a sample sentence as "Nivce glame, yu relly suurprised m wit tat clap atach!!!"), strained relations with members of the opposite sex, dreams involving little blue and red squares, and the use of the phrase "warmon-gering enemy" in everyday conversation.

There Were Only Winners

This was one of those cross-cyberspace rivalries where every player was certainly a winner. We all know that there is a kindred spirit among fellow wargamers, and in this tournament it lived and laughed aloud. Unfortunately, when I had to write this article, two games remained unfinished (and the suspense is excruciating!). The score stood at Prodigy 100, CompuServe 98. However, CompuServe had more winning "teams" than Prodigy did, so as far as this observer is concerned, *both* networks can claim a legitimate victory. Let me end this month's column with a roster of the matches. Perhaps next time, you'll be on-line and enjoying this kind of wargaming camaraderie. **CGW**

CHQ Tourney Update Feb 28

CompuServe/Prodigy CHQ Tournament

Team A Results

| | | Robert Lee | Leo T. | Devon D. | Ralph F. | Robert Moore | |
|----------------|-----|------------|--------|----------|----------|--------------|-------|
| | | PA1 | PA2 | PA3 | PA4 | PA5 | Tot |
| Bob P | CA1 | 1-1 | 1-1 | 1-1 | 2-0 | 2-0 | 7-3 |
| Dave Browne | CA2 | 1-1 | 1-1 | 0-2 | 1-1 | 2-0 | 5-5 |
| Joe Bolnick | CA3 | 2-0 | 0-2 | 0-2 | 2-0 | 0-2 | 4-6 |
| MAK | CA4 | 2-0 | 1-1 | 1-1 | 2-0 | 1-1 | 7-3 |
| Paul McClellan | CA5 | 2-0 | 1-1 | 0-2 | - | 2-0 | 5-3 |
| | | | | | | TOT= | 30-20 |

Team B Results

| | | Larry L. | Mark Davis | Jeff Miller | Jason D. | Kevin A. | |
|---------------|-----|----------|------------|-------------|----------|----------|-------|
| | | PB1 | PB2 | PB3 | PB4 | PB5 | Tot |
| Chris Hartman | CB1 | 1-1 | 0-2 | 2-0 | 1-1 | 0-2 | 4-6 |
| Kevin Holcomb | CB2 | 2-0 | 1-1 | 2-0 | 2-0 | 2-0 | 9-1 |
| Peter Harty | CB3 | 1-1 | 1-1 | 2-0 | 1-1 | 2-0 | 7-3 |
| Skulker | CB4 | 2-0 | 0-2 | 1-1 | 1-1 | 0-2 | 4-6 |
| Steve Kershaw | CB5 | 2-0 | 2-0 | 2-0 | 1-1 | 2-0 | 9-1 |
| | | | | | | TOT= | 33-17 |

Team C Results

| | | Dave W. | Barry Stuart | Tim M. | Mark K. | Tim C. | |
|---------------|-----|---------|--------------|--------|---------|--------|-------|
| | | PC1 | PC2 | PC3 | PC4 | PC5 | Tot |
| William Louis | CC1 | 0-2 | 0-2 | 1-1 | 2-0 | 2-0 | 5-5 |
| Bob Brennan | CC2 | 0-2 | 2-0 | 0-2 | 2-0 | 2-0 | 6-4 |
| Dave Willis | CC3 | - | 0-2 | 0-2 | 0-2 | 1-1 | 1-7 |
| Leonard Coyle | CC4 | 1-1 | 0-2 | 1-1 | 1-1 | 2-0 | 5-5 |
| Marc Dultz | CC5 | 1-1 | 2-0 | 2-0 | 2-0 | 2-0 | 9-1 |
| | | | | | | TOT= | 26-22 |

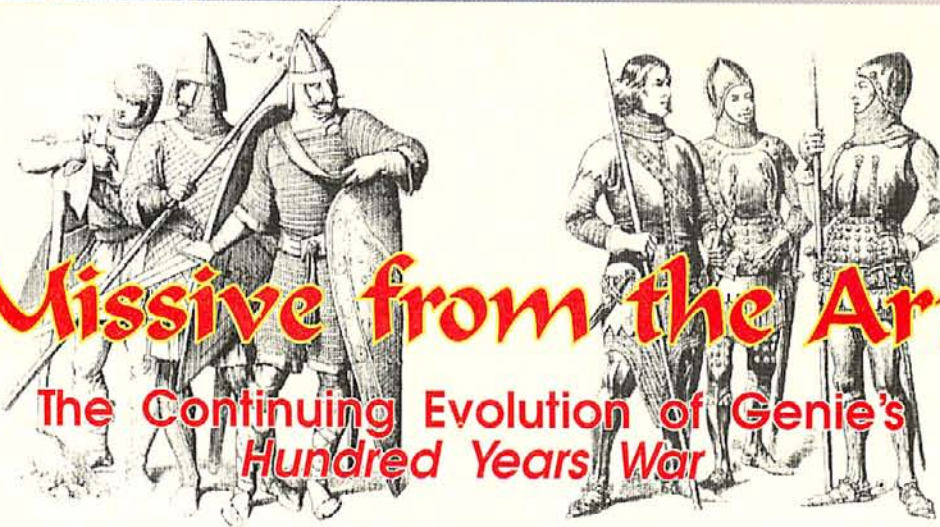
Team D Results

| | | Doug D. | Tim D. | Jon H. | Joe Seidel | Joel Stanford | |
|---------------|-----|---------|--------|--------|------------|---------------|------|
| | | PD1 | PD2 | PD3 | PD4 | PD5 | Tot |
| Daniel Black | CD1 | 2-0 | 2-0 | 2-0 | 0-2 | 2-0 | 8-2 |
| Emil Polito | CD2 | 0-2 | 0-2 | 0-2 | 0-2 | 0-2 | 0-10 |
| Marshall Lott | CD3 | 0-2 | 0-2 | 0-2 | 0-2 | 0-2 | 0-10 |
| Mike Elliott | CD4 | 0-2 | 0-2 | 0-2 | 0-2 | 0-2 | 0-10 |
| Rob MacArthur | CD5 | 0-2 | 1-1 | 0-2 | 0-2 | 0-2 | 1-9 |
| | | | | | | TOT= | 9-41 |

Tournament Summary:

CIS-Prodigy Team results (head-to-head)

| | | |
|--------|--------|---|
| Team A | 30-20 | Cserve Team A declared victorious over Prodigy Team A |
| Team B | 33-17 | Cserve Team B declared victorious over Prodigy Team B |
| Team C | 26-22 | Cserve Team C declared victorious over Prodigy Team C |
| Team D | 9-41 | Prodigy Team D declared victorious over Cserve Team D |
| Total | 98-100 | |



A Missive from the Army

The Continuing Evolution of Genie's Hundred Years War

by David M. Wilson

If the reaction to *Computer Gaming World's* preview of Genie's *Hundred Years War* is any indication, lots of people are fascinated by the intrigue, politics, warfare and social climbing available in this on-line gaming experience. Beta testing is now complete and the *Hundred Years War* (HYW) is now on in earnest. Here is the latest on this feudalistic virtual society.

HYW offers one a chance to assume the character of a French, English or "other" (anything besides French or English) noble and participate in such "noble" endeavors as diplomacy, social climbing, economic management and warfare as conducted under the ever-binding rules of chivalry.

A relatively new feature allows for a player character to switch (one time only) between husband and wife. Thus, if a husband is killed, a wife may remarry and switch to the husband. The disadvantage of being a woman is that a woman is not permitted to command an army. Not to worry, even if one chooses to play a female character, an NPC under her control may be appointed as commander of her army, eliminating any real disadvantage or inconvenience to the player.

The HYW staff obviously paid attention to the earlier article, since they have changed some aspects of the game in keeping with our suggestions. The economic structure of the game was changed, and free flow of cash was limited by doubling all army costs. By doubling the amount of army costs, the designers have effectively brought a slower pace to the game. Now, one must conserve resources for a reasonable amount of time in order to build up enough to recruit an army. While the change serves the positive function of keeping players from being overrun in a single season, it also forces a lot of nobles relegated to relatively minor positions to either become lackeys to wealthier nobles or to drop out. While the change has helped bring a historicity to the game, it has also effectively taken some of the

joy out of the game for those whose main purpose for playing the game is leading armies in military encounters.

Also in our preview, Johnny Wilson suggested that the French should elect their king from the more experienced players. A King and a Crown Prince are elected for each side at the beginning of each game. If the king passes away, the Crown Prince becomes king. The Crown Prince and King spend the remainder of the game swapping positions each time the king dies. In this manner, more than one player actually gets to play the part of the king (and hence, to share the burden of extra decision-making).

Another new feature is jousting. The jousting routine is similar to the dueling routines, with a few simple commands that allow the player to spur and rein his charger, adjust his shield, and aim his lance. Each successive win aids the player by raising his tournament rating. I was unable to really get the hang of jousting. While it is a neat feature and broadens the appeal of the game somewhat, its main attraction is that it provides, like the interactive court, another place to hang out and act like a 14th century knight.

Brawling in the Interactive Court (IC), by the way, can get really wild. Players can throw chairs at one another, bash each other with pewter mugs, knee each other in the groin, or simply punch each other out. Brawling is statistically-based, but getting whipped in a brawl doesn't affect the player's health outside the IC. The Interactive Court provides a place for the players to brawl or just sit and talk about anything under the sun.

HYW provides heralds, who are usually on duty each night to assist the player. The Herald will explain menus and options, suggest strategy, assist the king in communicating with his loyal (or disloyal) followers or maybe just listen to a player vent-off anger about what another player has done to him. I have had extensive interviews with all of the her-

alds, but especially commend Barbara Byro and Bob Kasten for their good work.

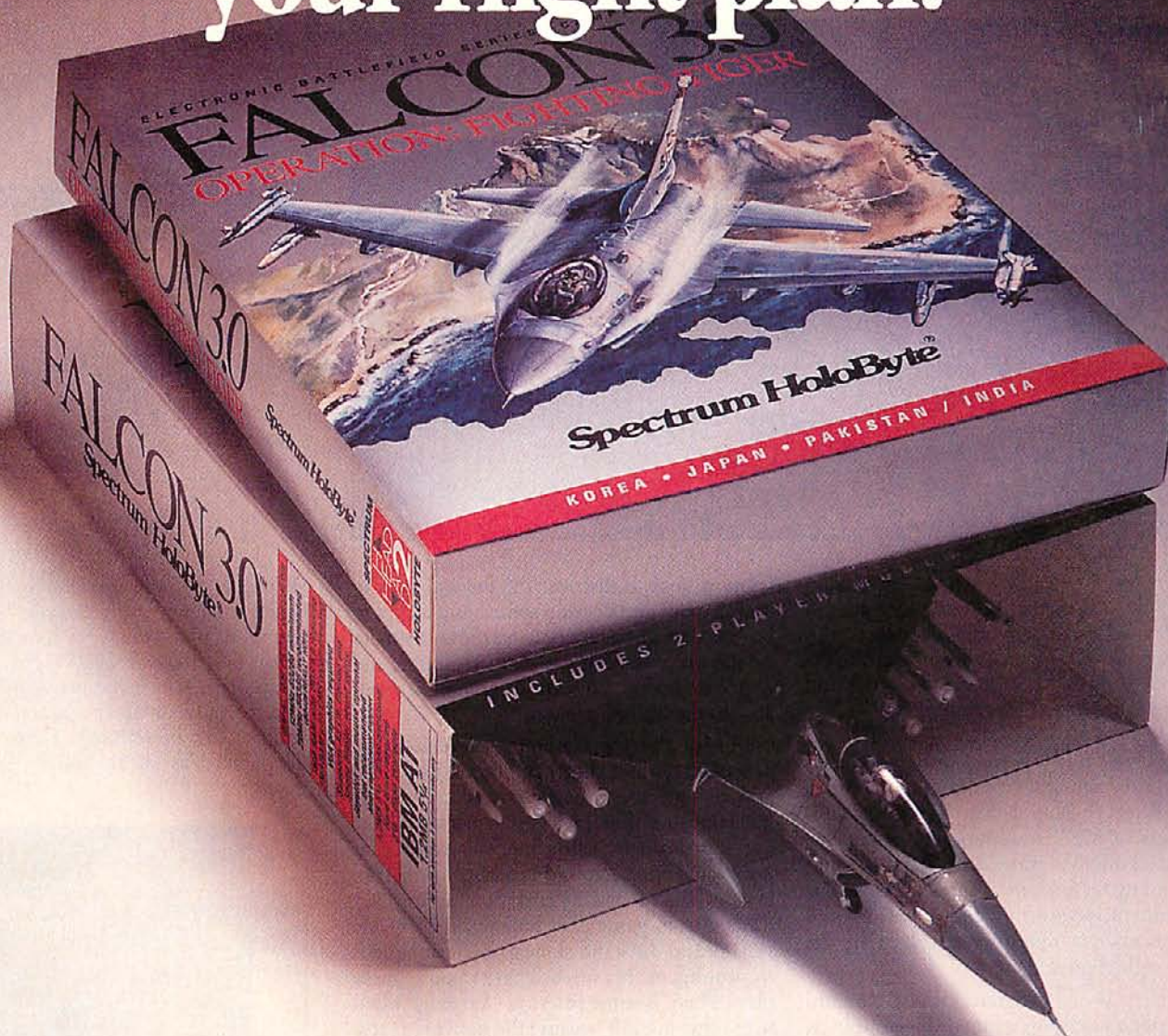
One problem that continues to plague HYW is that of players abusing dual accounts. Many players have access to more than one Genie account and can register to play as many characters as they have accounts. While this is a minor problem, when an abuse occurs it generally angers many. A player who angers another player may have to deal with this player in as many as three personas (yes this really happens). A player who has two positions will transfer funds and properties to his favorite persona, without regard for borders. In some cases, the player with double accounts will have a player who is privy to both the English Private Court and the French Private Court, eliminating the possibility of having military secrets and reducing the level of suspended disbelief.

The HYW staff wants the players to police the game. If they don't like what another player is doing, they are expected to team up and exact justice in 14th century style. While their stand is understandable in some ways, a simple statement from the HYW staff that such behavior is not exactly chivalrous would stop most players having double accounts from abusing them.

Also in our preview (#100), Ken St. Andre made a point about how much time the game takes to play. Though there is some dispute about this, I think it is fair to suggest that the average player will have to play about 30 minutes to an hour per day to keep up with the game. So, the HYW staff has responded by opening a "slow" game for players who only want to play a couple of times per week.

In summary, a word of warning is required. Players who like to remain aloof from their games may want to stay away from HYW, since those who are involved often become so immersed in the game that they frequently have to be reminded, "It's only a game!" **CGW**

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Arena for Aerial Gladiators

SVGA Air Warrior



by Doug Fick

Photo courtesy of McDonnell Douglas



What happens when a simulation combines the most accurate aircraft performance models ever seen with real, human aviation nuts from around the country? The result is the most intense and realistic flight simulation yet designed for network play.

Air Warrior (AW) is the GENIE network's aviation program that covers air combat from World War I through Korea. The program is an on-line game that allows people from all over the country to plug into the GENIE network and fly for any one of three nations. The environment is *big*. On a typical evening, 30 or more aircraft might be involved in the on-going dogfights.

While the boxed program sold by Konami allows single-user play against the computer, the real thrust of the game is to get people into the multi-player *Air Warrior* arena. In single user mode, any of the aircraft can be selected and up to four other computer controlled pilots take part. The computer-controlled aircraft can be either allied with, or opposed to the gamer. Single-user play provides a good

learning tool to discover the ins and outs of each aircraft and develop some basic tactics to be tried on-line. The best part about single-user mode is the ability to play in real time and toggle on additional realism modes not available to the on-line version.

Due to the huge amount of data being processed on-line, the game plays at half speed and such nuances as buffering and spins aren't taken into account. Half speed may sound like moving through Jell-o, but isn't really that noticeable once involved in a huge furball. In fact, at first I had a hard time seeing any difference in game play between the on-line version and the stand alone game. The benefit to running at this speed is *very* smooth game play. There is some jittering (warping) when near other aircraft because the network is trying to calculate exact positions for two or more planes in close proximity, but it's not too bad.

The program has aircraft that run the gamut from fabric-covered Spads to jet-propelled Sabres, but the real emphasis is on World War II fighters. World War II aircraft included are the Spitfire Mk IX, A6M5a Zero, A-26 Invader, P-51D Mustang, P-38J Lightning, FW-190A, KI-84 Frank, BF-109 and F4U-1 Corsair. From the Korean conflict, the MiG-15 and F-86 Sabre jet are included. Every detail of aircraft performance is perfectly nailed. Each aircraft's strengths and weakness are faithfully reproduced to the *nth* degree. In fact, while I was on the network, the P-38 had been temporarily removed from the game in order to tweak the climb performance model. Such attention to detail shows a serious ongoing commitment from the game's designers and bodes well for GENIE members.

Typically, each theatre of play (European or Pacific) rotates every third week. Within each three week block there are jet nights for the Korean war fans and WWI nights for the von Richthofens. When the player joins the *AW* arena for the first time, any one of the three countries can be selected. These are generically labeled as A, B, and C, and form a



| | |
|------------------|-------------------------------|
| TITLE: | SVGA Air Warrior |
| SYSTEM: | IBM with 640K, SVGA and modem |
| PRICE: | \$59.95 |
| PROTECTION: | None |
| DESIGNERS: | Kesmai Corporation |
| DISTRIBUTOR: | Konami Corporation |
| | Wood Grove, IL |
| ON-LINE SERVICE: | Genie |
| | Rockville, MD |

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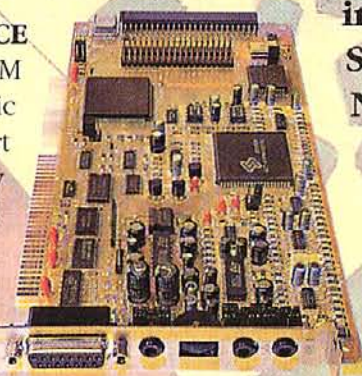
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GROUP

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Photo courtesy of McDonnell Douglas



triangle with common edges. Once a nation is selected, any one of the aircraft available in that theatre can be picked. This makes for some interesting gaggles as traditional allies square off against one another. Normally, two thirds of the combatants in Europe are Spitfires, as they are excellent all-around performers which most players prefer over all others. My personal favorite was the trusty Mustang. I had to pick my fights with care, though, as the agile Spit could rip me up in a turning fight (learned through painful first-hand experience), but given some altitude and four or five fast passes busting through the fight at high speed brought death and destruction to the scurvy dogs of B and C nations (tee hee).

As anyone can tell from my sudden burst of enthusiasm, this program emphasizes proper employment of aircraft type. The flight modeling is so well done, and the human adversaries so much better than any computer could hope to be, that it forces the player to wisely choose and use whatever aircraft they select, or they are likely to die repeatedly until the correct tactics are learned.

When I first jumped into the *AW* community, I was a little apprehensive. I wondered how new players would be received. Would

there be cliques or a holier than thou attitude among the seasoned players? The answer is "No." From the first moment on, I felt right at home and welcome among the group. People went out of their way to help me and other newcomers learn the nuances of the program. There is even an Air Warrior Training Academy to help neophyte pilots get their feet wet. This sense of camaraderie impressed me more than anything else in the *AW* world.

While the rose smells sweet, there are a few thorns. The game is not cheap to play. The basic GENie subscription is \$4.95 a month and the *AW* access cost is \$6.00 per hour. That can add up in a hurry if one isn't careful about watching the clock.

one's own country. Sometimes the battle might be miles away and trying to claw for altitude while covering territory at only 75 knots (150 knots typical climb speed divided by two for the network half speed) can eat up a lot of time. In addition, to receive full credit for any kills scored, the player has to fly all the way home and land. In fact, the program won't let the player exit unless they land or bail out/get shot down. At times, I found myself hanging around the fight long after fuel and ammo dictated a withdrawal, just to avoid the long flight home.

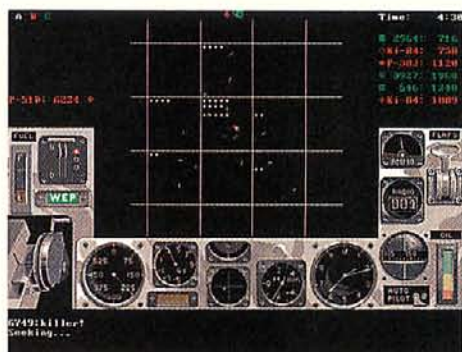
At 10 cents a minute, all this droning can add up. I would have liked to occasionally see the option of airborne start points. Something like five thousand feet of altitude within friendly airspace and not so close to enemy aircraft that it would provide an unfair advantage would be nice. Also, if I decide to egress the fight and get well clear of any enemy aircraft, let me exit with full credit. This would make the game much more combat-



oriented and reduce droning considerably. I'm not saying Kesmai should totally replace the airfield starts, just have an occasional quick combat night.

Amazingly, with just a little work, the single-user version of the game would blow away any of the competition (hint, hint). Upgrade the graphics, write a dozen or so types of missions, give it a career flavor and it would find space on my hard drive in an instant.

For the record, though, the multi-player game is great and highly recommended for any serious aviation enthusiasts. The combination of tough adversaries and realistic performance makes *Air Warrior* a winner. **CGW**



Graphically, the Super VGA graphic rendition of the cockpit and instruments is very well done, but views outside the players aircraft are fairly spartan. To run the network at a smooth speed, other aircraft and land detail is skimpy. Aircraft appear as tiny dots until very close, then expand into small grey polygon renditions of the plane. Even at very close range the aircraft are shown an eighth the size an actual aircraft at that distance would appear to be. It felt like shooting a BB gun at ants crawling up a wall from across the room.

One other item that annoyed me was that every sortie starts from the ground within

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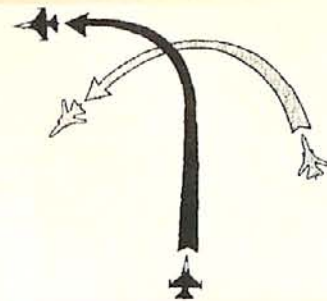
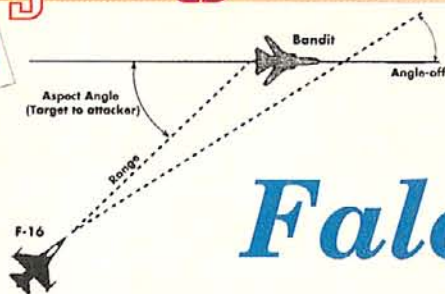
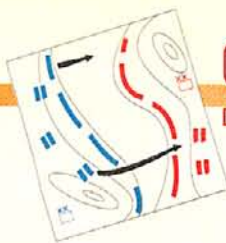
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Falcon 3.0

Getting The Enemy In Sight Via The Padlock View

by Tom "KC" Basham

Tom Basham is the co-author of Falcon 3: The Complete Handbook, published by The Waite Group.

Su-27s and Mig-29s devouring your F-16? MiG-19s turning unbelievable circles around your mighty Falcon fighter? Tired of hearing your wingman scream, "Atoll, Atoll!" as your missile lock warning light flashes in panic? Sick of Bitchin' Betty casually announcing "Warning" as your jet tumbles out of control? Then this article is for you. Air-to-air combat in any version of *Falcon 3.0* is extremely difficult, especially for those who are game enough to use maximum difficulty settings. To survive, you must have an edge: the padlock view.

Becoming proficient with the padlock view should be your top priority. While it may be disorienting at first, it allows you the ability to maintain visual lock on the adversary while operating your flight controls, just as though you were swiveling your head in a real aircraft. Combat pilots live by a motto: *Lose sight, lose the fight!* In a dogfight, the pilot never takes his eyes of his target until it is dead. Padlock view allows you to do exactly this.

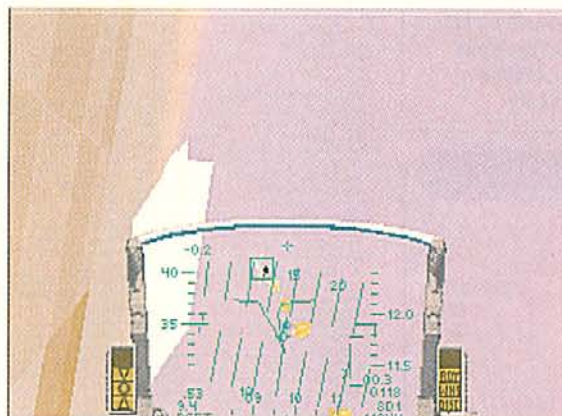
Gaining proficiency with the padlock view is a three-step process. You must begin by learning to fly your F-16 from within padlock. Try creating a Red Flag mission with no adversary aircraft anywhere near you. Then, just fly in padlock mode, using the mini-HUD in the upper right-hand corner and the data block in the upper left-hand corner to control your aircraft. Don't necessarily try any precision, Blue Angels style maneuvers, just get the feel for basic flight. Ignore the other windows in padlock and focus solely on the two in the upper corners. These will tell you your bank, pitch, speed, and altitude — everything you need to keep from colliding with the ground.

Once you can reasonably control your aircraft, add another aircraft to your Red Flag mission that starts near you. Preferably, use an allied aircraft in a separate flight, and give it many waypoints so that it will maneuver. Lock this target in the padlock mode and begin the second step of learning padlock: use the upper middle window.

The upper middle window is a 360 degree, wrap-around view. In the center is your HUD and, on either edge rests the left and right edges of your head rest. The red rectangle, or targeting box, shows the position of the padlocked target relative to your air-

craft. If the box overlays the small HUD symbol, the target is directly in front of you. If the box is at either edge of the window, the target is directly behind you. If the box is at the upper edge of the window, you would have to look directly through the top of your canopy to see it.

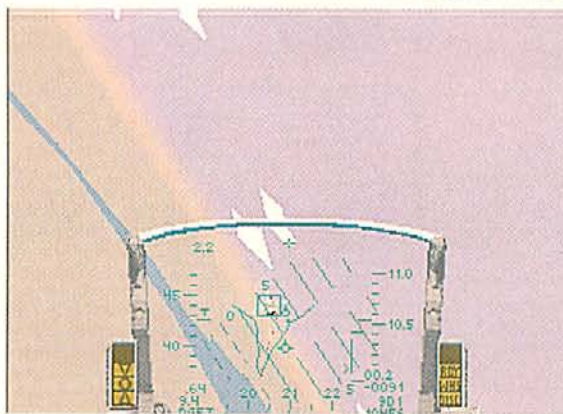
Steer your aircraft by watching the targeting box. Don't worry too much about your flight attitude, airspeed, or altitude, as long as you don't stall or go below 4,000 feet AGL. Instead, focus on your target and steer your jet relative to it, *not* relative to the ground. Practice maneuvering the F-16 such that the targeting box moves to cover the HUD symbol.

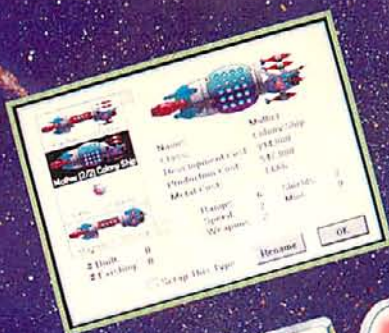


Now comes the third phase of padlocking, learning to use the lower, full-width window. This window shows you exactly what you see as you look at the target. The upper middle window shows you how your neck is turned, the lower full-width window shows you what you see with your neck turned that way.

Although this is one of the most important components of padlock mode, it is also one of the most confusing. Often, your viewing angle through the lower window is different than that of the normal "front view," simulating a pilot leaning forward and looking below the aircraft. The HUD may be in the lower window, but the bandit is well below your nose. This often causes disorientation among *Falcon 3.0* pilots. The key is in how you use the lower window. Do not use it to employ weapons, but solely to watch your opponent's movements. Watch how his wings bank and make a counter-maneuver before he forces you to overshoot. Watch his nose; if he's above you but pointed down, then shallow your climb, roll inverted and dive after him as he passes below you. By watching his movements in this window, you can predict where he's heading and make preemptive moves to beat him there, gaining a tight position on his six o'clock!

Once you're on his six, the fight isn't over. You still have to "saddle up" or get into a position where you can fire weapons with a high probability for success. Because of the shifting view angle through the lower full-length window, it is often difficult to employ heat-seeking missiles or guns while in padlock mode. In these final moments of combat, when





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you are firmly planted on the bandit's six, it's time to exit padlock mode.

For the final stages of combat, try using the forward-up view, accessed by pressing the "3" key followed by the "Scroll Lock" key. This will place your HUD at the lower edge of your screen and allow you to see more of the sky directly in front of you. By using padlock view, you should now have your bandit in view, slightly above your HUD and in the middle of your screen. Increase your turn rate, either by pulling more Gs or executing a series of Yo-yo turns, trading small units of speed for small bites of altitude, to pull your target directly into your HUD. Watch your speed closely; if you stall, the bandit will pull away and ruin your shot. If your speed goes too high, you'll overshoot and the bandit will reverse onto your tail, putting you on the defense!

Once you've pulled the bandit in the HUD, it's time to fire. If the bandit is less than 1.5 miles away, firing a missile has little effect. Rarely will a missile hit at this range, although the launch of a missile may frighten your opponent into making a reckless move. Your best bet is to switch to your 20mm cannon. Use short, controlled bursts of gunfire while watching the gunsight "funnel" on your HUD. Maneuver so that the wing tips of your target touch both edges of any point within the funnel and open fire. If the target fills the gap between the lines at any point on the funnel, you should score a hit. Be warned, however, gunfire hits cause unpredictable damage—it may take several hits to down the target, so use your ammunition sparingly.

The Padlock view also works for defensive maneuvers. Using the above procedure, you can quickly locate bandits at your six o'clock position, and maneuver to force them in front of you. More importantly, perhaps, is the ability to padlock incoming missiles. Introduced in version 3.0d, the padlock view will lock onto any missiles headed your way. This is an excellent tool in evading missiles.

To avoid an inbound missile, switch to padlock. Usually, padlock will immediately lock onto the nearest incoming missile, although sometimes you may have to press the "t" key to cycle through several targets before locating the missile. Look at the upper left hand window and identify the missile type. Knowing whether the missile is radar or infrared guided is extremely

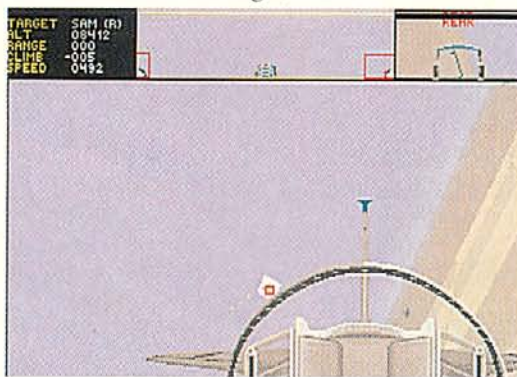
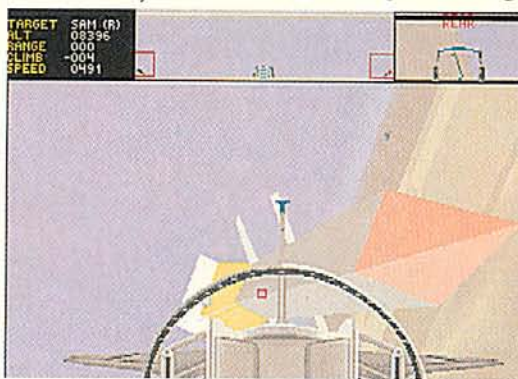
important. If the missile is radar guided, use whatever amount of throttle you need to maintain a corner velocity of 380 to 400 knots. If, however, the missile is a heat-seeker, you should reduce throttle and reduce your heat signature. Begin firing chaff or flares depending on the missile type. Since enemies may fire both missile types at you simultaneously, it is advisable to always fire chaff and flares in unison.

Now that you have the missile padlocked, turn in any direction you choose to gain a 90 degree flight path offset from the missile (i.e., your heading is 90 degrees different from that of the missile). That means, turn your F-16 until the red targeting box in the upper middle window is positioned halfway between the HUD symbol and either edge. Maintain enough turn

to keep the red box in this position. Don't turn too right or you will turn head-on into the missile. If you have an ECM pod, turn it on now, regardless of the type of the incoming missile—your enemies launch a different missile with a different guidance type while you're preoccupied with the first.

At this point, the missile should appear as a white dot in the lower window. As it approaches it will get larger and begin to look like a missile. At some point you will be able to see the exhaust plume behind the missile and, shortly thereafter, the missile will impact. To evade the missile, you must execute a perfectly-timed, high-G break in the direction of your turn, just before the missile hits. Timing of the turn is both critical and extremely difficult to judge. Just as the missile changes from a small white dot to a recognizable shape, you want to execute your break turn. Pull the stick all the way back to the limit and dump chaff and flares like there's no tomorrow (if you don't succeed, there may not be).

If you're successful, the missile will buzz harmlessly past you in the lower padlock window in dramatic fashion. If you fail, Betty will quickly notify you of such! Proper timing of the break turn is much more of an art than a science, but the above guidelines in conjunction with practice should provide satisfactory results against both surface-to-air and air-to-air missiles. Through the padlock view, your improved defensive ability in conjunction with your greater offensive skills will make your F-16 the most feared weapon in the simulated sky! **CGW**



Becoming a Fighting Falcon 3.0 On-Line

by Victor "Duke" Zaveduk

One of the most popular modem games being played in CompuServe's MTM-Lobby is *Falcon 3.0* from Spectrum HoloByte. *Falcon* puts gamers in the cockpit of an F-16 fighter jet with some of the most realistic flight modeling this side of a multi-million dollar military simulator. Modem play takes ultimate advantage of the simulation by pitting one human player against another in a classic one-on-one dogfight.

The game is so popular that an ongoing competition ladder has formed. Over 70 players have signed up since the competition began last October. This means that, at any given moment, nearly 50 active players are competing in a continuing struggle to determine the top "Ace" among CompuServe members. While there are a couple of active or ex-military pilots competing, most of the players are armchair fighter jocks. Put them behind the controls of *Falcon 3.0* and their adrenaline starts pumping, and the experience becomes as exhilarating and exhausting as "real" aerial combat.

The MTM-Lobby often resembles a fighter jock hangout with a large number of Falcon pilots looking for "friendly" matches to keep their competitive edge finely honed. Anyone interested in joining the competition ladder should contact Victor "Duke" Zaveduk at 76711,27 in the MODEMGAMES Forum or just drop by the MTM-Lobby for a little "friendly" competition. Just make sure to have that helmet strapped on and that parachute packed. **CGW**

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For Want Of A Hint A Kingdom Was Lost

Strategy Tips For QQP's Conquered Kingdoms

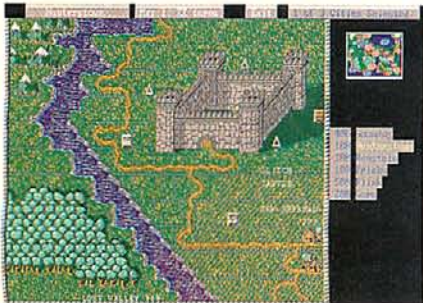
by Randall Black

With a rich armory full of pieces and a vast playing area, *Conquered Kingdoms* (CK) from QQP has the feel of chess on steroids. Only by careful placement and a mastery of the strengths and weaknesses of the 16 kinds of units can the player consistently beat CK's strong artificial intelligence (AI). Winning the game requires persistent attention to key principles and, most importantly, not losing — the campaign game penalizes each loss so that success breeds success as bonus pieces and gold pile up for use on the next map.

The far flung scale of the playing surface rewards speedy acquisition of key objectives (castles, resources and cities) and transforms the first few turns into a foot race for the goods. The choice of starting cities is crucial to victory. However tempting it may be to occupy cities based on victory points alone, prudence demands starting at some low point cities for their strategic positions.

Occupation of castles should be *top* priority, and the winning player sets up fast units such as cavalry to move in as soon as possible. Once occupied, castles are vastly more difficult to take. With even a single friendly unit inside its walls, a castle can be reinforced with cheap-but-deadly units like catapults and archers that can snipe with impunity from the protected keep. Manage to take all the castles, and the enemy can't reinforce, even with a mountain of gold.

The only source of replacement units, resources, are as important as cities for ultimate victory. The proximity of these sinews of war — gold, coal and wood — should exert a strong influence on the choice of starting cities before the initial mad dash begins. If possible, keep balanced supplies of wood and coal to maximize their purchasing power.



Cities should be occupied as soon as possible, but usually require well-planned garrisoning with strong forces to hold them over the long haul. An early sprint to a city by a single fast unit is often rewarded by a crushing attack, especially at the high value cities which act like magnets for enemy units.

Units purchased during the initial set-up should reflect the need for speed. Except on maps with lots of obstacles (mountains, oceans and rivers), cavalry are ideal starting units and should account for up to half of the initial budget. Spies are a must, at least one in each starting city, not only for vital intelligence but also for high-speed travel to resources and uncontested cities. Wizards may seem like powerful fighters, but they are most valuable for their speed, teleporting themselves and adjacent units to

objectives 15 squares away. Beware: a wizard-borne army can be quickly decimated if it rematerializes in the midst of enemy forces.

Clusters Bomb! (Avoiding Diminishing Returns)

The early battles, usually taking place among clustered forces, are the most treacherous. The AI excels at maximizing damage in a cluster fuss, and a review of the casualty report often reveals huge losses during these early battles among bunched forces. Preserving one's units can hinge on the ability to avoid large, uncontrolled battles. Remember the strategy made famous by brave Sir Robin and his fellow Holy-Grailsmen: run awaaaay!

When forces are bunched up, a single fireball can ruin your whole day. Goad fully loaded wizards into fireballing early by baiting them with a couple of units before approaching with larger numbers. Although touted for their ability to kill kings, a pair of spies are another great way to take out a 9x wizard. Dragons, too, punish clustered forces by hitting both units in a square. Spread out units to a square when these fearsome beasts are present.



Paying Scale (Dragons and Gargoyles)

Dragons may seem expensive, but they constitute an extremely desirable offensive unit. For 20 gold pieces one gets a fast, all-terrain unit that can attack at a distance, often from the safety of mountains and seas. Notice how much the AI likes dragons. In clustered battles at close quarters they can dish out up to 16 points of damage per round of combat. Once most of their impressive 32 points of damage are depleted, severely weakened dragons can move off to make excellent sentries for cities and resources. A badly crippled dragon can destroy wave after wave of small units blundering into range of its city, and dragons don't frighten easily.

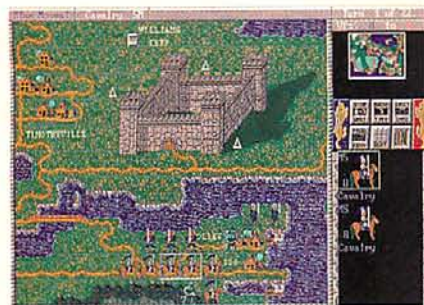
A poor man's dragon, the gargoyle, is good for crossing bad terrain to tap resources and attack out-of-the-way cities. Without ranged firing, however, gargoyles have to mix it up during combat and eventually get whittled away. At nearly half the price of a dragon, these escapees from Notre Dame are best left for spreading out over inaccessible terrain or attacking archers.

A Wiz at Some Things (Overpriced Units)

When starting in the lap of the enemy, a wizard or two can be a good

insurance policy but their best roles are those of long-range transports or keep sitters, not pitched battle fighters. Limit purchases of these exotic luxuries to the demands of specific missions.

Certain units hardly seem worth buying, except in very special circumstances. Phantoms are valuable for "scaring" in clustered fights, but given their low speed, exorbitant cost of 15 gold pieces, and the fact that one should be avoiding those massed attacks anyway, they are of dubious value.



At a cost of seven, land bound and remarkably vulnerable ogres aren't much of a bargain, even though they can attack at a range of one and inflict damage without making contact. Glorified lancers, trolls can heal (if they live), but they cost as much as three-and-a-half regular lancers. Instead of a troll, one should try buying a

squad consisting of a swordsman, a lancer and an archer for the same price. Take along an officer and they can heal as well.

Arch-enemies (The Archer Ploy)

One of the most effective and satisfying ploys in *CK* is loading boats with archers. Cruising out of reach of many land units, and hard to kill even with the most powerful units, archers in boats are a terror to coastal cities and make an excellent counter to dragons. When things get hot, their high speed can get them away from trouble (spelled g-a-r-g-o-y-l-e-s).

Perhaps, the most important key to success in *CK* is the ability to

anticipate. Knowing where enemy units will be *next* turn is often more important than where they are now. One should set up ranged units (archers, catapults and dragons) just within striking distance of squares where the enemy units will be *after* they move. This allows for a double barrage; first, at the end of the AI's turn, and then again on the player's turn. By simply mixing it up with enemy units, one will only trade hit points. By taking advantage of action at a distance and picking the right fights, the player's units can exact a toll (or troll) without getting a scratch.



Mixmaster (Strategic Overview)

Much of *CK*'s charm lies in the scissors/rock/paper interaction of the units. Even the lowly Rog can be incredibly deadly when a weakened AI begins to spit out droves of cheap lancers. Yet, a single lancer on a bridge can stop a massive cavalry charge. A knight can walk right into a castle held only by archers. Every unit has an Achilles Heel that can be exploited. Becoming too reliant on a few favorites can give the AI an opening. The right tool for the job is the right strategy for *Conqueror's Kingdoms*. **CGW**



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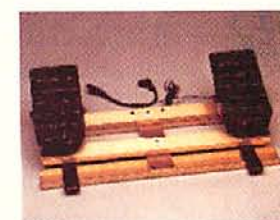


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Tegel's Mercenaries from Mindcraft

by Paul C. Schuytema



The time is solar year 2198 and the human race still hasn't learned from its history. "Destroy or be destroyed!" is the motto of the Consortium and a growing number of corporations. Enter the mercenaries. Napalm and lasers for hire, these go-getters are the backbone of order throughout a multitude of worlds. Still, mercenaries are a volatile, egocentric lot and they need a lot of discipline; they need a leader.

Their leader is the B.O.S.S., the Base Operations Squad Sergeant. The B.O.S.S. maintains control of a handful of hand-picked mercenaries through a real-time Tactical Imaging and Synthesizing Fabricator, which gives the sergeant a bird's eye view of the entire operation and a channel of communications to each of the mercenaries.



Tegel's Mercenaries, the latest science fiction game from Mindcraft, follows the ongoing adventures of a group of mercenaries bankrolled by the gruff, enigmatic and very rich general Tegel. The player has just washed out of the Officer's Training Academy and is a little slim on prospects. Enter the good general and an opportu-

nity to make a fast and bloody buck by commanding a crew of mercenaries and, before the player can think through the options, the first mission begins.

Tegel's Mercenaries is a squad-level game of combat and command where one's progress is registered by an accumulation of credits for each scenario successfully completed. A scenario begins with a short briefing from general Tegel, leaning over his desk and staring out of very beady eyes. The general explains the mission goals in general terms and how the mission fits into the overarching plans of the Consortium. Then, the player must select and recruit up to six mercenaries per mission from a stable of 20. The mercenaries vary in skill, weaponry, species and sense of just compensation — some are available dirt cheap, while others want a hefty sum for the risks they may take.

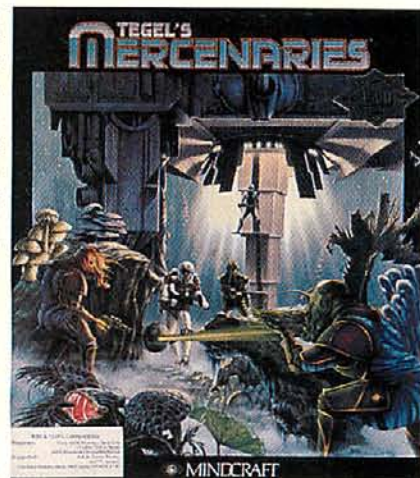
After assembling the crew, a drop ship brings the squad into the thick of the sortie and it is up to the player to issue the orders necessary to complete the mission, whether it is as simple as protecting a diplomat

or as complex as weaving through a maze-like building to destroy various communications centers.

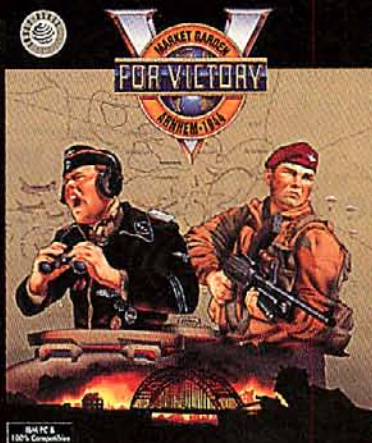
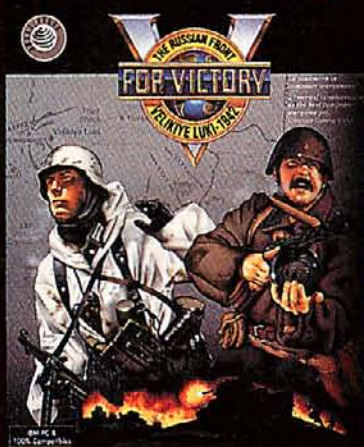
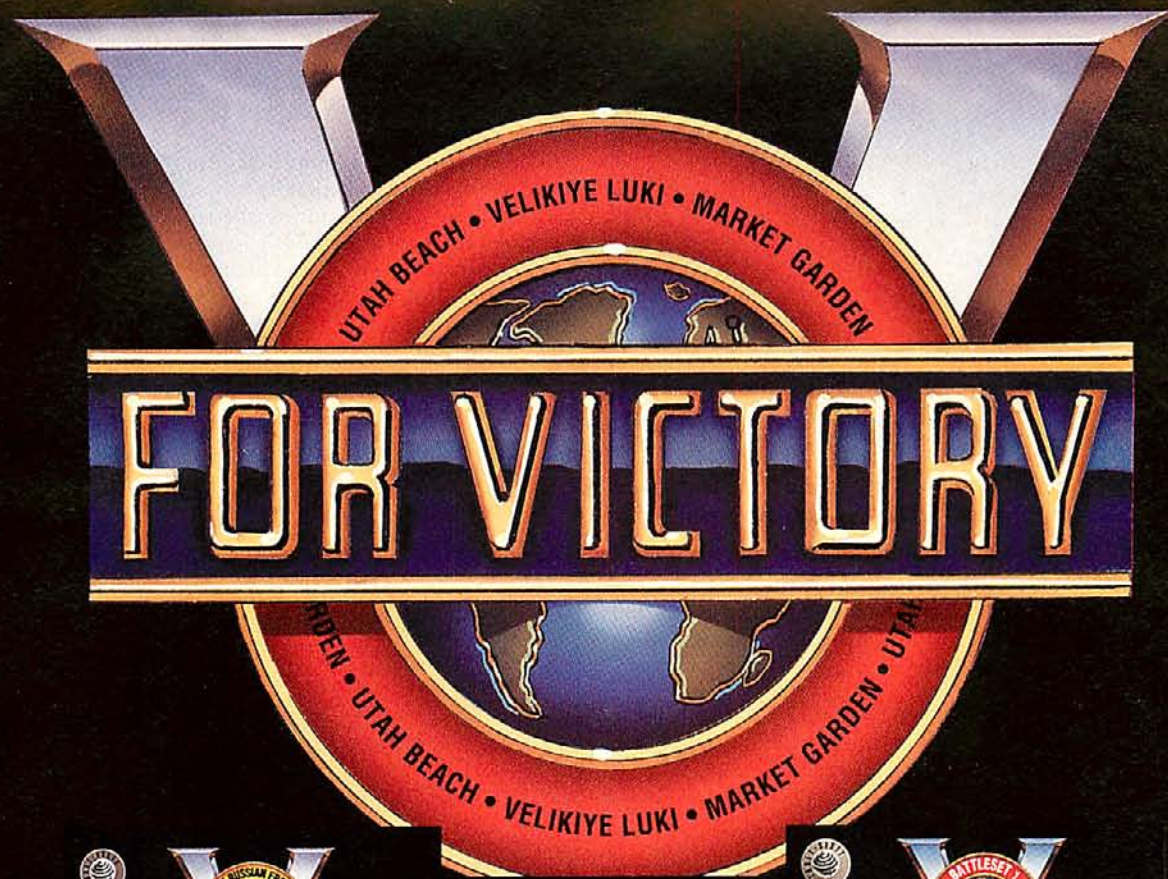
While the general premise of the game is attractive, the execution is anything but flawless. Once on the planet, the view is reminiscent of the skewed 3-D which works so well on the new *Ultima* series. The player controls a cursor with a mouse, and selecting a mercenary will bring up an opaque window which lists the various orders the player may select. Some orders, like those controlling movement orders, then require a mouse click on the location to which the player would like the mercenary to move.

The interface is poorly executed and the display flickers in blocky sections or freezes altogether while trying to hand out orders. The mercenaries themselves seem to be a bit spaced out (perhaps the oxygen mix of their suits is a bit off), because a simple movement order through a door can be an exercise in futility. The mercenary may simply keep bumping into the wall until the player reorders the movement, and the mercenaries seem to have amazing trouble walking around anything lying on the floor (like a body of a fellow mercenary).

The mercenaries can either be toggled to an aggressive or passive posture, attacking any enemy on sight or needing direct orders. Unfortunately, the combat in *Tegel's Mercenaries* is the most frustrating aspect of the game. It is very difficult to tell if a being is an enemy or only a bystander (there are no friends). The only litmus test is to wait and see if the entity fires on the mercenary. A



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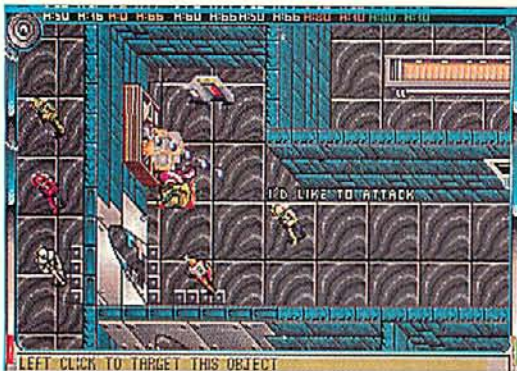
more functional approach is to simply kill every thing in sight. Not terribly realistic, but it is a touch safer.

When the mercenaries are set to initiate attacks themselves, they seem to deliberately turn their backs from the foe and fire off in random directions. It appears to take direct attack and target orders to get the squad to accomplish anything at all.

Generally, the missions are a combination of retrieval and combat, with completion requiring the elimination of one or two specific entities, and perhaps the retrieval of a data disk. At times, doors will be locked, and a card key is necessary, which generally means finding another entity, killing it, and searching the body.

Combat, as I mentioned earlier, is best handled by a direct order. When an entity appears to be hostile, order every squad member in the area to specifically attack the enemy. Grenades seem to work the best, and they appear to be the only weapon which makes the foes stagger back from the hit. This, at least psychologically, is far more satisfying than the less efficient weapons.

Since mercs are a precious and unmodifiable commodity, a tactic to generally ensure success in a mission is to save the game immediately when the mercs are deployed. Then, scroll around the map and figure out what points need to be hit, accessed or interacted with. Bring up



the file screen and reload the mission, this time armed with concrete information.

When the mission is complete, the player is paid in credits, with fees deducted for needless casualties (an odd stipulation since it's hard to tell a needless casualty during the run) and squad members killed. General Tegel will immediately issue orders for another mission, and recruiting may begin again. Since there is only a stock stable of mercenaries, it is very possible for the game to end due to a lack of warm bodies for hire. One problem with the credit system is that mercenaries aren't all that expensive to hire and there is no provision for purchasing new weapons. The only way to get new weaponry is to find it or pull it from a warm corpse. Having the option to re-equip

the mercs would make the logistical aspect of the game much more appealing.

The overarching mission of the game is to find and kill the K'istik queen who controls a race of aggressive insectoid creatures. Each mission assigned



from general Tegel moves towards this end, generally by analyzing the data captured from the mercenaries' previous mission.

Beyond the standard missions, *Tegel's Mercenaries* sports a custom mission builder. The player can load any of the blank scenario maps and create a custom mission. Mission goals may be set, and enemies are placed, with the designer able to control such things as armor

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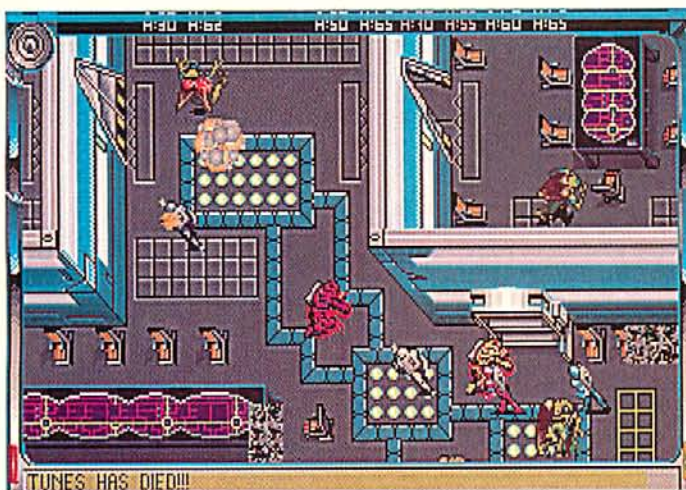
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strength and the actions of the entities. The mission builder is a very helpful tool which enables the player to learn the logic behind Tegel's missions, and it is a good idea, once the player has some familiarity with the game, to go in and build a mission. When returning to Tegel's scenarios, the player is armed with a wealth of information which makes the whole system a lot clearer.

Building the missions is a trial and error affair, since the interface is as clunky and as inconsistent as it is in the game. At one point a menu will pop up which warrants a mouse selection, at another time, the player cycles through choices with the left mouse button, and in yet another instance, the player must type in the requested information from the keyboard. To make things even more inconsistent, these parsers seem to pop up everywhere: at the top of the screen, on another menu screen, or in an almost invisible message box.

The manual provides a slight and abbreviated tutorial, but nowhere does the manual even mention how to use the custom tools. It took me several attempts before I found the "Custom Game" menu selection when starting the game to be able to access my scenarios.

The graphics are probably the strongest point of *Tegel's Mercenaries*. The artists chose a cartoonish look which seems to work very well. There is very little dithering, and the colors are all vibrant, making the screens stand out exceptionally well. When in the scenario mode, the



entire screen is filled with the overhead view, and menus are accessed by clicking on a squad member or one of two unobtrusive buttons. Clicking on the red button brings up the file save and exit menu, while the green button brings up a somewhat muddled, but helpful, overhead map of the entire scenario.

Sound is generally well handled, with a refreshing sparseness to the musical scores. Digital sounds are provided, but the version I reviewed was missing one of the needed drivers. The only problem with the game sounds is that they don't really help the player assess the mission any better. Sometimes a weapon makes a sound, other times

not, and the threats seem to be uncomfortably quiet, making the player pay extra attention to all of his squad members to find the little blue puffs of combat smoke.

All in all, *Tegel's Mercenaries* is a pretty game with a handful of good ideas. The problem is, not many of those ideas are very well executed. Control is clunky, inconsistent, and downright frustrating at times. The logistics aspect is downplayed to a fault, and the successful completion of the scenarios is accomplished more through rote than through any intuitive and creative decision making.

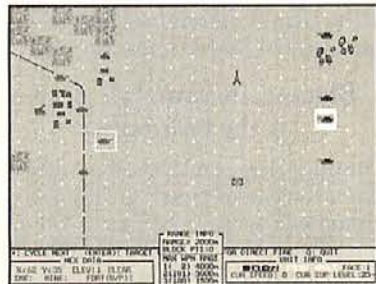
Hopefully, future editions will clean up the game and add the depth needed to keep a player's attention. Until then, the twenty-second century is a hit or miss proposition. **CGW**

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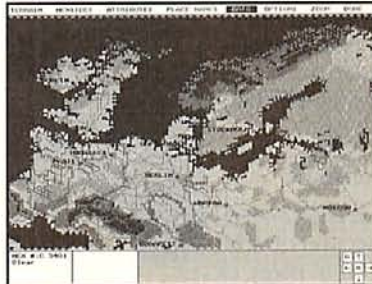
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Arrakaholics Anonymous

A Twelve Step Guide to a Happier, Healthier Harkonnen

by Jeff James

While Virgin Game's first computer gaming foray into the world of Frank Herbert's *Dune* books was well-received by many gamers, others wished the first *Dune* game was a little meatier. With the introduction of *Dune II*, Virgin Games and developer Westwood Studios have created a game that, among other things, contains more strategy muscle than its predecessor.

In *Dune II*, gamers can choose one of three houses to champion their conquest of the planet Arrakis: House Atreides, House Harkonnen or House Ordos. While the goal of each house is the same (supreme rulership of the planet), each house approaches its goal with a slightly different set of tactics. Regardless of whether gamers choose the guile of House Ordos, the overt military might of House Harkonnen or the balanced military doctrine of House Atreides, winning at *Dune II* can be an arduous task at best.

To aid aspiring conquerors in their conquest of Arrakis, the following strategy tips and guidelines (gained at the expense of thousands of simulated Atreides, Harkonnen and Ordos soldiers) should provide invaluable insight into the maniacal aggressiveness of a computer-controlled opponent. Although computers may have a "head for business" with regards to playing *Dune II* (after all, their tiny electronic brains are fashioned out of sand), a healthy dose of useful human behaviors (i.e. deception, trickery, chicanery, etc.) combined with the steps outlined below will help gamers along the sandy path to victory.

1. Speed is life (and victory).

From building structures to attacking the enemy, speed is invaluable. Building structures as fast as possible is the key to survival in many of the scenarios, where a fast-moving foe could easily overwhelm slowly prepared defenses. Build initial structures as quickly as possible in the following order: windtrap, outpost, light factory, windtrap, and refinery. This will work well in most scenarios. Building at least two refineries at the start of the scenario helps keep spice, the lifeblood of any military campaign on Arrakis, flowing in adequate quantities. Finally, when an opportunity presents itself, players would be wise to capitalize on it as quickly as possible.

2. When in doubt, run them over.

Although often overlooked in the combat role, the spice harvester can be a very effective weapon against infantry and troopers. No need for fancy weapons to do the job; simply point the anterior end of the

harvester at a line of enemy troops and proceed to squash them into jelly. Tanks (of all varieties) also work well at clearing out thickets of infantry, with the added benefit of being more heavily armored and sporting weapons to defend themselves.

3. Lay the foundations of success.

The victorious commander in *Dune II* is not just one who can lead a brilliant attack or manage troop production and spice refinement, but one who can plan ahead, literally, from the foundation up. Players of *SimCity* will certainly have the prerequisites necessary for building a military-industrial complex that is functional and efficient. When the scenario begins, take a moment to survey the landscape and visualize the optimal military base within the specific confines of the scenario. Plan to leave a nice, breezy thoroughfare through the middle of the complex so that units can quickly get to defensive positions on any side of the base. Also, try to place Spice Refineries and their attendant Harvester docking-bays such that they are easily accessible and closest to the majority of Spice Fields. Leave room for defensive structures at the edges of the base. Often, the hasty commander will build an important structure at the very edge of the sand, leaving no room for those essential Rocket Launchers.

4. Blatant, in-your-face deception is the best policy.

Directing large-scale assaults right at the center of an enemy base is usually a recipe for ignominious defeat. The enemy will usually (especially in the last few battles) pour out units en masse to meet any threat. Then, they will systematically proceed to grind any attacking force into Sand Worm patties. Taking a less direct (i.e. sneaky and deceitful) approach is the best path towards victory. First, fully explore the area around an enemy base. When a large section of rock is discovered next to the flanks of that base, sending units to gather at that point in anticipation of a massed assault is a good idea. A good production strategy is to create two units for the defense of the player's own base, then one for attacking the enemy base. Once a force of about 7-10 vehicles has been assembled at the rendezvous, they should be sent to attack the flanks of the enemy. This strategy may take some practice; assembling units too close to the enemy base will cause them to be attacked before the force is large enough, while gathering forces too far away gives Sand Worms ample opportunity to munch on them as they stream across great distances of open desert.



5. Accentuate the deadly, eliminate the ineffectual.

Learn the strengths of each house. Each demands different tactics to emerge successful. For House Ordos, maximize the speed advantage of raider trikes and other speedy units by performing slashing hit and run raids. House Harkonnen? Try to concentrate the superior firepower of this house's units on selected targets, then proceed to divide the enemy into small, easily eliminated groups. For House Atreides, a mixture of the aforementioned doctrines is essential: use firepower on the Ordos, while emphasizing a more stealthy approach when dealing with the Harkonnen.

6. Ride the rocks.

If one thing is constant in *Dune II*, it is that Sand Worms are always on the lookout for a meal on the cheap. Also, since the favorite snack of any rapacious Sand Worm always seems to be the most expensive of military units, keeping those units out of the gullet of an ornery Sand Worm is a top priority. Since Sand Worms can't travel through rock, gamers would be advised to plot lengthy unit movements so they travel across as much rock as possible. Wheeled and tracked vehicles seem to attract an inordinate amount of attention from Sand Worms, so a wise commander would keep those units on rock at all times, even when guarding a stationary position. Troopers and infantry, while occasionally getting munchied, are usually much safer guarding on open sand than any other units. When in doubt, however, keep all of your units stationed on rocks (unless the strategic value of placing them on open sand is more valuable than losing a unit or two).

7. Become one with the Shai-Hulud.

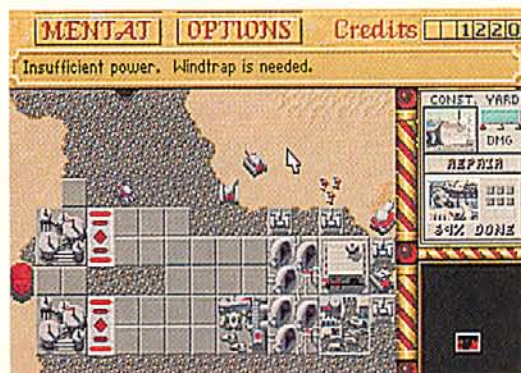
Although Sand Worms are extremely difficult to kill, they can be forced to alter their course. Pitched battles on open sand always seem to attract a great deal of attention from sandworms. In situations such as this, wise commanders will expend just enough firepower on a troublesome worm to have it change course away from his units and towards those of his enemy.

8. Follow the leader.

Using this tactic, players can lure enemy forces away from their base and into pre-defined "kill zones" around their bases. To begin with, a defensive cul-de-sac (lined with turrets and potent offensive units, such as tanks and trooper squads) should be created in front of a player's base. Next, a half-dozen or so trikes or quads should be created and then, sent to attack the enemy base. When the attacking units arrive at the enemy base, they should be directed to engage as many enemy units as possible. After fighting for a brief period of time, the attacking units should then be ordered to retreat to the "kill-zone" next to the player's base. Many of the engaged enemy units will happily follow the retreating units, allowing them to be cut apart when they arrive within the confines of the "kill zone." Used in conjunction with tactic #4, a player could use this tactic to draw off a substantial number of enemy units from their base before a surprise flank attack is performed.

9. Rockets galore.

For attacking enemy bases, nothing beats the rocket launcher (also



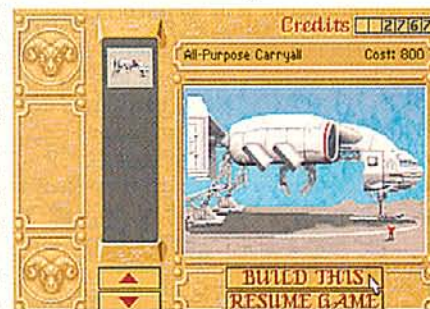
called a missile tank). Rocket launchers have greater range than almost every other unit in the game, making them well-suited to dismantling enemy gun and rocket turrets from a safe distance. A prudent commander will often use rocket launchers in conjunction with tactic #4, performing a sneak flank attack with long-ranged weapons of destruction.

10. Turrets, turrets and more turrets!

Although bashing an opponent into smithereens with waves of fast moving tanks is every commander's dream, a more pragmatic approach must also take the defense of a player's home base into account. Chief among the defensive weapons are gun and rocket turrets. Inexpensive, easy to produce and deadly accurate, a well-designed defensive wall of rocket turrets can effortlessly slice an attacking enemy force into shreds. Avoid using defensive walls; they are almost useless in the last few battles, easily falling under the heavier guns of powerful units.

11. Deal with the (Death) Hand you're dealt.

In the last few scenarios in *Dune II*, each House may build a palace. In addition to being a well-fortified defensive structure, a palace gives its owner a powerful offensive weapon. In the case of House Atreides, powerful Fremen troopers can be summoned to fight the enemies of the Atreides. The palace used by House Ordos grants the ability to create a saboteur, a stealthy unit which can heavily damage enemy structures. Finally, the palaces used both by the Harkonnen and the Emperor himself grant the ability to launch the Death Hand missile, possibly the most powerful offensive weapon in the game. Developing an effective strategy against these special weapons is crucial for victory.



As the most powerful special weapon, the Death Hand deserves special attention. The best way to deal with the deadly Death Hand missile is to simply save the game often. Although inaccurate, a Death Hand can destroy several structures with one strike. In addition to restoring your game, creating another construction yard on a section of rock a considerable distance from most structures will serve to minimize the effect of the Death Hand.

12. Getting Your Fix

The original release of *Dune II* crept out with a few bugs (not including our Sand Worm friends). If playing with the original version, one may occasionally notice that 1) the Frigate that is supposed to service the Starport may never show up when called, 2) a Harvester may dock in a Spice Refinery and decide that it is not going to leave, 3) Team Movement does not exactly work as described in the manual. According to Virgin, these problems and more have been corrected in an update that is currently available. Call the customer support line given in the game manual for more information.

Although the tactics listed here should prove successful, many more tactics and strategies for *Dune II* can be devised by either altering the ones presented here, or by experimenting. Indeed, a *Dune II* commander with an active mind and a willingness to experiment can make the best of any situation. **CGW**



Hawker's Descendant

Domark's AV8B Harrier Assault

by Paul Rigby

It has taken until the aircraft has become well and truly combat proven in the recent Gulf War for a seemingly worthwhile flight simulation of the latest version of the Harrier family to appear on a floppy disk. Now, two new simulations have appeared almost simultaneously. *Harrier Jump Jet* from Microprose and Domark's *AV8B Harrier Assault* (HA). The premise to the latter simulation is that Indonesia has invaded East Timor and has occupied it since 1975. Now, hard-line factions in the Indonesian army are oppressing the indigenous island population rather heavily, and their continual poor treatment of said population, as well as frantic appeals from the legal government in exile, have pushed the United Nations into action.

The only detachment in the area is the player's own amphibious force of US Marines. It is not, however, a full-strength Marine Expeditionary Brigade. Only the Tarawa assault ship is able to launch the limited number of AV8B Harriers. Limited Harrier replacements are available from the other assault ships along with a variety of helicopters plus special force troops and the marines themselves (who are equipped with LVTP-7 assault vehicles). No reinforcements are available, so the player must utilize what he has to complete the campaign.

Obviously, the game comes complete with a ready-made campaign and plenty of pre-generated missions which allow the player to experience some first person simulator action via the AV8B flight model. It is really a blend of two genres: flight simulation and wargame. Indeed, it may well be the first successful integration of such a system. That is, both genre types do (just stand alone as games in their own right).

Come Fly With Me (Flight Model)

The flight model, which can be explored with the use of the growingly popular *Thrustmaster* controls, is one of the best available. It doesn't top *Falcon 3.0*, but does present the feeling that multiple tons of metal are being thrown around the sky. This illusion is both enhanced by the flight model's inertia effects that hang on every movement of the Harrier and other unique Harrier skills which are well-depicted. For example, the Harrier's capacity to gradually come to

a dead stop from high speed and hover is well-presented, as is the famous VIFFing technique first seen in the Falklands campaign.

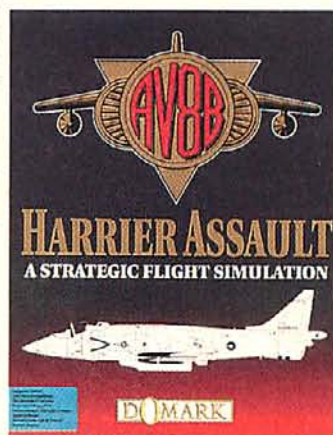
The one dubious element of the flight model is the rudder interpretation. Releasing the rudder control forces the Harrier to bounce back onto (or near) its original orientation. It appears that Simis (designers of the flight model) attempted to copy the effect of high inertia resulting from strong air-flow acting upon the airframe. The idea being that any movement away from the central axis will be resisted by the air-flow which, in turn, will attempt to bring it back to the original position. If this was the intention, the effect doesn't quite come off.

The sound support doesn't quite come off, either. The engine noise tends to stutter on take-off, and this is more than a little unnerving. Fortunately, the graphic appeal is more fulfilling. There is an excellent haze effect which obscures distant features and the day/night transitions are nicely portrayed. The blackout effect and the jolt which occurs when one is hit are also very well done.

Hunter/Killer (Limited Options)

Weapon systems are numerous and include: LGBs, Mavericks, Iron Bombs and Rocket Pods. Laser-guided ordnance is illuminated via special force troops. The whole subject of laser guidance opens up a can of worms in the game, though. For example, laser-guiding a Harrier via special forces is all well and good, but what about Harriers illuminating targets, via laser, for each other? The option is a well used one and was amply demonstrated by the RAF's own Buccaneers, who illuminated targets for their Tornado colleagues. Modern Close Air Support (CAS) aircraft, including the AV8B, should have the option, but it is not available in *HA*. Harriers can easily be sent on reconnaissance missions in the game to acquire targets, so it is not as if a hunter/killer option is out of the question on theoretical grounds.

Indeed, even if the idea of hunter/killer packs could be mooted, the notion would be doomed in *HA* because wingmen are not available. This also means that Harriers must fly missions on their own with no



| | |
|-------------|--|
| TITLE: | AV8B Harrier Assault |
| SYSTEM: | Amiga, IBM |
| PRICE: | \$59.99 |
| PROTECTION: | None |
| DEVELOPER: | Simis |
| PUBLISHER: | Domark c/o Accolade San Jose, CA |

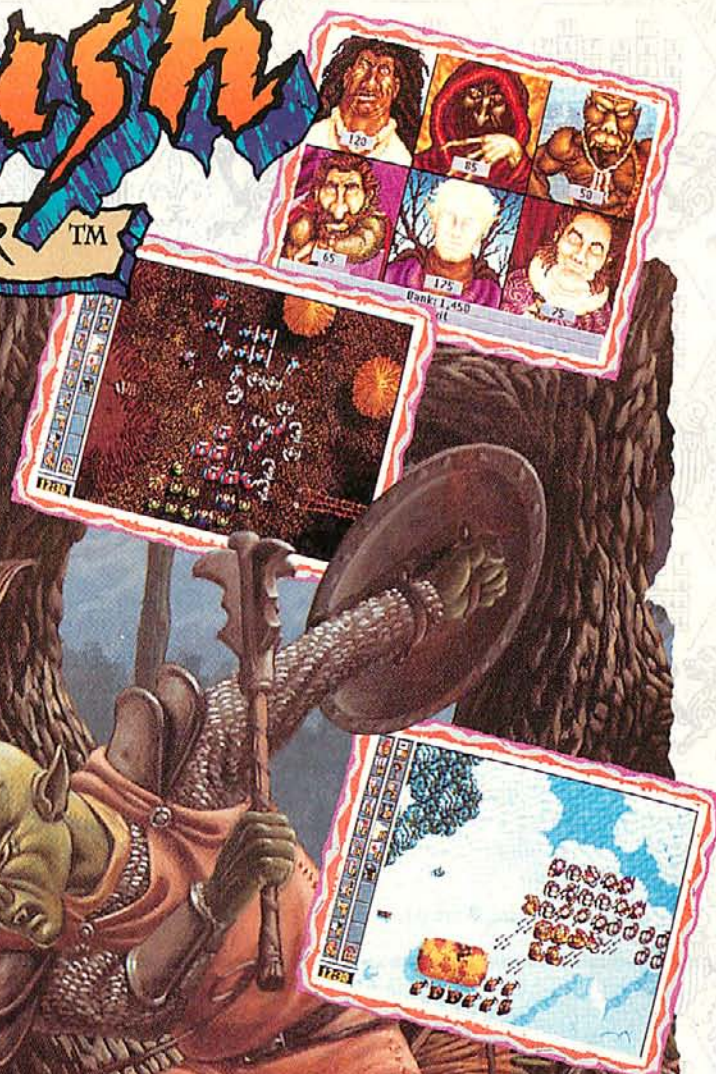
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Actual IBM VGA screen photos.

Circle Reader Service #73

Combat Air Patrol (CAP) options to cover each other's "six." This is a dangerous situation and one which led me into severe trouble on many occasions.

This trouble leads to the subject of air threats. I found the opposition too severe — especially for the supposed quality of the enemy I was facing. This situation was made more aggravating by the limited information received by the attendant AWACS (who offer air threat bearing, but not range), plus the poor performance of the AIM-9M Sidewinders which had a lower than expected performance.



Don't Rain on my Campaign (Campaign Construction)

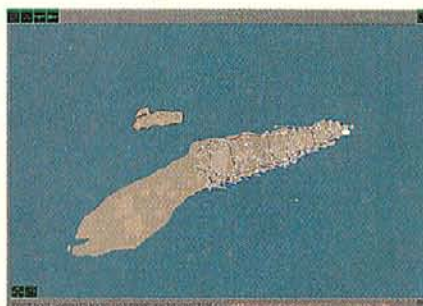
If the player does not wish to follow the game's campaign he can design one of his own. Using the campaign manager, TAWADS, one can allocate waypoints for Harriers (attack and reconnaissance), helicopters (attacks, reconnaissance and troop insertion) and troops (via landing craft). The fleet, itself, can be allocated waypoints along the coast of the island. However, even though TAWADS utilizes mouse commands and a menu tree, the system is long-winded and tiring to use. The command system cries out for global commands to speed up campaign orders and tactical decisions. The frequent slow screen updates that blank the screen also help to irritate, especially during the heat of the action.

Eccentricities also occur when using TAWADS. For example, in the

wargame view, Harriers become invincible apart from the odd loss over a target (presumably from SAM attack). Also, helicopters are similarly impregnable. I never lost one chopper during the whole campaign. The Harrier situation is a temptation to cheat, however. If one's Harrier is under attack from an enemy aircraft during the simulation mode, merely switching to wargame/campaign mode defuses the threat. Domark has admitted that the game switches to a simplified wargame set of rules. This one point is typical of the generally poor AI routines in the game. Another difficulty presented via TAWADS is the lack of air threat representation on the map; the only air threat seen is the infrequent supply C-130.

One final criticism is the no-win situation. Winning the game is, apparently, triggered upon achieving 70% occupation of the island. I managed to occupy 89% of the island without seeing a "win screen." This is a bug, it appears.

On the positive side, though, the real-time action seen on the TAWADS map is made more atmospheric when one realizes that all



of the movements are actually happening in 3D. It brings the normally staid 2D map to life. In addition, the map can be zoomed almost indefinitely and the presentation is commendable via the hires screen.

Amiga owners have their own problems, I'm afraid.

This version does not include night missions. Domark alleges that the lack of RAM in most Amigas is to blame. However, when one considers that night missions merely warrant a simple palette change and that Domark recommends a 68020 Amiga to play the game (and most 68020 Amiga owners have 2 MB+ of RAM), this seems unlikely.



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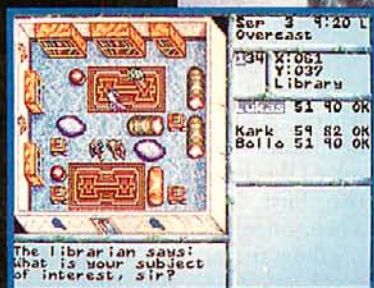
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End of Strafing Run (Conclusion)

Even worse is the fact that it is so obvious that the whole thing hasn't been properly tested, just rushed out of the door. Even limited playtesting would have prevented many of the problems occurring in HA. Domark deserves to be strafed with cannon fire for this simple lack of thought.

However, despite the criticisms HA is worth a look. There are enough innovations and hooks in the game to warrant spending some time on HA. Doubly so when an update is promised which will tackle many of the problems described. **CGW**

The Magic Candle III™



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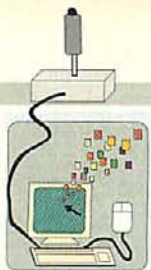
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MINDCRAFT

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(Actual screens may vary.)



It's A Small, Small, Real-Time World

Crossing Computer Gaming with Miniatures

Design Notes from Impressions' Ed Grabowski

In the fall of 1989, I first decided to create a computer system whereby I could fight some of the great heroic battles of yesteryear. I had spent a large part of my youth in painting, literally, thousands of miniature soldiers and attaching them to cardboard bases for ease of movement (and for reconstruction of the battlefield whenever my sister wreaked mass destruction equivalent to an act of God).

In spite of the obvious gratification earned from this pursuit, I always felt that the "turn-based" rules could never recreate the incredible mental challenge of simultaneously commanded thousands of troops. Instead of taking the sensible approach and creating said computer program in my spare time, I decided to leave my career as a systems analyst, working in Management Information Systems which utilized large water-cooled IBM mainframes, and go for it! My original game was *Rorke's Drift*, and it has been followed by a series of games based upon new historical subjects and full of refinements.

Aiming High

So, what did I really want to accomplish. The basic aim was to recreate the same resplendent battle formations one could command on the table-top, but allow gamers to command these units in "real-time" with artificial intelligence controlling each soldier. I didn't want to lose one bit of the visual splendor of the armies, and I desired to animate the troops as well.

This meant that, while the battle is taking place, the machine would have to perform the following calculations for each soldier depicted on the screen:

- work out the AI for each soldier. (Which means deciding if a soldier should stay put or move, as well as reload or fire, depending on his own



Conquest of Japan

- local AI and the orders set by the player.);
- carry out the move and decide on the animation pose required. Three frames of animation are used for each soldier's walk, but 24 total frames are required to reflect the eight different directions in which he can walk;
- detect if said soldier has collided with

a fellow soldier and work out how they can move around each other to allow both soldiers' orders to be fulfilled;

- detect collision with the enemy;
- if firing, automatically seek out the most suitable target and attack it;
- resolve any missile firing; and
- finally, draw the soldier on the screen!

Of course, the most difficult part of this algorithm is that it all has to be done in as short a time as possible — ideally, five times per second. To further complicate matters, gamers need to be able to scroll around the battlefield while all this is happening, so the computer must also detect and keep track of mouse clicks and key presses.

High Road or Low Road?

The next decision I had to make was whether to use a "high level" language like C or a faster "low level" assembly language. I solved this by electing to use a mixture of the two. First, I would write the routine in C. Then, once I had it working, I would often rewrite it in assembler in order to speed it up.

So, with a game that was both playable and working reasonably well on a 20 MHz MS-DOS machine, I suddenly discovered what a difference a higher clock speed can make. The game played entirely too fast on a 33 MHz machine. The computer executed its battle plans so quickly that I was being outmaneuvered before I knew it. There I was, busy getting my men in formation for an assault on the enemy's left, when the rascally computer had already attacked and routed most of my right with his cavalry. So, I would have to turn and try to rally my right while the computer nonchalantly charged my center.

In short, I was being out-fought, not because I was being out-thought, but because everything was happening too quickly. I

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didn't have time to react. Therefore, I was forced to introduce an option which may increasingly appear with new generations of faster machines — a speed reduction option. With this toggle in place, the game player can set how fast the men move on the screen. This, of course, provides time to see what's happening and respond appropriately.

Looking Good

When designing this system, I wanted to select a viewpoint which would give an impression (pun intended) of a three-dimensional battlefield. I rejected a straight overhead view because I wanted the player to see as much of the uniforms as possible. After all, miniatures players spend days researching and painting the clothing and armor of a given period. I decided that my design shouldn't offer any less.

I chose, therefore, the isometric 3-D view which is used in some arcade action games. Naturally, this solution had its attendant problems, the biggest being that once a piece moves behind a tree or building, it can become temporarily hidden. My solution was to give the player the option of viewing the conflict from the opposing player's viewpoint. To do so meant having to draw the scenery graphics from two viewpoints. I didn't have to worry about the soldiers, since all of their angles were already drawn, but I did have to do this for the scenery.

The Loyal Opposition

In the discussion to this point, I have neglected to speak of another major programming conundrum, the AI. Getting the computer to control an army is a never-ending task. The more we work on the AI, the more changes we come up with. Right now, I work on a general rather than specific approach.

Since I design campaign games (like *Conquest of Japan* and the upcoming *Blue & Gray*) where the size and composition of both armies and the terrain can be different in any battle, using general AI routines is mandatory. If I were only simulating a particular conflict, I could use pre-programmed attack/defense movements. So, I rework the general AI for the period (tactics, weapons and unit types) and geography (basic terrain advantages and disadvantages) in which the game takes place.

My routines work by looking at the army's composition, position and morale. It evaluates these points at three levels: Overall, Unit and Individual Soldier. First, it examines the overall strength of the army against the opposition, measured both numerically (number of men) and positionally (what type of terrain is held). If the AI algorithms controlling the player's units perceive that he has numerical superiority and terrain advantage, it shifts to attack mode.

Next, the routine examines each unit and follows the same procedure by zooming down

COHORT



PC 3.5

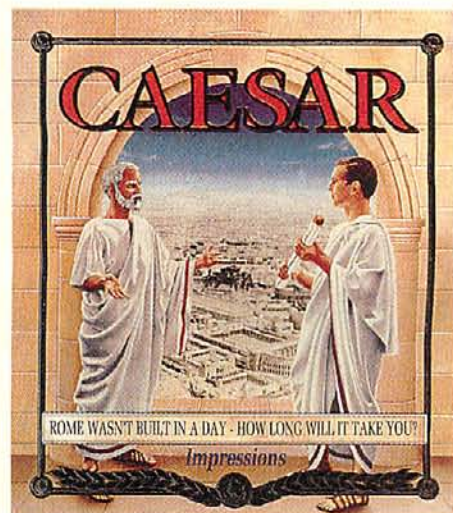
to that individual unit's perspective. Keeping in mind what overall strategy has already been factored into the process, the AI decides what the unit is most likely to do.

Naturally, however, the whole affair boils down to whether the individual soldiers are going to follow orders or not. The AI performs the same calculations on an even smaller scale for each soldier depicted on the screen. If the evaluation shows the soldier to be too weak or his morale to be too low, he simply will not obey the commands from the higher levels.

These general calculations are then supplemented by algorithms for fighting units with unique skills, such as artillery and cavalry. This keeps units from performing atypical attacks such as artillery units charging cavalry (The Charge of the Lugubrious Brigade?).

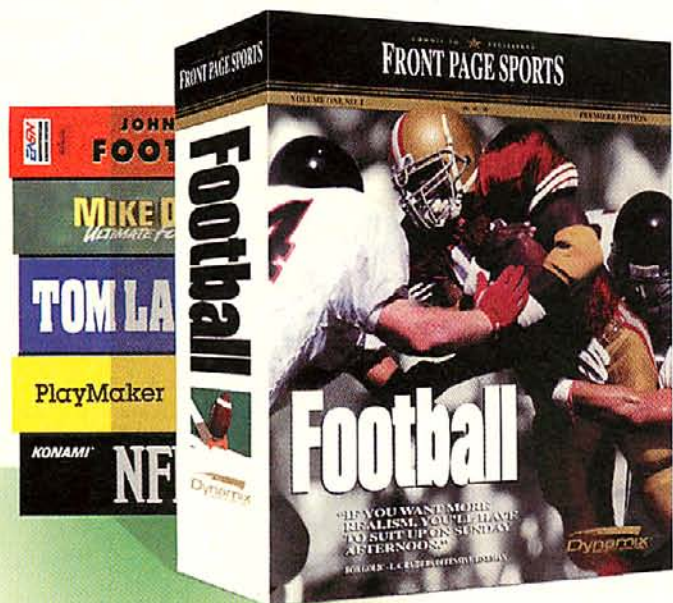
Historical Notes

Hopefully, this article has given some insight into the way my miniatures wargaming system originated and evolved. After *Blue & Gray*, we hope to create fantasy, W.W.II and space games which utilize the system. **CGW**



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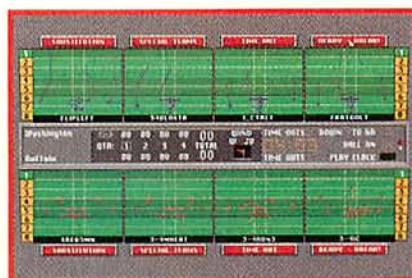
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Come to the Green Beret, My Friend

Special Forces from MicroProse

by Jeff James

For years, strategy gamers have used traditional pen-and-paper games to simulate the actions of squad-level infantry units. Boardgames such as Avalon Hill's *Squad Leader* allowed arm-chair infantry commanders to tackle the problems a real-world infantry leader might have to. From destroying ammo dumps to securing small villages, small infantry squads have traditionally served as a deft and deadly arm of a country's armed forces.

Like most other board-gaming products (such as TSR's *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*), several attempts have been made at bringing the visceral appeal of squad-level infantry combat to the computer screen. MicroProse's *Airborne Ranger* took the "lone wolf" approach, allowing gamers to assume the persona of a single American paratrooper. Other games, with Interstel's *D.R.A.G.O.N. Force* as a prime example, took a broader approach, giving gamers a crack at commanding an entire squad of grunts. As the latest attempt at simulating small-scale infantry action, MicroProse has released *Special Forces* (*SForces*).

While MicroProse has positioned *SForces* as the sequel to *Airborne Ranger*, the two products have almost nothing in common. While *Airborne Ranger* was originally developed here in the states by MicroProse U.S.A. for the venerable Commodore 64 and IBM-compatible computers, *SForces* was developed in England by Sleepless Knights and published on the Amiga by MicroProse U.K. I had hoped that the transatlantic connection between the U.S.A. and U.K. branches of MicroProse would result in a product with a global outlook on the units the player could command. Instead of offering specific, individualized units, MicroProse has unfortunately attempted to cover all the bases with an amorphous, overly generalized unit of soldiers. Although the product packaging subtly alludes to such renowned units as the U.K.'s SAS, the Soviet Union's Spetsnaz, and America's anti-terrorist Delta Force, they are nowhere to be found in the game itself. Other elite military units such as the Navy SEALs, USMC Marine recon, US Army Rangers and others are nowhere to be found. Giving gamers the chance to choose from the world's most elite special forces would have been a welcome program feature.

Boot Camp Basics

The game begins with the roster screen, where players have the opportunity to give a custom name to their unit. After choosing one of four difficulty settings, the player is presented with a file cabinet holding all 16 missions included in *SForces*. These 16 missions are divided into four geographical regions: arctic, tropical, temperate and desert. The missions in each zone pit the player against unnamed terrorist groups, militaristic drug lords or a maniacal despot patterned heavily after Saddam Hussein. Missions can be chosen at random or played in order, allowing gamers to enjoy a quick game or to invest more time in a lengthy campaign. The objectives in each mission range from planting laser target designators (LTDs) next to scud missiles to

assassinating the leader of enemy forces. Players who wish to create and name their own soldiers are out of luck; gamers can only select troopers from the included, pre-generated eight man roster. Four soldiers can be used in a mission and each can be equipped with a variety of hi-tech weapons. A variety of pistols, rifles, grenades and rocket launchers are included. Explosive charges and LTDs round out the included armaments, ensuring that nearly every obstacle a player faces can be overcome by the vigorous application of copious amounts of firepower. Once the player's team is briefed, assigned and loaded with weaponry, the war zone may be entered.

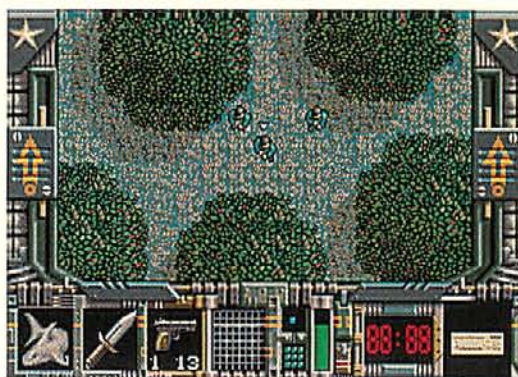
Into The Breach

Upon arrival into the war zone, the game shifts to an overhead view of the currently selected team leader and his surroundings. Two levels of magnification are supported, including a scaled terrain map which displays the entire warzone at once. Once the four troopers are on the ground, the player has a number of formation and movement options with which to order them about the countryside. By pressing the F-keys on the keyboard, gamers can direct soldiers under their command to operate in one of three different unit formations: individually, in pairs, or in team support mode (where all soldiers work in a triangular formation around the team leader). Soldiers can be moved directly by pressing the appropriate soldier's function key (F1 - F4) and steering them to their objectives with a keyboard or joystick. For more strategically minded players, movement can be set at the scaled terrain map level by establishing waypoints.

When traipsing through enemy territory, soldiers can either move in stealth mode (shooting at enemies only when necessary) or sniping mode (shooting everything that comes close). For heavily defended objectives, I discovered that the stealth mode worked best; for less armed objectives, the sniping mode seemed to be the superior choice. Regardless of which mode is chosen, the four grunts that the player controls seem to possess an incredible amount of stamina. Even at the most difficult play settings, these soldiers seem to absorb an unearthly amount of damage, taking several rounds of fire from a machine-gun pillbox at close range. Although the inherent invincibility of the soldiers can be argued for the sake of playability, gamers looking for a more accurate representation of damage received during combat will be disappointed. In many instances, *SForces* plays more like a version of the arcade blast-fest *Ikari Warriors* than a detailed wargame of small-scale infantry actions.



| | |
|--------------|---|
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| SYSTEMS: | Amiga, IBM |
| REVIEWED ON: | IBM |
| PRICE: | \$49.95 |
| DESIGNERS: | Sleepless Knights Game Design |
| PUBLISHER: | MicroProse Hunt Valley, MD (410) 771-0440 |



Purple Hearts And Promotions

Once the objective for the current scenario is accomplished (retrieving a valuable object, assassinating the enemy leader, et al), the player must shepherd units back to "pickup zones." Once the team arrives at one of the designated retrieval points, a helicopter can be called in to pluck the players from the warzone. Even here, *SForces* leans more towards the arcade end of the computer gaming spectrum. Even if the pickup zone is surrounded by dozens of enemy soldiers, gun emplacements and other enemy units, the player's chopper happily zooms into almost certain death, slowly picks up the team, and vanishes from the combat scene without even a single shot being fired in its direction. If any soldiers end up being captured by the enemy, the player has the opportunity to fly back into the warzone and retrieve the missing soldiers. If any soldiers are killed in action, that soldier is permanently removed from the eight-man roster. After playing through the majority of the scenarios at a respectable level of difficulty, this loss of soldiers can be crippling. Once lost, a soldier is not replaced; players may find themselves braving the last scenario or two with less than a complete squad of four soldiers. Once the mission has been accomplished, each of the soldiers that participated in the mission are given the opportunity to be promoted or decorated. This process is entirely in the hands of the player, allowing gamers to reward favorite soldiers with a greater allotment of rewards. Once the 16 included scenarios are completed, the game ends and the player's squad is retired from active duty. Players can attempt those same scenarios at a higher difficulty level with a new squad, although the scenarios themselves will remain largely unchanged. One can only hope that MicroProse will release additional mission diskettes (or a scenario builder) to give the game playing appeal after the included scenarios are accomplished.

The playing interface is the strongest feature of *SForces*. Although mouse support is not included in the actual combat portion of the game, moving soldiers about by way of joystick or keyboard is clean and straightforward. Switching between soldiers can be done quickly,

while changing weapons is as easy as selecting the appropriate character and using the "+" and "-" keys to scroll through that character's available weaponry. Graphics, though not excessively detailed, are crisp and bright, making the flora and geographical features of the battlefield easily distinguishable. Sound is limited to firing weapons and exploding ordnance, although a fittingly somber military melody is played whenever a mission is completed. The 88-page instruction manual is somewhat of a disappointment coming from MicroProse, which has historically produced some of the most well-written game documentation in the industry. While I had hoped that the manual might devote a dozen or so pages profiling the elite military units of several countries, backed by a brief history of the accomplishments of special forces used throughout history, it did neither.

Mission Incomplete

I had hoped that MicroProse U.K. would have heaped the same amount of lavish detail upon *SForces* that other U.K. designed MicroProse products have exhibited (with *B-17 Flying Fortress* being a prime example). Unfortunately, *SForces* ends up being a rather unexciting and easily forgettable entertainment product. With the game playing emphasis resting more upon arcade action than shrewd tactical maneuvering, *SForces* appears to be aimed squarely at male computer gamers in their early teens. Yet, even if *SForces* was classified as a true "shoot em' up," it fails miserably to compete with more focused arcade offerings. In summation, *SForces* is a product which unsuccessfully attempts to straddle the barbed wire between arcade action and detailed, realistic infantry combat. Gamers looking for a vague, oversimplified introductory simulation of small-scale infantry operations might see something to admire in this game. Unfortunately, more serious minded gamers looking for a detailed, factually correct simulation of squad-level infantry actions should count *SForces* as missing in action. **CGW**

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Better Late?

A Sneak Preview of Virgin's *Reach for the Skies*

by Paul Rigby

Many moons ago, two flight simulations appeared to be on the brink of release to commemorate and celebrate the Battle of Britain. The product from LucasArts, *Battle of Britain: Their Finest Hour*, became a huge success. The Mirrorsoft game, *Reach for the Skies*, a polygon-based simulation produced by Rowan Software, never materialized. Due to more tweaks than one could shake a stick at, *Reach for the Skies* has undergone a variety of changes. After the death of publishing magnate, Robert Maxwell, which caused great disruption to his Mirror Corporation and its subsidiaries like Mirrorsoft, the product was picked up by Virgin Games and is now finally being published in the U.S.

From Either Side of the Channel

The game focuses upon 70 crucial days of the Battle of Britain, beginning on June 10th, 1940. Depending on the difficulty level selected, play begins with the player as either a pilot (active in combat or practicing in a training mode) or a controller (where a selection of targets is offered and one's set of responses is issued). The player can control either British or German forces. In theory, the course of history can be changed by applying different tactics (as the German side) or just failing to cope with German onslaught (as the British side).

After running through the introductory demo that features digitized

scenes from WW2, plus digitized noises (e.g., Churchill's voice, sirens, etc.), one will observe that *Reach for the Skies* employs an attractive feature regarding the campaign. That is, it splits the operation into four phases; they are the German airforce's attempt to lure the RAF out into the Channel; the German attack on the radar installations; the attack on RAF airfields; and the attack on industrial and civilian targets, better known as "The Blitz."

RAF Command

As the British commander, one is supplied with intelligence about the known German threats for each particular day. These are highlighted on a strategic map. The player will be told what direction the "bandits" are flying in, what type of bombers they are, their speed, and the size of their force. Only one wave of German bombers will ever appear at a time, although secondary fighter squadrons may be poaching after the bombers have swept by. Once a force is on the way, forces can be scrambled from any of England's ten Fighter Command airfields. The number of aircraft for an attack can be selected, as can their heading. Each airfield only holds one type of allied aircraft, either Spitfire or Hurricane.

From the H.Q. to the Cockpit

During flight, the player can control up to four aircraft per British squadron (or eight for the Germans). At any time, as in *Flight of the Intruder* (another Rowan Software production), the RAF player can transfer to the cockpit of any allied aircraft. Similarly, as in *Flight of the Intruder*, wingmen are available. They will watch each other's "six" but, unfortunately, no orders can be given to one's fellow pilots. The player's wingman will follow his actions while the other aircraft will take events as they come. Radio messages in textual form (and digitized via a sound card) from the radar stations and other aircraft will appear on the top of the screen as the intercept progresses.

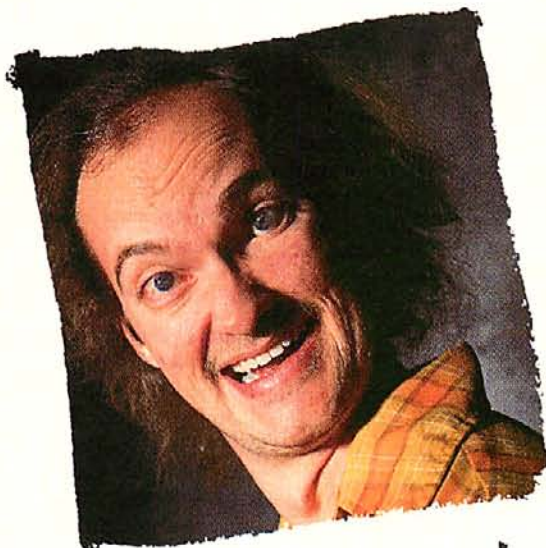
For the Germans one can fly Me 109s, Me 110s and Stukas (plus the rear gunner).

It is a shame that the heavier bombers (i.e.: He111, Do17, Ju88) cannot be piloted. One can only be a tail or forward gunner. Rowan has been quoted as stating that flying the heavy bomber is an unexciting job; that they merely flew to the target, dropped their bombs and flew back again. Try telling the actual He111 pilots that their mission was never exciting! The decision not to allow the player to fly the heavy





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bombers is a *poor* one. It should have been up to Rowan to provide that excitement and leave it to the players to decide.

Readers may be pleased to know that Rowan has implemented a workable rudder into the program, controlled by either the keyboard or separate pedals (even two joysticks are supported). However, Rowan failed to include auto-centering for keyboard users. Manual centering is a trial and is completely unnecessary.

Cockpits for the British side are generic. On the German side there are three different gunner positions and a one-off cockpit for the Stuka. A generic cockpit is given to both the Me109 and Me110.

Esprit de Flying Corps

Unfortunately, there are no medals awarded — only points. A player flying for the British, if he does well on a particular mission, receives a visit from the King. Why the King would spare time to visit a pilot just because he had a "good day" and not toss him a DFC (Distinguished Flying Cross) through the post instead, is beyond me. I firmly believe that the awarding of medals and promotions is more satisfying. Post-mission reports could have been better structured, too. As it is, they are rather woolly and, possibly, confusing to some players.

It is good to see that morale plays a big part in the campaign. It is based, or scored, upon *average* morale of the whole airfield rather than upon individual pilots. Although, if a pilot arrives from an airfield of low morale to an airfield of high morale, the average morale of that airfield will be reduced. If an airfield is garnering a lot of kills, morale will go up — improving their overall skill. If they are losing pilots regularly, morale will fall. There is a slight morale loss for damaged aircraft too. Left to recuperate, airfields with low morale will improve in morale, but only very slowly.

Where do Airplanes Come From?

There are four aircraft factories producing one aircraft each, every four days. From these, airfields can be re-stocked. Aircraft also can be repaired at home bases. However, if an airfield is damaged, aircraft repair is slowed. If factories are damaged, they will stop producing aircraft until fully repaired. If the British force drops down below 50% then Britain is proclaimed lost.

What's in the Sights

Two welcome cosmetic features are gouraud shading and light sourcing, highlighted by the addition of a 256-color VGA palette. Imagine observing a 3-D rendition of a Spitfire from the external viewpoint. Then, roll the aircraft. The effect of light-sourcing means that, as the wing's upper surfaces roll over to face the ground, the color of the upper wings progressively darken. Well, they turn away from the sun don't they? Conversely, lower surfaces lighten. It is an extremely nice effect to see.



Sound can be driven by both Roland LAPC-1 and SoundBlaster simultaneously (via a mixer of some sort) providing satisfactory noises, but never anything special.

The basic flight model for *Reach for the Skies* is a generic form that obeys the fundamental laws of aeronautics. Rolls and loops are well implemented, as are stalls. Progressively tipping a wing on a lazy roll will result in a loss of height and a possible stall which is easily recovered from. Height is realistically lost while flying straight and level with the throttle pulled to minimum.

Checking the Specs

There are supposed to be overlaid patches that specify the charac-



teristics of each individual aircraft. However, I couldn't find any. For example, even though the Spitfire Mark I carried eight guns, only two are simulated; its historical straight-and-level speed of 360 MPH can never be reached (speed tops out at 300 MPH); and high speed diving enforces no problem on the Spitfire where, in reality, it almost locked the ailerons, allowing only a little movement in the rolling axis, if any. Further, negative G or bunting never initiates the Merlin III engine modeled in the game to cut out as it did in real life (a significant feature and one of the very real disadvantages compared to the Me109 which never suffered from this complaint — resulting in challenging dog-fights for RAF pilots).

Flights can be recorded using a range of different orders, angles and so on, with the game's VCR utility. Recordings are portable and recorded files can be extremely long since the game uses expanded memory to store the information. However, options are limited and will never scale the heights observed in *Red Baron*, for example. One odd but handy utility is a DOS file that tidies extraneous files on the hard disk, depending upon what one wishes to dispose of. This is, indeed, a thoughtful gesture.

A Real "No Brainer"

Until this point in the review, one might weigh the pros and cons and decide that *Reach for the Skies* is a pretty good simulation. Alas, I have yet to speak of the game's artificial intelligence. Actually, it has none to speak of — or very little, at best. For all of its technical and cosmetic excellence, *RFTS* is too easy. The enemy is no where near aggressive enough.

While playing the RAF, I was never aware that I was under the cosh, a struggling nation keeping the mighty Luftwaffe at bay. Playing the RAF in *RFTS* is like shooting ducks at a penny arcade. Bombers can be easily brought down from any angle one wishes to fire from. The German escorts are poor and almost Gandhi-like in their aggressiveness. Another thing: German bombers hardly ever hit their targets. After dozens of missions flown in all phases of the campaign, flying as the RAF, I experienced one target hit — *one!* I often repelled entire waves of German bombers plus their escorts with a single Spitfire.

Playing the Germans is not much better. Again, another duck-shoot. Spitfires sit on a bomber's six, just waiting to be shot down (they always are, too). Fellow German bomber pilots/bombardiers are, again, very poor and hardly ever hit their targets, making the player very frustrated and itching to get into the cockpit — which, of course, they can't.

Thus, for this extremely important reason, *Reach for the Skies* cannot be recommended as a viable flight simulation. This is a shame because the game has a lot going for it. It is far more simulation-oriented than Lucasfilm's *Their Finest Hour*. However, it hardly contains a single percent of that game's challenge and gameplay. **CGW**

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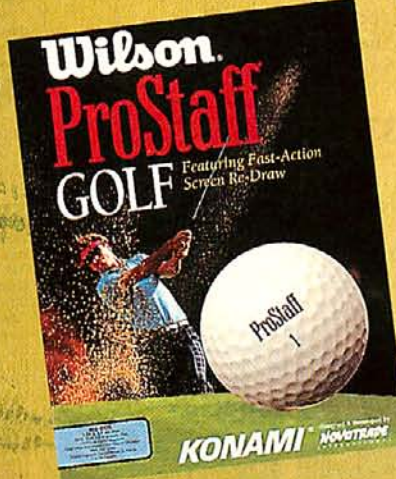
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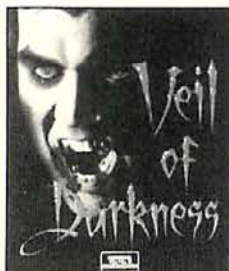


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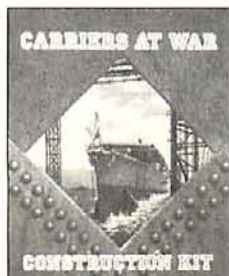
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IBM/Mac \$37



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The most popular WWII series in gaming software adds another proud product. Simulates Allied airborne invasion of Germany in 1944. SVGA graphics required.

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| Aces of the Pacific | 10 | - |
| B-17 Flying Fortress | 10 | - |
| C. Yeager Air Combat | 10 | - |
| F-15 Strike Eagle II | 10 | - |
| F-117A Nighthawk | 10 | - |
| Flight 3.0/3.0 I | 10 | - |
| Flight Simulator 4.0 | 10 | - |
| Jettifighter I and II | 10 | - |
| Megalotress | 10 | - |
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EASTWARD HO!

A Replay of Columbia Games' *EastFront*

by Michael Peck

German player: Paul Saunders

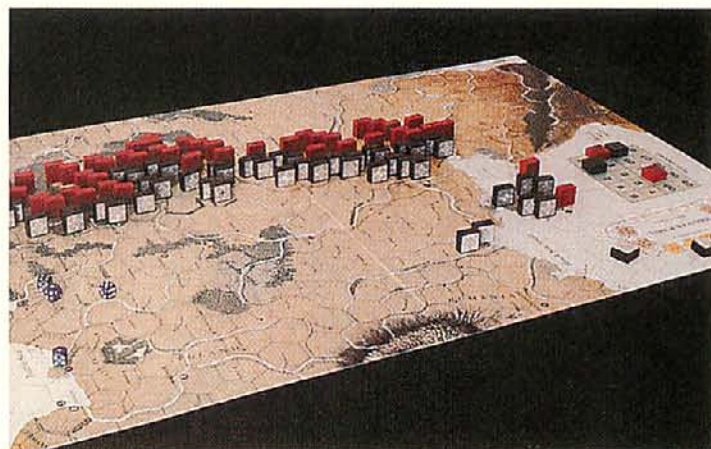
Soviet player: Michael Peck

The following article is a replay of *Computer EastFront* by Columbia Games Inc. *Computer EastFront* is a faithful translation of the popular board game of the Russo-German war. The article describes the opening terms of the Summer 1942 scenario, when the Germans grasped their last opportunity to defeat the Soviet behemoth. The scenario was played using the game's electronic mail feature.

Situation and Deployment

The Germans stared into the jaws of a strategic dilemma as they gazed across the immensity of the endless Russian steppes. With the Russians still groggy from their drubbing the previous summer, the Wehrmacht still dominated the battlefield. Yet, it was too weak to seize all of its strategic objectives. The Germans had a good shot at taking Moscow, Leningrad or the Caucasian oil fields, but *not* all three. Moscow and Leningrad were right on the front lines, but surrounded by dense forests and rivers. So, the Germans opted to thrust across the open southern steps between Moscow and Rostov. To ease the way, they used the game's limited intelligence feature, which hides the strength and type of enemy units not in combat, as well as the ability to reallocate steps among units before a scenario begins. Each of the corps in front of Leningrad and Moscow were depleted to their minimum one step, and their strength points were used to bring the armor and infantry in the south to full strength. The southern armor was also dispersed so as not to tip off the Soviets. The German plan was to kill Soviet units (and get victory points) and then execute a hook on Moscow from the south.

For their part, the Soviet dilemma was no less acute and a lot more frightening. The front was huge and their units and HQs were weaker than their German counterparts. Seeing what appeared to be strong stacks around Moscow (and not knowing their strength) the Soviets



built a strong line in the north to hold the vital production centers. An infantry screen was left in the south with reserves in the cities behind the front.

Turn 1 (First half of June 1942)

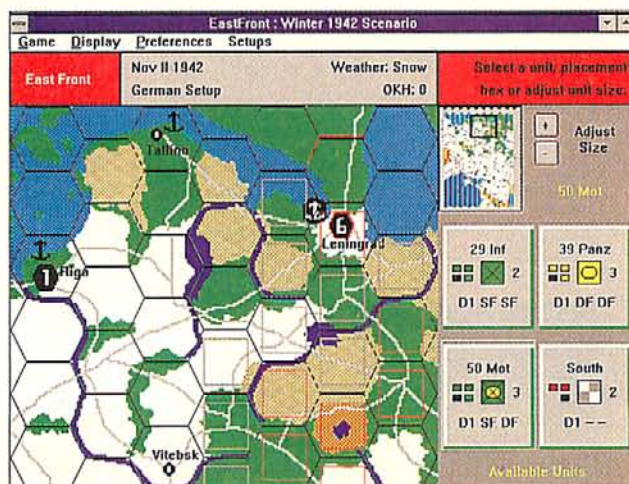
The great drama along the Don unfolded as the Soviet defenders in the south melted under waves of dust-covered panzers. Voroshilov fell, and the gap between the Don and Donets rivers was threaded. The Germans struck in groups of four panzer corps — the maximum allowed by stacking. Although not bringing along infantry maximized striking power, it also meant the expensive armor absorbed all the losses.

The Germans had ordered one HQ to blitz, which gave a second movement and combat phase, though at the cost of depleting the HQ. German armor and infantry pour through the ruptured line to penetrate as far as the outskirts of Stalingrad. Two German infantry corps also tried to seize Rostov, but suffered heavy losses in the built-up terrain. The Soviets moved swiftly to plug their shattered line. Because using HQs is expensive, they only activated the STAVKA HQ, which had an unlimited command range. But with a six-unit limit, STAVKA couldn't both maneuver units in the south and pull reinforcements down from the north. So, the Soviets used local forces to form a

hasty line along the Don and in front of the open terrain near Stalingrad. Even a precious HQ, locked in combat with a panzer corps, was left behind to shore up the line. As a small consolation, two German mech corps out of supply range of a friendly German rail hex suffered attrition.

Turn 2 (Second half of June)

The Germans chose not to blitz this turn. Blitz commands deplete an HQ's strength, and with two turns to go before replacement time, HQ's must be rationed. Yet, the Wehrmacht still created big headaches



for the Red Giant when an isolated panzer corps used strategic movement to move into empty Stalingrad. Meanwhile, three infantry corps piled onto the fortress of Sevastopol while the panzer battering ram again slammed the Soviet line between Rostov and Voroshilov. The Sevastopol and Rostov defenders inflicted heavy losses upon the attackers, but again the Soviet line was ruptured.

Fortunately, no blitz gave the Soviets time to again reform their line. But Marshal Zhukov cursed as the swastikas flew over Stalingrad. With units only able to move two and three hexes normally, rail movement is vital, and a hostile Stalingrad blocked rail transit between Moscow and the Caucasus. This time, the Soviets activated STAVKA and the local southern HQs to take advantage of a fragmented German line. With supply restricted to two hexes from a friendly rail hex, supply effects are harsh, particularly since cutting supply lines depletes enemy units at the end of the friendly turn. Soviet armor managed to cut German supply and rail lines, and seven German mech corps lost a step apiece at the end of the Soviet turn. Still, after one month the Germans have managed to open a bulge between the Caucasus and Voronezh south of Moscow.

Turn 3 (Beginning of July)

During production, the Germans and Soviets both gave priority to augmenting their HQs first. Without them, combat units are essentially paralyzed. The Germans used their remaining resources to augment panzer forces. The Soviets concentrated on rebuilding destroyed cadres. Though more expensive than augmenting on-map forces, STAVKA wanted as many maneuver units as possible in the south. The new cadres were placed in the Caucasus and on the rail lines on the eastern edge of the map.

In July the Germans begin with attacks at two crossing sites over the Don south of Voronezh. One was repulsed, but the other established a bridgehead. In the North, the Germans finally stirred with a bloody and unsuccessful assault into the fortress of Leningrad. The Soviets responded by forming a line south of Moscow. In a sneaky move, a lone tank corps locked in battle east of Rostov disengaged and moved to cut the German railhead in the south. The Germans watched with dismay as a panzer corps in Stalingrad and two infantry corps in Rostov died for lack of supply, while several other units suffered attrition. Dismay turned to confusion as they realized it shouldn't have been happening. In the board game, units locked in battle or out of supply exert no zones of control, so some of their corps should be able to trace a line along the Don. A computer glitch seems to be the only explanation.

At this point the game is called, with the Germans well ahead on points. Although the Soviets will be stronger by winter, they have lost too many cadres and a precious HQ. In hindsight, the Red Army should have been stronger in the south. But the Germans needed to be more careful of their supply lines, and probably should have tried more to husband their armor.

Tips

Since *Computer EastFront* is a faithful translation of the board game (except for tracing supply lines), many of the same cautions apply.

First, think long and carefully before activating HQs and, especially, blitzing with them. Blitzing consumes two steps in a single turn and, with two turns a month and only one step replaced at the beginning

of each month, players can easily find themselves with a pile of useless HQs. The Soviets must be particularly careful; once their two-step HQs blitz, they are completely depleted. The three-step German HQs have a slightly easier time. One good technique is to cluster two or three HQs together and blitz on alternate turns. Nonetheless, with only four or five HQs on each side, only select portions of the front will be in command. That's why the STAVKA and OKW high command HQ's are so valuable; they can command units anywhere on the map. One should also remember that units can make unsupported attacks. Although their offensive

power is halved in such a case, it is a way to get units into a hex in preparation for a later attack.

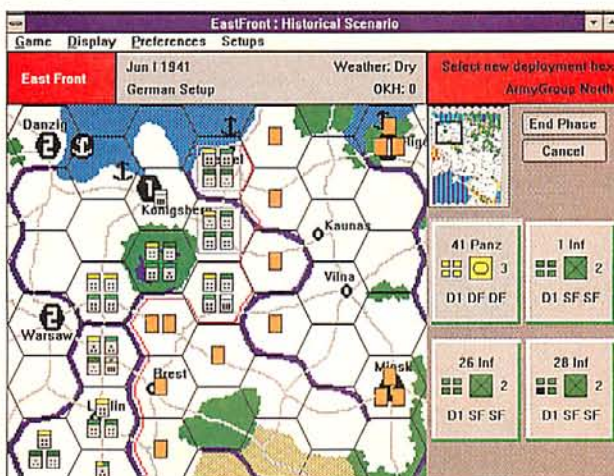
Next, decide where to concentrate. *EastFront* is an attritional game, and units tend to die slowly unless hit by strong forces. Particularly in cities and forests, where the defender takes one-half or one-third normal losses, dislodging a strong force is nearly impossible. It is easier to try and isolate those points and let supply attrition do the work. Remember that four corps may stack in a hex, but only two may cross a single hexside in a single movement phase, so plan on striking the enemy line from multiple hexsides. Only one unit may cross an enemy-controlled river line at a time, so use less expensive infantry to force the bridgehead — and take the losses — and then, move the armor across.

Though the computer chooses losses, it will always take from the strongest piece first. This puts players in a dilemma since striking with pure armor doubles offensive power, but lets armor get shot up. The Germans must be especially watchful because their replacements are twice as costly as each Soviet step. Also, players must decide whether to allocate replacements to existing units or return destroyed cadres to the map. German replacements are more expensive but their cadres are cheaper compared to their Soviet counterparts. Nonetheless, cadres start weak and only one step can be added to them per month, so losing a cadre means that corps won't be full strength for three or four months.

A vital factor is supply. Despite the glitch, the computer version still demonstrates the danger of outrunning supply lines and of a narrow thrust. A two-hex range is short, and rail lines can be easily blocked by zones of control. A hard-pressed defender can try to maneuver along the attacker's flanks and cut his supply lines. What

is devastating is that enemy units suffer attrition at the end of the friendly turn, so they don't have time to re-establish supply.

Finally, both the computer and the boardgame fiendishly use hidden combat values to turn any game into a tense game of bluff and feint. Probe the enemy line to see how strong he really is and use fast mech units to suddenly descend on an outnumbered defender. Enjoy the feeling of surprising an opponent, and don't be surprised when that stack of weak infantry turns into an armored unit that completely turns the tables. **CGW**





Access Software, Inc.
4910 West Amelia Earhart Dr.
S. Lake City, UT 84116
(800) 800-4880

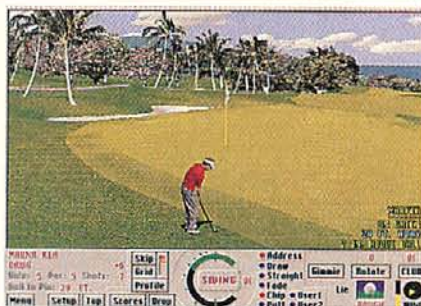
MAUNA KEA - LINKS CHAMPIONSHIP COURSE: Aloha — the very versatile Hawaiian word meaning “hello,” “good-bye,” and “the pig is burning” — can also replace “Fore!” in the vocabulary of the golfer, at least if the golfer is in Mauna Kea. Access’ excellent golf system does a beautiful job of depicting this paradisiacal tropic landscape, with graceful palms, rich azure seas, and coarse volcanic rock. The new course can be used with any of the three Access-developed programs: *Links*, *Links 386 Pro*, and *Microsoft Golf*. Hang loose but watch the hook left. IBM (\$29.95). Circle Reader Service #1.

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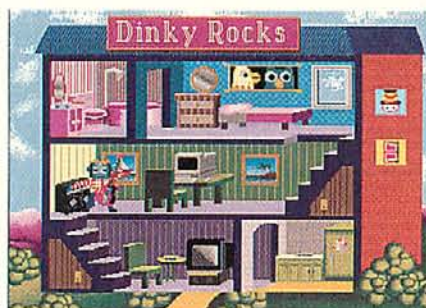
RODNEY’S FUNSCREEN: “Provides five essential games,” reads the package designed to parody the typical children’s cereal box. “Sold by fun not by volume,” warns the side panel, and fun it may be for its preschool audience, though there’s plenty of volume in the copious sound effects and narration from Rodney. The five games included are very simple and are designed to introduce very young kids to the computer and its mysteries. At Dinky’s House, kids will try to find which shade-drawn window Dinky is hiding behind. Kids can also go inside the house and click on the various rooms to see what Dinky does in his daily life. (See screen shot.) There is a primitive paint program that allows kids to draw silly accessories on provided faces. Other games include the typical Concentration adaptation, a monster counting exercise, and a cute diversion that introduces kids to the alphabet. All told, a great tasting, mentally nutritious bowl of goodies for the young ones, though it may get soggy in milk. IBM, Mac (\$49.95), IBM CD-ROM, Tandy VIS (\$59.95). Circle Reader Service #2.

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|--------------|-----|-------|------|-------|------|------|-------|------|-----|------|------|-----|------|------|
| A. Silva | 148 | 4142 | 569 | 1288 | 44.2 | 519 | 1141 | 45.5 | 50 | 147 | 34.8 | | | |
| S. Perkins | 148 | 4189 | 625 | 1368 | 45.7 | 694 | 1279 | 47.2 | 21 | 89 | 23.6 | | | |
| M. Worthy | 148 | 4245 | 839 | 1988 | 42.2 | 1117 | 1888 | 43.5 | 22 | 100 | 26.4 | | | |
| A. Foster | 148 | 3376 | 844 | 1115 | 48.8 | 445 | 810 | 59.7 | 79 | 187 | 40.1 | | | |
| C. Threlk | 148 | 5827 | 914 | 1791 | 51.0 | 893 | 1582 | 53.1 | 21 | 109 | 15.3 | | | |
| D. Edwards | 148 | 1773 | 372 | 786 | 47.3 | 372 | 786 | 47.3 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 | | | |
| C. Campbell | 148 | 2505 | 366 | 851 | 43.0 | 362 | 843 | 42.9 | 4 | 0 | 58.0 | | | |
| A. Green | 148 | 4211 | 532 | 1049 | 50.8 | 526 | 1011 | 52.0 | 7 | 28 | 18.4 | | | |
| B. Scott | 148 | 2520 | 476 | 988 | 48.2 | 431 | 951 | 50.6 | 45 | 137 | 32.8 | | | |
| T. Smith | 148 | 1739 | 389 | 643 | 48.1 | 381 | 613 | 49.1 | 6 | 30 | 26.7 | | | |
| D. Cooper | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 | | | |
| A. Blackwell | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 | | | |
| TOTALS | 148 | 31788 | 5547 | 11867 | 46.7 | 5290 | 11894 | 48.1 | 257 | 863 | 29.1 | | | |
| PERCENT | 148 | 31788 | 5575 | 12405 | 45.7 | 5297 | 11894 | 47.9 | 378 | 1005 | 34.1 | | | |

B-Ball - Pro Basketball for the Computer



Arthur's Teacher Trouble

was poor, or a coach should be fired, or a draft was ineptly run. Regardless of the situation, the armchair GM can usually do better. Now they can prove it with this update of Bethesda's original hockey league simulator. The new version sports an improved interface and menuing system, better negotiation artificial intelligence, and a horde of other gamer-suggested enhancements. The program is fully compatible with *Wayne Gretzky Hockey III*, so one can draft a team, organize its schedule, hire or fire its coach, and then play each game of the season with either *Wayne Gretzky* or with a quick simulation mode. It's an excellent simulation of franchise sports from the executive's box. IBM (\$44.95). Circle Reader Service #3.

BOBBALL, Inc.
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B-BALL - PRO BASKETBALL FOR THE COMPUTER: Originally created as a tool for NBA teams to analyze team and player performance, this text based statistics program is now being marketed to the general gaming public. The package comes with team statistics for all teams from 1973-93. Players can coach single games or statistically generate an entire season of games and stats. A “prediction” module allows rotisserie league gamers to play their rotisserie team against other teams in the league to predict statistical outcomes. The statistics generated are incredibly detailed, including league leaders, single game highs and lows for teams and individuals, and top league performances. Though it is not the most user-friendly program, it seems like a must-have tool for rotisserie players and stat freaks. IBM (\$29.95). Circle Reader Service #4.

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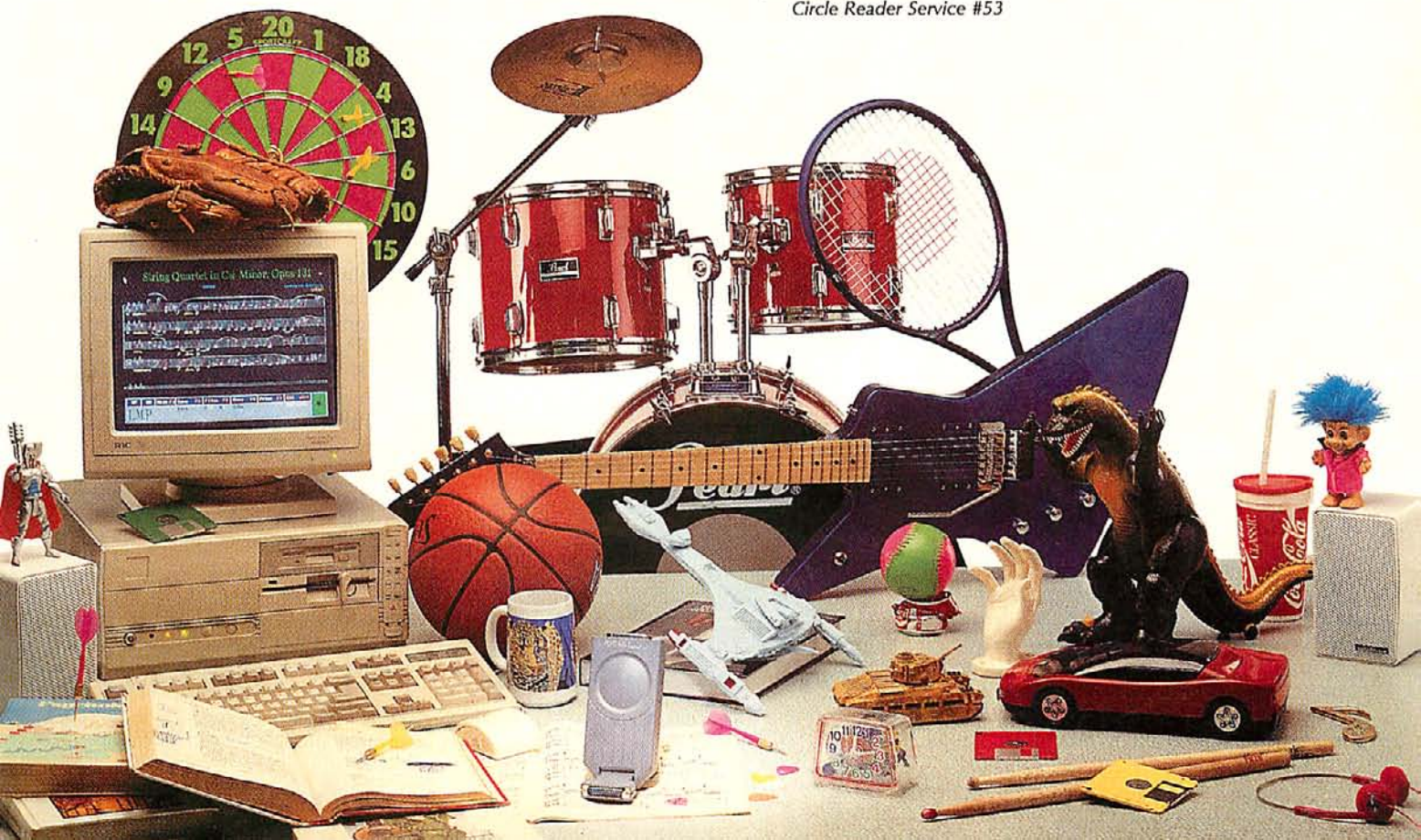
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Circle Reader Service #53



they can't get Mom or Dad off the computer. Macintosh CD-ROM, IBM CD-ROM (\$49.95). Circle Reader Service #5.

Capstone
7200 Corporate Center Dr. Suite 500
Miami, FL 33126
(800) 468-7226

TRUMP CASTLE 3: This latest incarnation of the *Trump Castle* casino games offers several interesting new features. In addition to SVGA graphics and sound, more casino games have been added, including a good selection of slot machines and an adequate range of poker games (which, ironically, are illegal in New Jersey, site of the real Trump Castle). Even keno and baccarat have been added to the roster. Gambling buddies can even play together using the two-player modem option or the one-to-four-player network option. IBM (\$59.95). Circle Reader Service #6.

Ebook
c/o Electronic Arts
San Mateo, CA
(800) 245-4525

TWELVE ROADS TO GETTYSBURG: "If I had something like this when I was in high school..." seems to be the favored response to this excellent multimedia documentary of a seminal period in the American Civil War. While it couldn't touch the acclaimed *Civil War* PBS special on its detail and breadth of scope, this CD-ROM has one advantage over the television documentary — it's interactive. Players watch animated battles from a bird's-eye view as the narrator calls the dance for the blue and red units as they illustrate the progression of the battle. Period engravings add extra flavor to the narration, while hypertext "hot spots" allow the user to access descriptions of the personalities and places that played crucial roles in the battle. Frankly, all previous CD-ROM releases from Ebook have failed to meet our expectations; this product makes amends. A must for CD-owning history buffs. IBM with CD-ROM (\$49.95). Circle Reader Service #7.

Impressions
7 Melrose Drive
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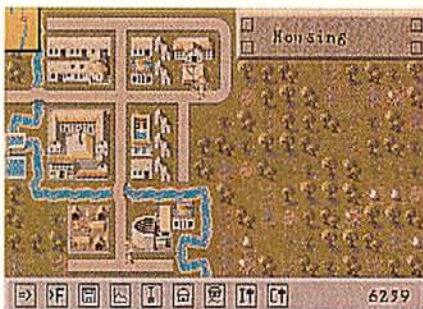
CAESAR: As previewed in *CGW* #103, *Caesar* can glibly be described as "*SimCity* with columns," but it is much more. While one must build up provincial capital cities by placing the necessary urban features a la *SimCity*, one must also protect it from roving barbarians. The various urban elements include water supplies, troop barracks, roads, plazas, walls, forums, temples and many others. Unlike



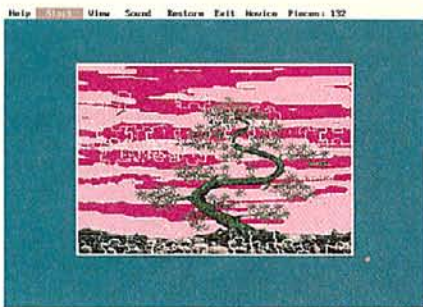
Trump Castle 3



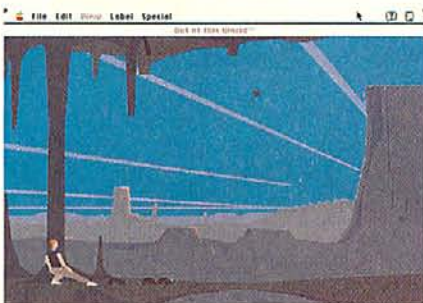
Twelve Roads to Gettysburg



Caesar



Jigsaw Puzzle



Out of this World

SimCity, the player's city does not operate in a bubble; the economic model is based upon the performance of the player's city, the province in which it is located, and the Empire as a whole. If the player is successful as urban planner/military leader, he or she may be promoted to governor of another province, and, ultimately, to Caesar. IBM (\$59.95). Circle Reader Service #8.

InTime Corp.
PO Box 1873
Brookline, MA 02146
(617) 232-3264

JIGSAW PUZZLE: Is it just us? Or does jigsaw puzzling seem like one of those activities that need not be computerized, like backpacking or crochet? Well, for those who might find it appealing, there is *Jigsaw Puzzle* from InTime which offers 15 VGA puzzles and "six hundred game variations" (which they arrive at by generating all possible permutations of puzzles and the 40 different ways that they can be cut). Players can either take their time and relax while solving a puzzle, or they can race against the clock. In Expert and Master modes, if one doesn't place pieces fast enough, the computer will start removing the correctly positioned pieces and place them back in the unplaced pile (the computerized equivalent of a young child or the household cat). While it is a decently made piece of software, we still see little advantage of the computer version over the real thing, except perhaps that one won't get that cardboard dust in the cracks of the coffee table, and it would be very difficult, short of a power outage, to lose a piece. IBM (\$34.95). Circle Reader Service #9.

Interplay
17922 Fitch Avenue, CA 92714
(714) 553-6678

OUT OF THIS WORLD: While this game is actually a conversion of the earlier Amiga, IBM, and cartridge product, we thought we'd take the opportunity to introduce a new division of **Interplay Productions**. *MacPlay* is a group of "MacHead" programmers whose purpose in life is to bring more quality products to the hard drives of Macintosh gamers. Their first release, *Out of this World*, is an adaptation of Delphine Software's excellent polygon-graphic action game. Gamers take the role of Lester Chaykin, the young, Coke-pounding, particle physics prodigy, who finds himself in the middle of one of those everyday laboratory accidents that open doors to another space-time plane. The alternate reality in which he finds himself is rife with nasty foot-long leeches, bloodthirsty beasts, and a race of enslaving aliens. Escaping these horrors requires solving a series of action-oriented puzzles interspersed with cine-

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matic sequences. The Mac conversion is a faithful one, and if its quality is any indication of MacPlay's potential, Mac gamers can look forward to an increased selection of quality games in the coming months. Mac. Circle Reader Service #10.

Keyboard Commander Corp.
4839 SW 148 Ave., Suite 402
Davie, FL 33330
(800) 262-6066

F-3.01 KEYBOARD TEMPLATE:

The situation is probably familiar to most flight sim jocks: while madly searching for that vital key on the keyboard, one's tail gets peppered by machine gun fire from a Mig. During that slow parachute ride to the ground, one has just enough time to go back to the manual and find the key that could have saved the mission. An equally frequent problem with complex sims is the re-learning curve necessary when jumping between, say, *Falcon 3.0* and *F-15 Strike Eagle II*. Keyboard Commander's series of keyboard templates are designed to reduce this confusion and increase one's gaming pleasure. The templates are printed on card-stock and fit nicely over most keyboards, and have color-coded icons for quick access (i.e. flight controls in blue, navigation commands in peach). Templates are available for most complex sims including, but not limited to *Falcon*, *Aces of the Pacific*, *S.W.O.T.I.*, *Chuck Yeager*, *A-10*, and *Megafortress*. IBM Enhanced Keyboard (\$11.95). Circle Reader Service #11.

LucasArts Games
PO Box 10307
San Rafael, CA 94912
(415) 721-3300

X-WING: Stepping into their Star Wars universe, LucasArts has put together a package that is aimed to impress the many dedicated fans of *Wing Commander*. With considerable panache, *X-Wing* starts the player on a safe, slow learning curve as he joins the Rebel Alliance as a new recruit. Training missions and "historic" simulations will bring pilots up to speed as they acquire the feel for their X-Wing, Y-Wing and A-Wing craft. The three campaign games included (and more are promised in future expansion disks) each progressively develop the Rebel cause and place an important role on the player's shoulders. For space combat simulator buffs, *X-Wing* is an absolute must. IBM (\$69.95). Circle Reader Service #12.

Mallard Software, Inc.
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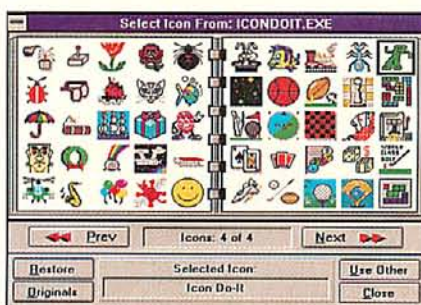
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Icon - Do It

tional hazards of game designers and air traffic controllers. Now gamers can experience the nail-biting drama of directing dozens of aircraft under dangerous conditions. *Air Traffic Controller* is a revised version of Wesson International's acclaimed simulation, *Tracon*. The new version allows gamers to direct pilots in six heavily trafficked metropolitan airports, the player-controller vectoring departing and arriving traffic under normal and emergency conditions. The revision adds new weather and pilot models, and spoken word communications from the pilots and controllers with most major sound cards. Ardent enthusiasts can even hook up by modem or null link with four friends flying aircraft in Microsoft's *Flight Simulator*, who can then be ordered around by the master controller. IBM (runs under DOS and Windows), Mac (\$59.95). Circle Reader Service #13.

RESCUE AIR 911: A few issue back we "peeked" Mallard's *Aircraft and Adventure Factory*, a program which allows creative sim-fanatics to create their own *Flight Simulator* scenarios. If one hasn't the time or the talent to create their own, Mallard has provided a few ready-made scenarios with digitized audio voices. *Rescue Air 911* takes pilots through eight rescue scenarios varying from fires to auto wrecks on the interstate. Two other adventures are currently available as well. *Flight Adventures Nos. 685* and *701* include short-hop flights under both VFR and IFR flight rules. A great way for "real" pilots to practice for their VFR/IFR certifications. IBM (\$24.95 each). Circle Reader Service #14.

Moon Valley Software
706 East Bell Road, Suite 112
Phoenix, AZ 85022
(602) 375-9502

ICON MAKE IT - DO IT - HEAR IT: Some people seem compelled to assert their individuality. Personalized license plates, bumper stickers, "shocking" fashion choices, pink trim on their houses. These same people may enjoy these three packages that allow one to add a touch of the human to his or her Windows environment. In addition to screen-savers and Windows wallpaper, *Icon Do It* offers 200 designer icons and 50 custom cursors to replace the drab ones that come as factory equipment on the PC. *Icon Hear It* adds 200 more icons, 50 more cursors, and 50 animated icons, in addition to 100 sound effects that one can link to any application. *Icon Make It* hands the creative power to the individual, allowing one to create their own animated icons, mix and dub their own sounds, and put it all together into an iconic movie of sorts. Creative types and office practical jokers will have a blast. IBM with Windows (*Do It -*

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286 or faster machine
with 640K RAM;
hard disk with min.

8 megabytes of available space required, mouse recommended. Graphics
compatible with EGA, MCGA and VGA (VGA highly recommended).

Sound support:

Sound Blaster Pro, Adlib Gold



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RATED R (This program is voluntarily rated due to the partially violent and adult nature of the graphic imagery.)
This program is intended for mature audiences only!!! No sales to minor under 18 and where prohibited by law.

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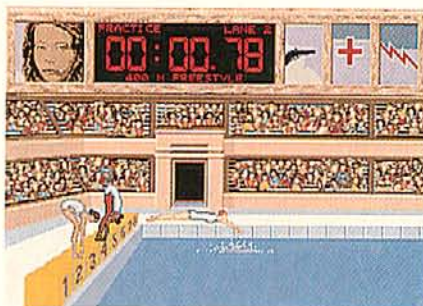
\$29.95, *Hear It* - \$49.95, *Make It* - \$69.95). Circle Reader Service #15.

Ocean of America
1855 O'Toole Avenue, Suite D-102
San Jose, CA 95131
(408) 954-0201

ESPANA - THE GAMES '92: The last straggling competitor in the Olympic games rush of 1992 has finally limped across the finish line. Despite their poor sense of timing, Ocean has put together a decent collection of Olympic contests. With over 30 events, *Espana* offers the most variety we've seen in this sort of game, including rarities like the steeplechase (both the 800m and 1500m varieties), judo, wrestling, boxing, and several less popular swimming styles. Like Psygnosis' *Carl Lewis* program, *Espana* allows the player to train athletes before the events, designing training programs that will maximize their stamina and skill without causing burn-out. Beyond all this, *Espana* is the same joystick breaking, keyboard pounding diversion that blistered our hands on the Atari 2600 and will continue to blister our hands in 1996, 2000, 2004, ... Amiga, IBM (\$39.95). Circle Reader Service #16.

HOOK: Based upon the flashy Spielberg film, Ocean's *Hook* is the tale of Peter Pan's quest to recover his children from the nasty hook-fisted pirate of the title. It is a typical graphic adventure which flirts with mediocrity. It's a point-and-click adventure with a five-icon command system, and it has more than its share of typical graphic adventure problems (we haven't seen so many "Why-would-you-want-to-look-at-thats" and "You-can-do-that-heres" in quite a while). It has a colorful setting and a decent story, but fans of recent Sierra and LucasArts adventures will probably feel as if they've taken a flight back to graphic adventure never-ever-again-land. Amiga, IBM (\$49.95). Circle Reader Service #17.

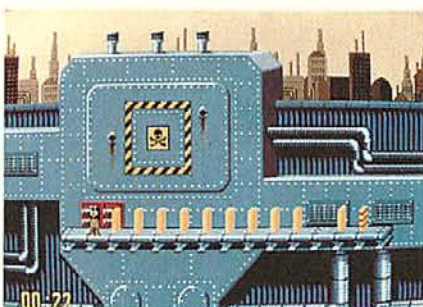
PUSH-OVER: Once beyond the contrived fictional set-up, one finds *Push-Over* to be a rather nice puzzle game with a lovable protagonist, G.I. Ant. With an acknowledging nod to Psygnosis' *Lemmings*, *Push-Over* is composed of multiple levels of puzzles set in nine different graphical settings. On each level is a configuration of dominoes which must be toppled over by G.I. Ant. G.I. only has one "push" in him per level, so the dominoes must be arranged such that they all fall in one continuous reaction. To ensure a complete domino effect, G.I. must lug dominoes around the screen and place them in the proper sequence. To make things especially interesting, there are eight special domino types with special



Espana - The Games '92



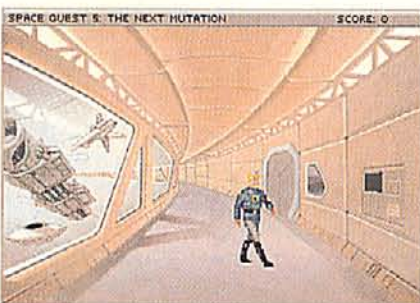
Hook



Push-Over



Creepers



Space Quest V - The Next Mutation

properties to deal with. G.I.'s antics are as cute as any lemming, and the puzzles are devious enough to provide gamers many hours of delicious frustration. Amiga, IBM (\$49.95). Circle Reader Service #17.

Psygnosis
29 St. Mary's Court
Brookline, MA 02146
(617) 731-3553

CREEPERS: There seems to be a regular phenomena in computer gaming. A company puts a new sort of product on the market with limited expectations of success, and then finds, to their surprise, that the product is a major hit. Then they try to recreate the phenomena with successor products that employ the new idea in another way. Without exception, the successors don't enjoy the same sort of success. Witness *SimCity*, and now *Lemmings*. *Creepers*, like Psygnosis' recent *Bill's Tomato*, is undeniably a *Lemmings* "me-too." It has cute but stupid creatures (in this case, inchworms) that require the guiding hand of the gamer through multiple levels of puzzles. It has a menu bar at the bottom of the screen that provides access to a number of tools necessary for the task (in this case, the tools are fans, ramps, girders, and fly swatters). It even borrows the cute "paws" command from *Lemmings*. Unfortunately, the inchworms aren't half as endearing as the lemmings, the puzzle screens are cluttered and confused, and the game is simply lesser in many ways. Puzzle gamers may want to wait for the eventual return of our original furry friends in *Lemmings 2*. IBM (\$49.99). Circle Reader Service #18.

Sierra On-line
Coarsegold, CA
(209) 683-4468

SPACE QUEST V-THE NEXT MUTATION: The Space Quest series is nothing but garbage, and will always be nothing but garbage — at least as long as Roger Wilco, janitorial prodigy, is involved. In his latest mis-adventure, Roger has faked his way through the Space Academy and has taken control of his own ship — a garbage scow. Mounted proudly upon his reeking steed, Roger rides out to save the universe from your everyday nefarious race of mutants. In the process he will: die many horrible deaths; encounter a grab-bag of very silly though deadly aliens (a baby-faced hugger with unusually acidic, uh, liquid waste product); and meet the woman from the holodeck in *Space Quest IV*. It's all very twisted and juvenile and pant-loads of fun — just the sort of thing the editors of *CGW* enjoy, though they'll never admit it. IBM (\$69.95). Circle Reader Service #19.

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VISUAL CLIPS - STAR WARS: The quest to personalize our computing environments continues. Screen savers, animated icons, sound packages, oak cases for CPU chassis, large fuzzy dice hanging from our screens — why not video footage to accompany system events? With this package for 68020+ Macs, your computer can now greet you with a scene from the alien cantina, turn your system beep into a wookiee's cry or an android's prattle, eject your disks with a disgusted remark from Lord Vader, or empty your trash can with the violent destruction of Alderaan 2. Once past the arduous installation procedure (probably designed by Vader himself), one will have a large library of video clips to impress friends and irritate neighbors. Look for collections from *Empire* and *Jedi* to follow shortly. Mac (\$89.95). Circle Reader Service #20.

Strategic Simulations, Inc.
675 Almanor Ave. Suite 201
Sunnyvale, CA 94086-2901
(408) 737-6800

VEIL OF DARKNESS: Fans of Event Horizon's adventure *The Summoning* may find love at first byte in their new tale, *Veil of Darkness*. Set in an isolated community in the Romanian highlands, this 3-D isometric adventure pits the solitary adventurer against an ancient vampire and his possessed minions. Event Horizon has really spruced up their graphics in this one, offering extraordinarily rich visuals and strong cinematic cut-screens. Though the game mechanics may be a bit over simplified for some, the story is artfully told and the setting refreshingly different (no Orcs!). Packaged on three disks, it won't suck much hard drive blood, though it may suck away your late night hours. IBM (\$59.95). Circle Reader Service #21.

Waite Group Press
200 Tamal Plaza, Suite 101
Corte Madera, CA 94925
(800) 368-9369

FRACTAL CREATIONS: After running our article on fractals in the February issue, we were bombarded with e-mail suggesting that we check out this book/software from the Waite Group. We'd like to thank you all, because the book and its program FRACTINT turned out to be quite a find. Developed by a group of programmers on the CompuServe network, FRACTINT is a fractal creation program that not only includes dozens upon dozens of formula for the



Visual Clips - Star Wars



Veil of Darkness



Fractal Creations



The Image Lab



Aladdin Print Kit

quick generation of fabulous fractal images, but allows one to program his or her own formula. In addition to generating the images in two dimensions, it also has the ability to "stretch" an image through three-dimensions. Very neat stuff! It supports a huge variety of video cards and screen resolutions, and generates the most beautiful fractals we've yet seen on a personal computer. The companion book offers a nice introduction to fractal geometry and clearly covers the specifics of the program and all its wonders. Highly recommended for the beginning fractal buff. IBM DOS & Windows (\$34.95). Circle Reader Service #22.

THE IMAGE LAB: Along with *Fractal Creations* came an intriguing collection of shareware programs packaged with a companion book, *The Image Lab*. The book offers both a general introduction to the fascinating and complex world of computer graphics, and a step-by-step tutorial of the software. Among the collection of programs is PICLAB, a shareware image processing/enhancing tool that does color reduction, image sharpening, contrast adjustments, and the addition, subtraction, and overlaying of images. CSHOW allows its user to display any image regardless of one's screen resolution. IMPROCES is a Super VGA paint program that does special effects, mirroring, flipping, color reducing, etc. IMAGE ALCHEMY is a handy tool that converts any graphic format to any other. But the most interesting program is POV-Ray, or Persistence of Vision Ray Tracer, which generates incredible ray traced images like the one on this page. These programs are not as easy to use as the fractal program mentioned above (one will have to invest some time with the book and program) but the diligent user will be rewarded with a set of very powerful creative tools. IBM (\$39.95). Circle Reader Service #23.

Walt Disney Computer Software, Inc.
500 Buena Vista Street
Burbank, CA 91521-6385

ALADDIN PRINT KIT: Forty-six images from the Disney hit *Aladdin* are awaiting a master who can rub the magic mouse and allow them to serve his or her desk-top publishing desires. Abu, Aladdin, Genie, Jasmine, Rajah, and even that bad guy whos-his-name are all here, along with 18 borders and several fonts. Suggested uses include the creation of letter-head, posters, placemats, signs and greeting cards, though budding publishing Sultans can certainly do as they wish. IBM (\$19.95). Circle Reader Service #24.

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. This month, we welcome a much loved game to these hallowed halls.

- The Bard's Tale* (Electronic Arts, 1985)
Many formats
- Chessmaster* (Software Toolworks, 1986)
Many formats
- Dungeon Master* (FTL Software, 1987)
Amiga, Atari ST, IBM
- Earl Weaver Baseball* (Electronic Arts, 1986)
Amiga, IBM, Macintosh
- Empire* (Interstel, 1978)
Amiga, Atari ST, Commodore 64, IBM
- F-19 Stealth Fighter* (MicroProse, 1988)
IBM
- Gettysburg: The Turning Point* (Strategic Simulations, Inc., 1986)
Amiga, Apple, C-64, IBM
- Gunship* (MicroProse, 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, 1990)
Amiga, IBM
- M-1 Tank Platoon* (MicroProse, 1989)
Amiga, IBM
- Mech Brigade* (Strategic Simulations, Inc., 1985)
Many formats
- Might & Magic* (New World Computing, 1986)
Apple, C-64, IBM, Mac
- M.U.L.E.* (Electronic Arts, 1983)
Atari 8-bit, C-64
- Pirates* (MicroProse, 1987)
Many formats
- Railroad Tycoon* (MicroProse, 1990)
Amiga, IBM, Macintosh
- Red Baron* (Dynamix, 1990)
Amiga, IBM, Macintosh
- SimCity* (Maxis, 1987)
Many formats
- Starflight* (Electronic Arts, 1986)
Amiga, C-64, IBM, Sega
- Their Finest Hour* (LucasArts, 1989)
Amiga, Atari ST, IBM
- Ultima III* (Origin, 1983)
Apple, Atari ST, C-64, IBM
- Ultima IV* (Origin, 1985)
Amiga, Apple, Atari ST, IBM
- Ultima VI* (Origin, 1990)
Amiga, IBM
- War in Russia* (Strategic Simulations, Inc., 1984)
Apple
- Wasteland* (Interplay, 1986)
Apple, C64, IBM
- Wing Commander* (Origin, 1991)
IBM, Sega
- Wizardry* (Sir-Tech Software, 1981)
Many formats
- Zork* (Infocom, 1981)
Many formats

The Newest Member to the
CCW Hall of Fame

Red Baron
(Dynamix, 1990)
Amiga, IBM, Mac



Red Baron may well be Damon Slye's masterpiece. Damon is the designer/programmer who has been pushing the edge of 3-Space since his first vectored graphics game of space-age tank combat, the original *Stellar 7* on the 8-bit computers. At **Dynamix**, Damon moved the company through the *Skyfox* and *Airfox* series of 3-D action games (published by EA) and on toward their current success with *A-10 Tank Killer*, *Red Baron* and *Aces of the Pacific*.

Red Baron not only features terrific graphics that dress up the traditional polygon-filled look with occasional bit-maps and shading, but offers campaign play from both sides, the largest selection of aircraft in a WWI air combat simulation, and a multitude of quick-combat missions. It is a rich, satisfying simulation that not only held a prominent position in the top ten of CGW's Top 100 for more than a year, but still stands as the high watermark of realistic air combat for many gamers.

Top Adventure Games

| GAME | COMPANY | SCORE |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|-------|
| 1 King's Quest VI: Heir Today... | Sierra | 10.40 |
| 2 Star Control II | Accolade | 10.12 |
| 3 Indiana Jones: Fate of Atlantis | LucasArts | 10.02 |
| 4 Monkey Island 2: LeChuck | LucasArts | 10.00 |
| 5 Les Manly in: Lost in L.A. | Accolade | 9.73 |
| 6 The Secret of Monkey Island | LucasArts | 9.72 |
| 7 Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes | Electronic Arts | 9.71 |
| 8 Quest for Glory III | Sierra | 9.66 |
| 9 Sherlock Holmes CD | IOCOM | 9.55 |
| 10 Amazon | Access | 9.34 |

Top Role Playing Games

| GAME | COMPANY | SCORE |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|-------|
| 1 Ultima Underworld | Origin | 10.45 |
| 2 Wizardry VII: Crusaders of Savant | Sir-Tech | 9.60 |
| 3 Eye of the Beholder II | SSI | 9.56 |
| 4 Might & Magic III | New World Computing | 9.45 |
| 5 Might & Magic: Clouds of Xeen | New World | 9.43 |
| 6 Ultima VII | Origin | 9.39 |
| 7 Eye of the Beholder | SSI | 9.10 |
| 8 Bane of the Cosmic Forge | Sir-Tech | 9.05 |
| 9 Ultima V | Origin | 9.00 |
| 10 Elvira | Accolade | 8.82 |

Top Simulation Games

| GAME | COMPANY | SCORE |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|-------|
| 1 Comanche: Maximum Overkill | NovaLogic | 9.77 |
| 2 Falcon 3.0 | Spectrum HoloByte | 9.63 |
| 3 Aces of the Pacific | Dynamix | 9.53 |
| 4 Stunt Island | Disney | 9.53 |
| 5 Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe | LucasArts | 9.33 |
| 6 Gunship 2000 | MicroProse | 9.06 |
| 7 Chuck Yeager's Air Combat | Electronic Arts | 9.06 |
| 8 Red Storm Rising | MicroProse | 9.04 |
| 9 Silent Service II | MicroProse | 9.03 |
| 10 F-117A | MicroProse | 8.92 |

Top Strategy Games

| GAME | COMPANY | SCORE |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|-------|
| 1 Civilization | MicroProse | 10.75 |
| 2 Solitaire's Journey | QQP | 10.26 |
| 3 Hong Kong Mahjong Pro | Electronic Arts | 9.85 |
| 4 Chessmaster 3000 | Software Toolworks | 9.32 |
| 5 Dune II | Virgin | 9.32 |
| 6 The Last Admiral | QQP | 9.05 |
| 7 Mech Warrior | Activision | 8.94 |
| 8 Populous II | Electronic Arts | 8.90 |
| 9 Hoyle Book of Games, Vol. 3 | Sierra | 8.78 |
| 10 Siege | Mindcraft | 8.77 |

Reader Poll #104

Top 100 Games

| Game | Company | Type | Score |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|-------|-------|
| 1 Conquered Kingdoms | QQP | WG,ST | 10.76 |
| 2 Links 386 Pro | Access | SP | 10.75 |
| 4 Civilization | MicroProse | SP | 10.75 |
| 5 Front Page Sports Football | Origin | SP | 10.45 |
| 6 King's Quest VI: Heir Today... | Dynamix | SP | 10.43 |
| 7 Wing Commander II | Sierra | AD | 10.40 |
| 8 Solitaire's Journey | Origin | AC | 10.31 |
| 9 V for Victory: Vekkiye Luki | QQP | ST | 10.26 |
| 10 Star Control II | Three-Sixty | WG | 10.20 |
| 11 Indiana Jones: Fate of Atlantis | Accolade | AD,AC | 10.12 |
| 12 Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge | LucasArts | AD | 10.02 |
| 13 Hong Kong Mahjong Pro | LucasArts | AD | 10.00 |
| 14 Wolfenstein 3-D | Electronic Arts | ST | 9.85 |
| 15 Comanche: Maximum Overkill | Id Software | AC | 9.80 |
| 16 The Perfect General | NovaLogic | SI | 9.77 |
| 17 Les Manly in: Lost in L.A. | QQP | WG | 9.75 |
| 18 The Secret of Monkey Island | Accolade | AD | 9.73 |
| 19 Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes | LucasArts | AD | 9.72 |
| 20 Quest for Glory III | Electronic Arts | AD | 9.71 |
| 21 Falcon 3.0 | Sierra | AD,RP | 9.66 |
| 23 Wizardry VII: Crusaders of Savant | Spectrum HoloByte | SI | 9.63 |
| 24 Hardball III | Three-Sixty Pacific | WG | 9.63 |
| 25 Eye of the Beholder II | Sir-Tech | RP | 9.60 |
| 26 Sherlock Holmes CD | Accolade | SP | 9.58 |
| 27 Great Naval Battles | SSI | RP | 9.56 |
| 28 Stunt Island | ICOM | AD | 9.55 |
| 29 Aces of the Pacific | SSI | WG,ST | 9.54 |
| 30 Links | Disney | SI | 9.53 |
| 32 Warlords | Dynamix | SI | 9.53 |
| 33 Might & Magic III | Access | SP | 9.47 |
| 34 Ultima VII | SSG | WG,ST | 9.47 |
| 35 Battles of Destiny | New World Computing | RP | 9.45 |
| 36 Amazon | New World | RP | 9.43 |
| 37 Pacific War | Origin | RP | 9.39 |
| 39 Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe | QQP | WG,ST | 9.36 |
| 41 Chessmaster 3000 | Access | AD | 9.34 |
| 42 High Command | SSI | WG | 9.33 |
| 43 Jack Nicklaus Signature Golf | LucasArts | SI | 9.33 |
| 44 Lemmings | Virgin | ST | 9.32 |
| 45 Spellcasting 301: Spring Break | Software Toolworks | ST | 9.32 |
| 46 Carriers At War | Colorado Comp. | WG | 9.29 |
| 47 Tetris Classic | Accolade | SP | 9.27 |
| 48 The Castle of Dr. Brain | Psychosis | AC | 9.21 |
| 49 Eye of the Beholder | SSI | WG | 9.17 |
| 50 The Dagger of Amon Ra | Legend | AD | 9.16 |
| | SSG | WG | 9.15 |
| | Spectrum HoloByte | AC | 9.14 |
| | Sierra | AD | 9.11 |
| | SSI | RP | 9.10 |
| | Sierra | AD | 9.09 |

Top Wargames

| GAME | COMPANY | SCORE |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|-------|
| 1 Conquered Kingdoms | QQP | 10.76 |
| 2 V for Victory: Veldiya Luki | Three-Sixty | 10.20 |
| 3 The Perfect General | QQP | 9.75 |
| 4 V for Victory: Utah Beach | Three-Sixty Pacific | 9.63 |
| 5 Great Naval Battles | SSI | 9.54 |
| 6 Warlords | SSG | 9.47 |
| 7 Battles of Destiny | QQP | 9.36 |
| 8 Pacific War | SSI | 9.33 |
| 9 High Command | Colorado Comp. | 9.29 |
| 10 Second Front | SSI | 9.17 |

Top Action Games

| GAME | COMPANY | SCORE |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|-------|
| 1 Wing Commander II | Origin | 10.31 |
| 2 Wolfenstein 3-D | Id Software | 9.80 |
| 3 Lemmings | Psychosis | 9.21 |
| 4 Tetris Classic | Spectrum HoloByte | 9.14 |
| 5 Oh, No! More Lemmings | Psychosis | 8.92 |
| 6 Terminator 2029 | Bethesda | 8.85 |
| 7 Out of this World | Interplay | 8.51 |
| 8 Conan the Cimmerian | Virgin | 8.10 |
| 9 Speedball 2 | Konami | 7.92 |
| 10 Ancient Art of War in the Skies | MicroProse | 7.32 |

Top Sports Games

| GAME | COMPANY | SCORE |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|-------|
| 1 Links 386 Pro | Access | 10.75 |
| 2 Front Page Sports Football | Dynamix | 10.43 |
| 3 Hardball III | Accolade | 9.58 |
| 4 Links | Access | 9.47 |
| 5 Jack Nicklaus Signature Golf | Accolade | 9.27 |
| 6 Indianapolis 500 | Electronic Arts | 8.83 |
| 7 Tony LaRussa's Ultimate Baseball | SSI | 8.60 |
| 8 4-D Boxing | Electronic Arts | 8.56 |
| 9 NFL Pro League Football | Micro Sports | 8.54 |
| 10 The Games: Winter Challenge | Accolade | 8.50 |

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.



| | | | | |
|----|----------------------------------|---------------------|-------|------|
| 52 | Conflict: Korea | SSI | WG | 9.09 |
| | Chuck Yeager's Air Combat | Electronic Arts | SI | 9.06 |
| | Gunship 2000 | MicroProse | SI | 9.06 |
| 54 | Bane of the Cosmic Forge | Sir-Tech | RP | 9.05 |
| | The Lost Admiral | QQP | ST | 9.05 |
| 56 | Red Storm Rising | MicroProse | SI | 9.04 |
| | Conquests of the Longbow | Sierra | AD | 9.04 |
| 58 | Silent Service II | MicroProse | SI | 9.03 |
| 59 | Quest for Glory II | Sierra | AD,RP | 9.02 |
| 60 | Police Quest 3 | Sierra | AD | 9.01 |
| 61 | Ultima V | Origin | RP | 9.00 |
| 62 | Space Quest IV | Sierra | AD | 8.98 |
| | Western Front | SSI | WG | 8.98 |
| 64 | The Adventures of Willy Beamish | Dynamix | AD | 8.96 |
| 65 | Mech Warrior | Activision | ST,SI | 8.94 |
| 66 | F-117A | MicroProse | SI | 8.92 |
| | Oh, No! More Lemmings | Psychosis | AC | 8.92 |
| 68 | Populous II | Electronic Arts | ST | 8.90 |
| 69 | Rise of the Dragon | Dynamix | AD | 8.89 |
| | Martian Memorandum | Access | AD | 8.89 |
| 71 | Terminator 2029 | Bethesda | AC | 8.85 |
| 72 | Indianapolis 500 | Electronic Arts | SP | 8.83 |
| 73 | Elvira | Accolade | RP | 8.82 |
| 74 | Command HQ | MicroPlay | WG,ST | 8.81 |
| 75 | Rex Nebular | MicroProse | AD | 8.79 |
| | Gateway to the Savage Frontier | SSI | RP | 8.79 |
| 77 | Hoyle Book of Games, Vol. 3 | Sierra | ST | 8.78 |
| 78 | Siege | Mindcraft | ST | 8.77 |
| 79 | The Summoning | SSI | RP | 8.76 |
| 80 | Heart of China | Dynamix | AD | 8.75 |
| 81 | Castles 2: Siege and Conquest | Interplay | ST | 8.72 |
| | Battles of Napoleon | SSI | WG | 8.72 |
| | Battlechess | Interplay | ST | 8.72 |
| | Gateway | Legend | AD | 8.72 |
| 85 | Starflight II | Electronic Arts | RP | 8.71 |
| 86 | F-15 Strike Eagle II | MicroProse | SI | 8.69 |
| 87 | Action Stations | RAW Entertainment | WG | 8.68 |
| | Pools of Darkness | SSI | RP | 8.68 |
| 89 | Typhoon of Steel | SSI | WG | 8.67 |
| 90 | Armada 2525 | Interstel | ST | 8.63 |
| 91 | Tony LaRussa's Ultimate Baseball | SSI | SP | 8.60 |
| 92 | Buck Rogers | SSI | RP | 8.57 |
| | Legend of Kyandia | Virgin | AD | 8.57 |
| | Carrier Strike | SSI | WG | 8.57 |
| 95 | 4-D Boxing | Electronic Arts | SP | 8.56 |
| 96 | MegaFortress | Three-Sixty Pacific | SI,ST | 8.55 |
| 97 | NFL Pro League Football | Micro Sports | SP | 8.54 |
| 98 | Out of this World | Interplay | AC | 8.51 |
| 99 | The Games: Winter Challenge | Accolade | SP | 8.50 |
| | Martian Dreams | Origin | RP | 8.50 |

Games on unnumbered lines have scores equal to the line above.

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

January, 1993

PC Games (MS-DOS)

| Rank | Title and Source |
|------|--|
| 1. | F-15 Strike Eagle III (MicroProse) |
| 2. | Ultima Underworld II (Origin) |
| 3. | Front Page Sports: Football (Sierra On-Line) |
| 4. | Comanche: Maximum Overkill (Nova Logic) |
| 5. | Wing Commander (Origin) |
| 6. | Kings Quest VI (Sierra On-Line) |
| 7. | Sim City (Maxis) |
| 8. | Microsoft Flight Simulator (Microsoft) |
| 9. | Falcon 3.0 (Spectrum HoloByte) |
| 10. | Links 386 - Pro (Access) |
| 11. | Civilization (MicroProse) |
| 12. | Silent Service II (MicroProse) |
| 13. | F-15 III Aces Pack (MicroProse) |
| 14. | Police Quest (Sierra On-Line) |
| 15. | Links - Mauna Kea (Access) |
| 16. | Aces of the Pacific (Sierra On-Line) |
| 17. | Hardball III (Accolade) |
| 18. | Monopoly (Virgin Games) |
| 19. | Star Control II (Accolade) |
| 20. | Beat the House (Konami) |

Amiga Games

| Rank | Title and Source |
|------|---|
| 1. | 688 Attack Sub (Electronic Arts) |
| 2. | AD&D Gateway to Savage Frontier (Strategic Simulations) |
| 3. | Realms (Virgin Games) |
| 4. | AD&D Eye of the Beholder (Strategic Simulations) |
| 5. | Operation Combat (Merit) |

Macintosh Games

| Rank | Title and Source |
|------|--|
| 1. | Civilization (MicroProse) |
| 2. | Prince of Persia (Broderbund) |
| 3. | Sim City Supreme (Maxis) |
| 4. | Microsoft Flight Simulator (Microsoft) |
| 5. | Award Winners: KQ V & Red Baron (Sierra On-Line) |

CD-ROM Products

| Rank | Title and Source |
|------|--|
| 1. | MPC Wizard (Aris Entertainment) |
| 2. | Cinemania (Microsoft) |
| 3. | Wing Commander/Secret Missions I & II (Origin) |
| 4. | Battle Chess (Interplay) |
| 5. | Street Atlas U.S.A. (Delorme) |
| 6. | World View (Aris Entertainment) |
| 7. | Mantis (MicroProse) |
| 8. | Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego (Broderbund) |
| 9. | Lost Treasures of Infocom (Activision) |
| 10. | Adventures of Willy Beamish (Sierra On-Line) |

This list is based on units sold by Software Etc., Babbage's, Waldensoftware and Electronics Boutique. For more information, please contact PC Research at (703) 435-1025.

What You've Been Playing Lately

The Feedback Forum of Reader Response

Every month our mailbox fills to capacity with hundreds of Reader Input Cards from our many loyal and outspoken readers. Over the years we've found these cards to be an invaluable source of feedback. Within 10 days of the release of our latest issue we can expect to see dozens of cards begin pouring in with comments, suggestions, encouragements, tirades and many good laughs, in addition to the data for our Top 100 game poll. Through your efforts, we know which articles were hits, which flopped, how many typos or grammatical errors we've let slip through -- in addition to the many well-articulated opinions on anything and everything related to gaming. This column is set aside to give our readers a voice, and to display the results of our "Playing Lately?" field on the Reader Input Card. Thanks for taking the time to fill them out—and keep 'em coming!

Playing Lately? Results For CGW #104, March 1993:

1. Conquered Kingdoms (QQP)
2. Ultima Underworld II (Origin)
3. Civilization (MicroProse)
4. Front Page Sports Football (Dynamix)
5. Wizardry VII: Crusaders of the Dark Savant (Sir-Tech)
6. Dune II (Virgin)
7. V For Victory: Velikiye Luki (Three-Sixty)
8. Star Control 2 (Accolade)
9. F-15 Strike Eagle III (MicroProse)
10. Gary Grigsby's Pacific War (SSI)

Mandates from the People

"The depth and realism of Shadow President are so good that sometimes I think I can understand why the world is so screwed up. This game is a classic!"

- J. Tusk, Des Plaines, IL

"I never enjoyed a football game like I do with Front Page Sports Football. Just outstanding. A touchdown for sports fans."

- Kirk Williamson, Mosinee, WI

"Sex is great but Front Page Sports Football is better because you don't need a helmet!"

- M. Crudder, Hobbs, NM

"In your Star Control 2 review you mention a modem option. I have been unable to locate such a feature. Am I missing something?"

- Chris Haswell, Austin, TX

[Ed: No, the editors are. Star Control 2 does not have a modem option. Sorry. Those responsible for the sacking have been sacked (again).]

"All auto racing simulations need to use the algorithms from World Circuit. It is as close to being in the cockpit as there is. Well done!"

- Anonymous Enthusiast, Waco, TX

"Playing lately? As in late night, every night and every morning before work and lunch time also. My wife is in the process of making a SirTech voodoo doll."

- Bill Sasser, Chesapeake, VA

"Travel agents should keep copies of Underworld and Underworld II stocked with their brochures of other exotic destinations. As someone who travels extensively, I prize new opportunities for adventure and discovery. The Underworld games have given me a wonderful way to visit yet another vacation spot — and at a very reasonable fare."

- Brian Schutt, North Lauderdale, FL

[Ed: Uh huh. Try telling your Significant Other that you're taking him/her on a two-week vacation to Britannia. We don't think you'll get far, no matter how lovely the Gargoyles are in Spring.]

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 either Compuserve or GEnie, but can also be obtained from individual software publisher's own BBSs and 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.)

Air Force Commander Slowdown Patch: Makes the game playable on high-powered machines. 11/24/92

Amazon Raft Bug Fix: Fixes the problem getting the raft out of the box in the airplane. 12/12/92

B-17 Flying Fortress Version 2 Update: Adds many new features and tweaks some of the existing ones. 11/17/92

Batman Returns Update: Latest version of Konami's Bat-venture. 1/24/93

***Civilization Version 1.0.8 (Macintosh):** Latest and greatest version of the reigning king of strategy. 2/23/93

Darkseed Version 1.5 Update: Latest version of CyberDreams' adventure. 1/20/93

F-15 Strike Eagle III Install Update: For those having trouble with the install program. 12/23/92

F-15 Strike Eagle Help Info Text: Text file containing known problems and suggestions for those having problems with the sim. 1/08/93

***F-117A Stealth Fighter V.04:** Update to MicroProse's jet simulator. 1/29/93

***Front Page Sports Football:** A new version is available which improves upon the original release in many ways. 2/15/93

Full Count Baseball V5.1 Upgrade: Expands play-by-play and offers a new screen layout. For owners of V5.0 only. 12/06/92

Greens Version 02 Update: Addresses the problems reported with scoring, Sound Blasters, etc. 11/22/92

***Great Naval Battles/North Atlantic Update:** Updates all GNBNA files to version 1.2. 2/23/93

***Gunship 2000 Islands and Ice Patch Version .085:** Corrects keyboard lockout problems some gamers are having. 2/11/93

Hockey League Simulator 2 Update V1.11: New version for the IBM. 2/3/93

Island of Dr. Brain Update: Fixes "Ooops 10" error, music room puzzle, and several other problems. 12/23/92

Jack Nicklaus Signature Edition Rev 1.5: Fixes the Mini-Moss effect caused by several objects being placed after a hill crest. 12/16/92

Links 386 Pro Update Version 1.08: Allows game to run under OS/2 and other DPMI operating systems and software. 11/14/92

***Magic Candle III Version 1.16:** Fixes problems with Sound Blaster support, mirror of honesty/candlewick problems, difficulties with transferred characters from MC2, and other minor glitches. 2/17/93

NFL Pro League Football '92 V1.1: Contains many upgrades, fixes, and additional schedules. 1/26/93

Pacific War V1.06: Fixes the bombardment bug, the West Coast defense bug, the missing unit bug, etc. An "unofficial" upgrade from Gary Grigsby — not supported by SSI. 1/24/93

Power Politics Update: Fixes all known bugs. 12/11/92

Quest For Glory III "B" Patch: Corrects all known game play errors. 12/03/92

Rex Nebular Update 8.49 (IBM/VGA): Corrects the chicken-bomb and

poly-cement problems. 11/13/92

***Shadow President Update Version 1.0b:** This version will run in ca. 30k less memory than the previous version. It also includes minor adjustments to the internal processing. 2/12/93

***SimLife Upgrade V2:** Fixes minor problems in Maxis' A-life simulator. 2/10/93

***Solitaire's Journey Patch V1.03:** This is a patch for those having problems with saved Tournament games and those having mouse troubles. 2/12/93

Spelljammer Update V1.1: Latest version of the game. 11/21/92

Star Control 2 V1.1: Fixes several small problems. 12/11/92

Star Legions Update: Fixes some machine-specific lock-ups, problems with phasers firing out of the FOV, changes to mission ratings, fixes to award sequence. 1/15/93

Stunt Island Update: Fixes a minor bug in the Install program that was causing some system lockups after the hardware autodetect sequence. 11/27/92

***Task Force 1942 Update:** Corrects the waypoint problem, among others. 2/15/93

***TL's Ultimate Baseball V1.1:** Upgrades SSI's baseball simulation to the latest version. 1/29/93

Tom Landry Football V. 1.02 Update: Corrects problems with modem play, excessive penalties, Sound Blaster problems, and improved animation choreography. 12/03/92

Twilight 2000 Colonel Upgrade (VGA only): Adds extra sounds and graphics, and adds a new ending to the game. 2/2/93

***Ultima VII Version 3.4:** Lord British fixes some minor leaks in the roof of Castle Britannia. Updates from Version 3.0 to 3.4. 2/17/93

***Ultima Underworld II Patch:** Fixes the "strike" problem, local bus difficulties, and a few others. 2/24/93

Wayne Gretzky Hockey 3 Version 1.10: Fixes many bugs, including the Canadian.VOC file, the computer scoring problem, CH FlightStick problem, penalties, referees, coach's clipboard and others. 11/24/92

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 EXP40B). 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.



GAME POLL

TOP TEN RANKED GAMES

Week of February 18 to February 25

| RANK | SCORE | TITLE | RANK | SCORE | TITLE |
|------|-------|------------------|------|-------|-------------------|
| 1 | 2882 | Wolfenstein-3D | 6 | 1847 | Aces of Pacific |
| 2 | 2334 | Civilization | 7 | 1433 | Monkey Island 2 |
| 3 | 2223 | Kings Quest VI | 8 | 1408 | Links |
| 4 | 2122 | Wing Commander 2 | 9 | 1397 | Ultima Underworld |
| 5 | 1771 | Falcon 3.0 | 10 | 1336 | Ultima 7 |



COMPANY NEWS:

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Awards — Thy Name Is Controversy

State of the Industry: Last issue, we touched on the issue of awards. We observed that appending a superlative like "Best" to any product is tantamount to painting a bull's-eye upon it. This virtually allows any would-be critic to come along and castigate the flawed selection process, alleged political influences and supposed ignorance of the voters. Awards selected by members of the press represent the elitist perceptions of jaded critics who are out of touch; those chosen by working members of an industry represent unenlightened selections from those who are so focused upon their own products that they do not know the products of others; and those selected by the public are mere popularity contests because the "great unwashed" cannot possibly understand the subtle nuances of each new innovation.

The Software Publishers Association probably didn't help their case with the selection of the new nickname for their annual "Excellence in Software" awards. Believing that a gala black tie dinner and dance, complete with celebrity MC and multi-media fanfare, did not sufficiently emulate the ceremonies surrounding the Oscars, Emmys, Tonys and Grammys, the SPA nicknamed them the "Codies" (one wag immediately maligned them as the "Cooties"). Nevertheless, there were only a couple of surprises and plenty of the criticism typical of any system of award selection.

SimLife was selected as Best Simulation. In a sense, this seems a reasonable choice. It does an admirable job in simulating biological systems and it has the abbreviation "Sim" in its title. Yet, one wonders if it is truly a simulation in the tradition of first-person perspective, 3-D polygon-filled graphic games which simulate vessels and vehicles. Maxis has ruled this category for four years, but even Maxis' president, Jeff Braun, seems uncomfortable with their dominance in the category. He wishes there was a "software toy" category so that "so many of the other worthy products" would be able to win "without us having to lose."

Maxis continued their winning streak with *A-Train* being selected as Best Strategy Program. CGW readers didn't seem to gravitate toward *A-Train*, having trouble with an economic model that seemed foreign to U.S. business practices. It is very likely that they would have selected Dynamix' *The Incredible Machine* or Virgin's *Dune II: The Building of a Dynasty* as the winner in this category, since the buzz has been more favorable for the latter two products. Note, however, that SPA win-

rate highly among CGW readers.

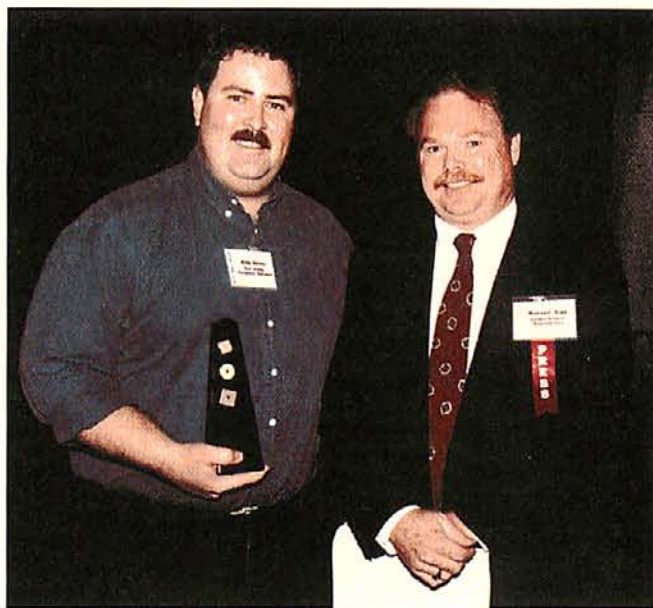
In the Sports category, golf games from Access have won the award for several years in a row. This year, the competition from MicroProse's *World Circuit*, Dynamix' *Front Page Sports: Football*, Accolade's *Jack Nicklaus Golf: Signature Edition*, Accolade's *Al Michaels Announces Hardball III* and newcomer Merit Software's *Tom Landry Strategy Football* seemed to offer the stiffest test yet. *Links 386 Pro* continued the domination of the category for Access. Upon being congratulated for their victory, company representatives said, "Wait till you see the technology in our next generation product!"

It may well be, however, that the Action/Arcade category brought the biggest surprise. In an awards process where politics often seems to rule, the underdog managed to win. *Wolfenstein 3-D*, id Software's first-person 3-D action game (published by Apogee Software) took the prize. To our knowledge, it is the first time that a shareware game has taken honors in the SPA voting. Further, id Software is probably the smallest software house to win such honors. The entire operation is six employees (two programmers, two artists, one creative director and one business person).

As noted earlier, no awards process is so removed from potential flaws that it does not engender some debate and dissatisfaction.

One SPA award that has consistently reduced the amount of controversy has been the Critics Choice Awards. These awards are selected by a panel of judges who cover their respective fields all year long. This year, The Critics Choice Award for Best Consumer Product went to Walt Disney Software's *Stunt Island*. The winning margin seemed to be the game's unique capacity for filming, editing and saving to disk a custom "film" of one's play session. After several years, the Critics Choice seems to be the one award that most often rewards design innovation.

Yes, awards can be controversial. Without awards, though, what would we have to talk about? **CGW**



CGW Publisher Russell Sipe presents Critics Choice award for *Stunt Island* to Disney Software's Kirk Green.

ners in the strategy category have rarely squared with gamers' tastes.

One close observer of the SPA awards pointed out the obvious fallacy of the Best Fantasy Role-Playing/Adventure category. The observer commented that any organization that could combine the two genres had a fundamental misunderstanding of both genres. A graphic adventure from a new player won the honors in this category. Cyberdreams' *DarkSeed*, an intense graphic experience built around the fantasy art of H.R. Giger (designer of the original *Alien* creature). Again, the game offers a certain aesthetic quality which appealed to the voters, but does not

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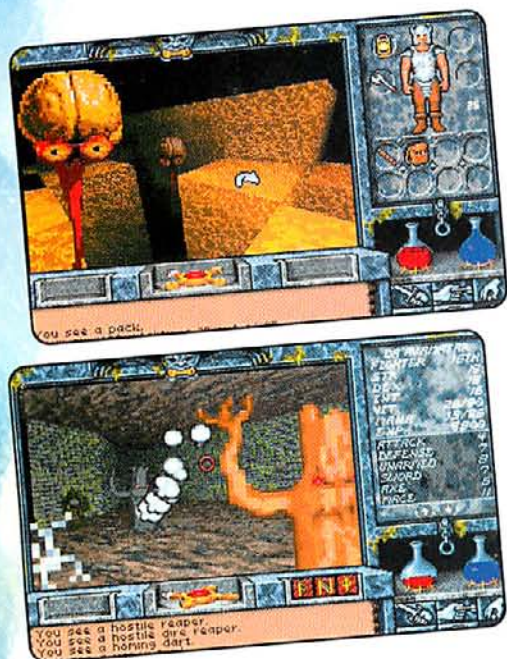
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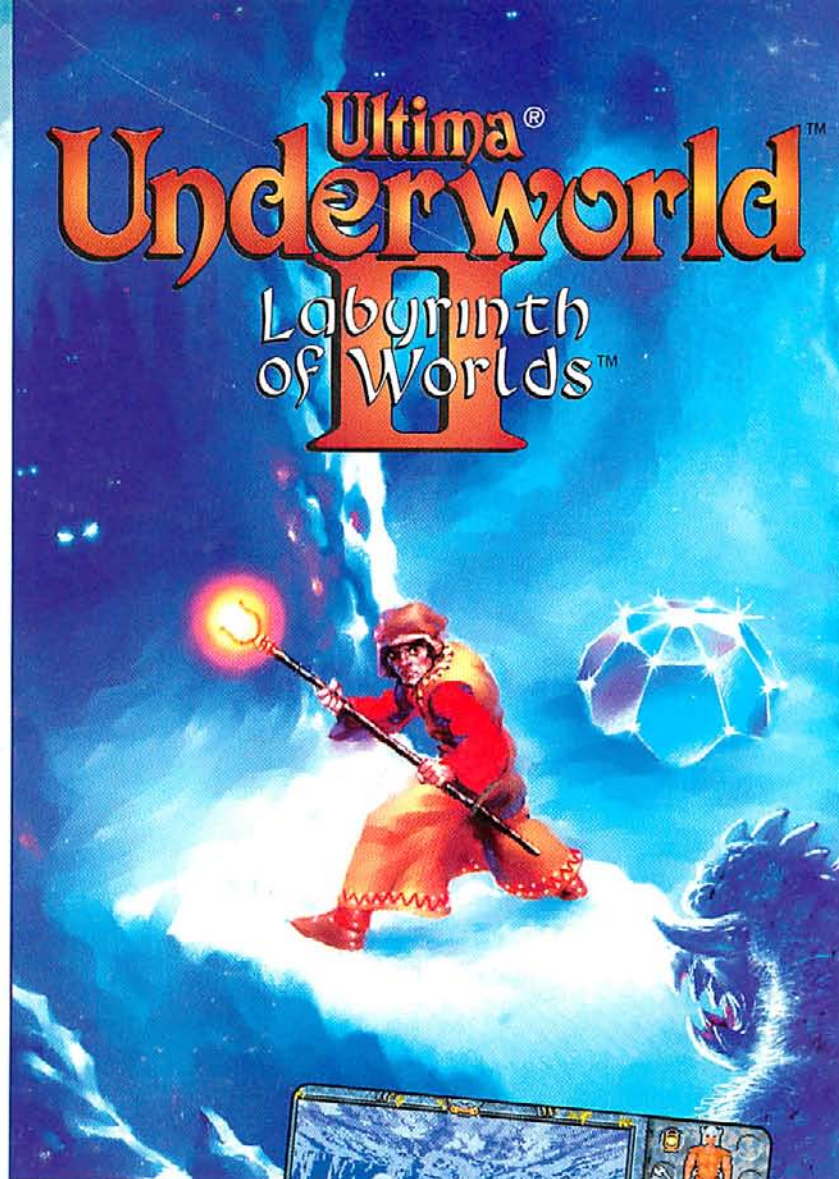
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