COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

The #1 Computer Game Magazine ZD

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Sneak Previews

- Silent Hunter
- Duke Nuke Em 3D

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PC Gamer magazine described FX Fighter as "ground-breaking." And we're grateful. But to be honest, with all that power sitting on the desktop, we just felt that the last thing the world needed was another damn word-processor.

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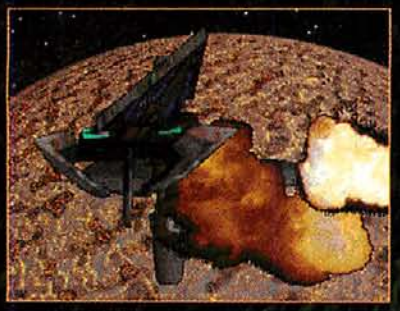

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–Computer Player, April `95

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–Computer Gaming World, March `95

"**Terminal Velocity** is a symphony of titillating action and g-force slurping excitement..."
–Strategy Plus, March `95

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–Computer Gaming World, May `95

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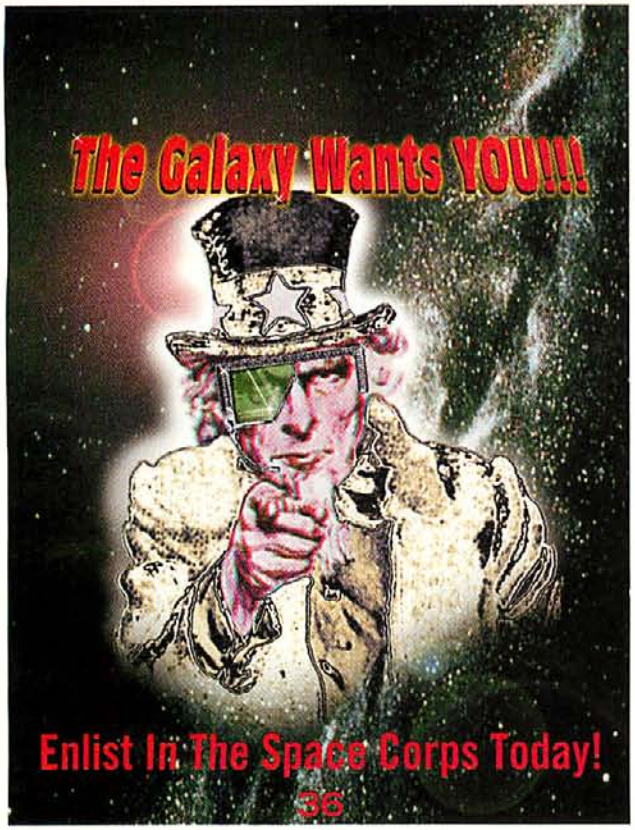

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

JULY 1995

Duke Nukes In A New Dimension
Duke Nukem 3D
86

FEATURES

32 SNEAK PREVIEW! MECHWARRIOR II A millennium from now, engines of war will tower like skyscrapers over the battlefield, crushing all who block their path. CGW's Johnny Wilson climbs into his Wolf Clan battlemech and challenges you to, "Mech my day!" in a 31st century duel to the death.

38 GO SPACEWARD, YOUNG MAN From galaxies long ago and far away to a star system near you, space simulators take you where no human has gone before. Martin Cirulis destroys Death Stars, ignores Admiral Tolwyn's orders, and snares odd-looking Gorene ships in tractor beams in his quest to find the ultimate interstellar experience.

ADVENTURE/ ROLE-PLAYING

59 SCORPIA'S STING *CGW*'s most famous anthropologist grabs her Jane Goodall hat and journeys into **Virgin**'s LOST EDEN.

64 THE SCORPION'S TALE Lost and wandering on DISCWORLD? Instead of slipping off the edge, you might let yourself fall under our sorceress' magic spell.

68 JEWELS OF THE ORACLE Peter Olafson puzzles out this prettily-packaged adventure from **Discis**.

78 ALIEN VIRUS Arinn Dembo finds that bug-hunting without a script leaves gamers in a vacuum in **Vic Tokai**'s sci-fi world.

82 THE DAEDALUS ENCOUNTER Tia Carrere looks as sleek, sexy and serious on the computer screen as on the big screen—but is it enough to keep a gamer's attention? Grab your popcorn and join Charles Ardai for another interactive sci-fi movie.

ACTION

86 SNEAK PREVIEW! DUKE NUKEM 3D Space Commander Peter Olafson briefs you on riding spaceships, leaving footprints, and even drinking from the water fountains in **Apogee**'s new action-packed blast fest.

98 SUPERKARTS Driving a go-kart at 30 mph may not seem like much to a NASCAR vet, but Vox Day says that this game has more horsepower than its 125cc engine would lead you to believe.

102 TANK COMMANDER **Domark** moves from simulations to arcade fare, keeping the action fast-paced and the explosions loud.

108 ATARI 2600 ACTION PACK Well, Sherman, this month the Wayback Machine takes us to the long-lost days when KABOOM! was King, and 8K games were a dim vision on the horizon. Come now, don't fret—a little nostalgia will do you good...

SIMULATIONS

123 **BOGEY'S BAR & GRILL** If you haven't been invited by the military to train in a state-of-the-art simulator, join Denny Atkin for a private seminar in the *CGW* Virtual War College.

128 **SNEAK PREVIEW! SILENT HUNTER SSI** dives deep in trying to out-perform ACES OF THE DEEP. Kevin "Sumo" Turner puts the new SVGA propellers through some difficult maneuvers in the WWII Pacific theater.

130 **1942 GOLD** Does everything **MicroProse** touch eventually turn to gold, or are the enhancements merely multimedia electroplating? Michael Rymaszewski logs several hours in a virtual cockpit to find out.

STRATEGY/ WARGAMES

137 **BROADSIDES & GRIPESHOT** Alan Emrich wonders whether good artificial opponents will be left behind in the age of on-line strategy games.

142 **X-COM: TERROR FROM THE DEEP** In exploring the sequel to *CGW*'s Game of the Year, Martin Cirulis dons his aquanaut gear and scours the ocean floor for aliens.

148 **JAGGED ALLIANCE** If you take an X-COM style tactical engine and replace the research with more character interaction and role-playing elements, Jeff James says you end up with a most interesting situation for strategic mayhem.

156 **1830 Avalon Hill**'s plan to convert award-winning board games to the computer is picking up steam. Bob Proctor arrives on the 7:30 express just in time to file this report.

160 **THE PURE WARGAME** Easily the most historical of **QQP**'s many strategy/wargame titles, THE PURE WARGAME needs some of that old-fashioned QQP play balance. Tim Carter finds the historical research superb, but the game system wanting.

168 **PIZZA TYCOON** Listen up, youse mugs. Y' know what's good fer ya, you make da pizza all day even dough dis game is in real time. Ya got me? Dis here is my godson, Randall Black, an' he's gonna tell you alla 'bout it. Capice?

172 **MACHIAVELLI: THE PRINCE** In a new translation by Renaissance scholar Arinn Dembo, we discover why even loyal MERCHANT PRINCES should consider changing their loyalties.

X-COM: Terror From The Deep 142

Go Ahead, Mech Our Day! 32

SNEAK PEEK: Silent Hunter 128

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208 **WHAT'S THE DEAL?** Clones Are Among Us

6:02 AM –

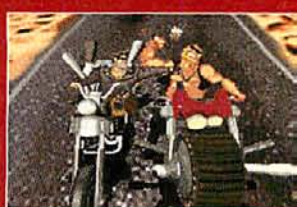
7:03 AM – HAD TEQUILA

9:31 AM – PUNCHED

12:02 PM –

6:31 PM – KICKED THE

MIDNIGHT – TOOK A RIDE AND



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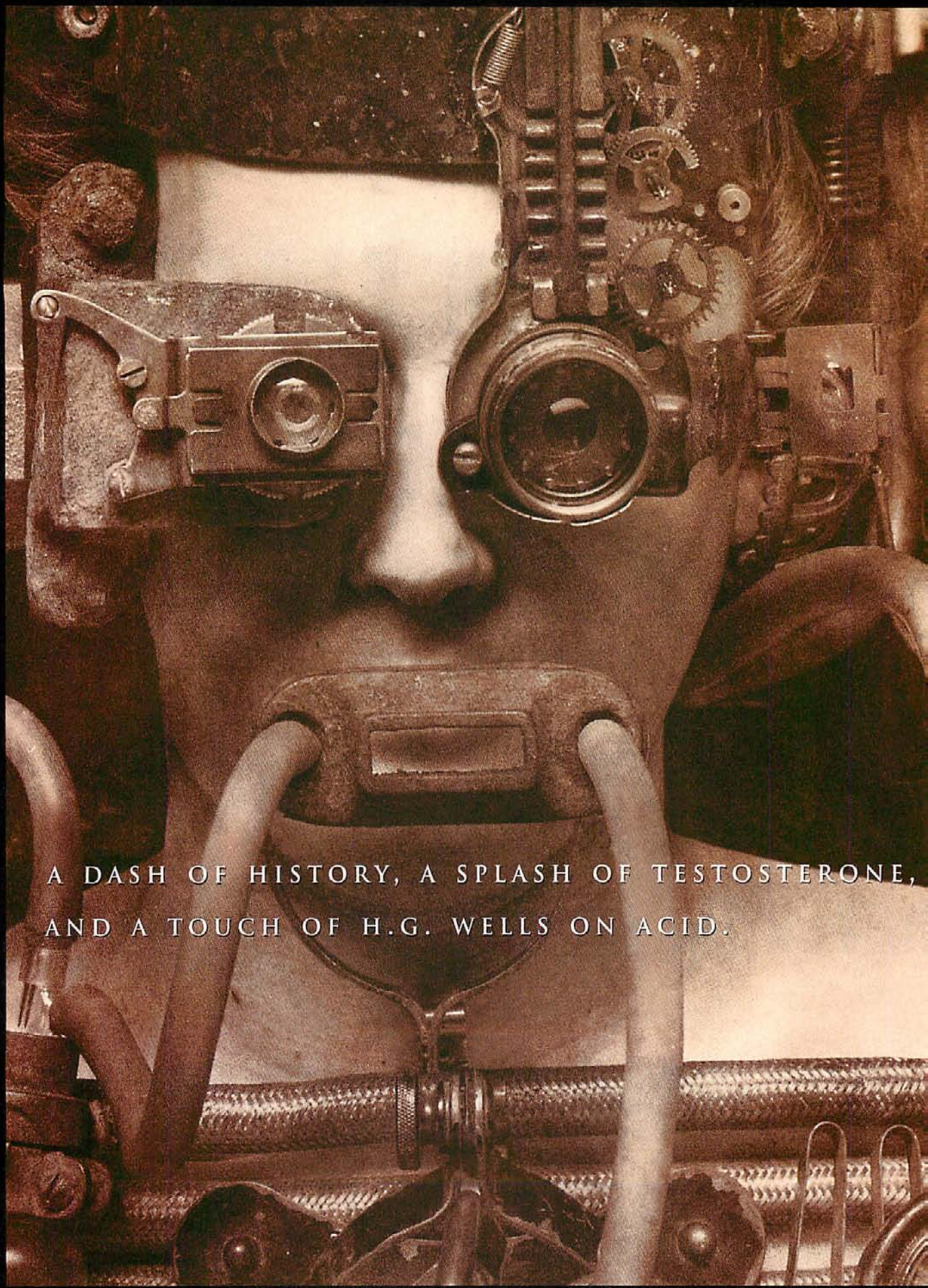
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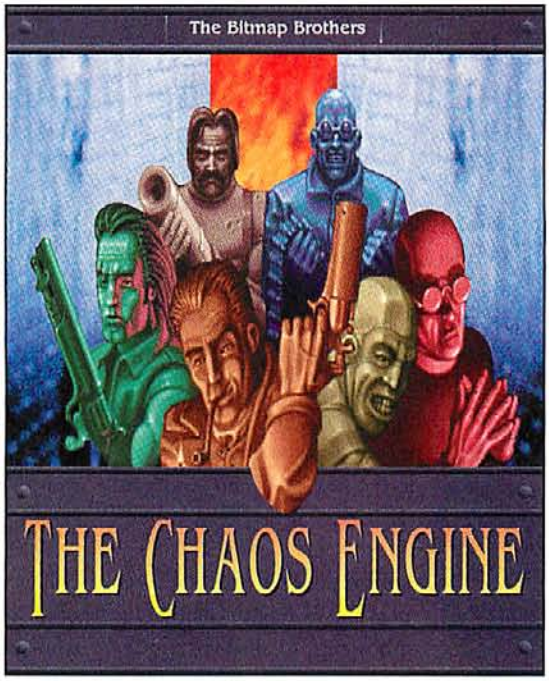

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Circle Reader Service #255

Don't Start The Revolution Without Me

Three Technical Trends Sure To Be Gamers' Friends

by Johnny L. Wilson

I realize that the above title expresses the opposite sentiment of the Gene Wilder and Donald Sutherland film *Start The Revolution Without Me* based on the legendary Corsican Brothers in pre-revolutionary France. You remember, don't you? Each brother would feel what the other one normally would. If one brother was stabbed, the other felt the pain. If one brother got lucky, well, it couldn't *all* be bad, could it?

Yet, as with the citizens of the French Revolution which served as the backdrop for the bizarre little Wilder/Sutherland comedy, the current state of computer gaming has citizens who are restless. They've had it with the aristocratic notions of hardware manufacturers who insist on creating "their own standard." They've had it with elitist ideas like adapting their CONFIG.SYS files for every "state of the art" game. They've had it with supporting the patrician overhead of memory-hogging TSRs. They want "Plug 'n Play" and they want it NOW!

Well, I can assure you that at *CGW*, we're not going to play the Scarlet Pimpernel and rescue these archaic remnants of the techno-aristocracy from the coming revolution. In fact, over the next 18 months, we're going to introduce you to the Corsican triplets of technological revolution: the WINDOWS '95 Explosion, the 3D Graphics Revolution, and the next Sound Wave. Like the legendary brothers, what the architects of these trends do in the next year and a half are going to affect each other's performance and benefit significantly. There will be plenty of interesting developments with regard to all three performance areas in the near future, and we are gearing up coverage to help you sort through the confusion which inevitably surrounds a revolution.

Like Robespierre's Committee of Public Safety, we may have to lop off a few heads of decadent traditional technology in order to help you reach a new level of gaming satisfaction, but we think the new order will be worth it. To help you identify our coverage of this fast-paced era of change, you'll grow familiar with the three emblems which adorn this editorial and correspond to the Corsican triplets described above.

What's so important about these trends? First, for those of you who missed last month's WINDOWS '95 games preview, Microsoft's new operating system is potentially a tremendous boon to gamers. We believe WINDOWS '95 could mean the end of most configuration headaches, provide a transparent interface by which graphics accelerator cards can make games run faster, incorporate sound and video drivers that will eliminate many compatibility problems (making sound/video installation transparent), and enable you to insert an Autoplay CD-ROM disc into your drive and be able to start playing a game without having to go through a lengthy configuration process.

Second, we are going to see light years of improvement in the area of 3D graphics over the next 18 months. We have all seen over the last couple of years how 3D graphics have become an integral tool for establishing real-time, first-person perspective games, modeling virtual worlds for graphic adventures, building virtual sets, and creat-

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AH GAMES OF STRATEGY

Circle Reader Service #297

ing synthetic actors. We've observed the enrichment of these 3D graphics through the techniques defined in this issue's "Hex, Bugs, & Rock 'n Roll." Now, imagine what happens when your game machine has hardware assists, specific chips designed to enhance 3-D graphics performance without dependence upon CPU time. Both performance and technique should improve. For an update on important news in this area, be sure to see the articles marked with the 3D Graphics Revolution logo in this month's "READ.ME" section and "Under The Hood."

Third, we're going to see some exciting new advances in sound. The next Sound Wave will feature advances in sound modeling that should shatter our former thresholds of suspended disbelief. Use of sound to convey spatial awareness, direction, echo, and mass, as well as custom sound design akin to that used to develop dinosaur sounds for *Jurassic Park*, will enhance our gaming experiences. Further, the ability to use voice-over-data technology will greatly expand our pleasure in on-line gaming experiences (as anyone who has played DOOM simultaneously over computer and an office intercom system can testify). We will be looking at both the coming hardware that is designed to assist these newest sound technologies and some of the design techniques which underlie them over the next 18 months. Just watch for the Sound Wave logos in future issues.

By offering these logos as visual pointers, we hope to not only make it easier for you to find our technology coverage within the magazine but to pull together for you the trends behind some of the fast-breaking events and announcements that we have been observing. So, enjoy our expanding coverage and, "Don't Start The Revolution Without Me" because I plan to be beefing up my computer to take advantage of the new advances, too.

HOW DO WE RATE?

The Guide To CGW's Review Rating System

★★★★★ Outstanding: That rare game that gets it all right. The graphics, sound, interface, and, of course, the game play come together to form a Transcendent Gaming Experience.

★★★★½ Very Good: A quality game that succeeds in many areas. May have minor problems, but is still worth your time and money, especially if you're interested in the subject matter/genre.

★★★½ Average: A mixed bag. Can often be a game that reaches for the stars, but falls short in significant areas. Can also just be a game that does what it does well, but lacks flair or originality.

★★½ Weak: A game with serious problems. May be buggy, may not have much play value, may be ill-conceived—and you may want to think twice about buying it.

★½ Abysmal: That rare game that gets it all wrong. Usually a buggy, incomplete, and/or valueless product.

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Overall Score "
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Interface

LETTERS FROM CGW READERS

MISTAKEN IDENTITY

I found, when I looked at your Premier Awards issue that my game, THE ELDER SCROLLS: ARENA, had won the CRPG of the Year award. Excellent! Thank you and the other reviewers for your faith. Imagine, however, my surprise when I looked at my picture and found I had suddenly changed (quite drastically) into someone of another race! While blonde hair and fair skin look good on Ted (the assistant designer pictured), I prefer to look

like myself. I'm sure it was an honest mistake by **Bethesda Softworks**, wishing me well at my new job at **Magnet Interactive Studios**. I'm sure you'll be seeing more of my games in the near future. Enclosed is a more accurate photograph.

Best wishes and thanks again for the award.

Vijay Lakshman
Washington, D.C.

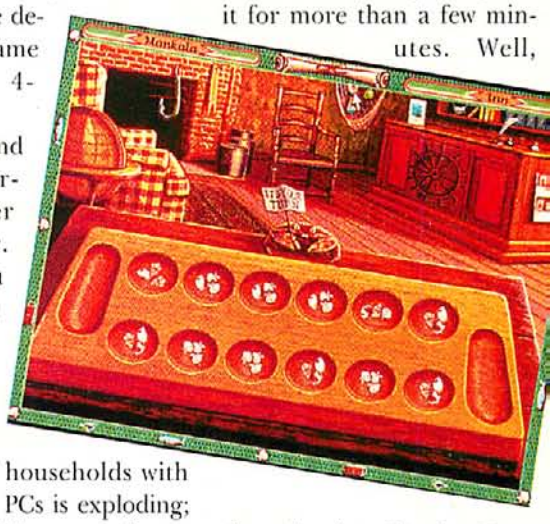
When we asked for a picture of the ARENA design team, ***Bethesda Softworks*** *sent a picture of the remaining members of the design team. Since our art department was expecting a picture of Vijay and Julian, the main designers, and we received a picture of two designers, that's what we ran. Since our Editor-in-Chief was the only staffer who actually knew who was who and he was speaking out-of-state as we went to press, no one caught the error until it was too late. The error does, however, give us a chance to announce that Vijay is now heading up the Action/Role-Playing Game Division of* ***Magnet Interactive Studios****.*

A MESSAGE FROM MERETZKY

I'm writing in response to the review of HODJ 'N' PODJ by Charles Ardai in the May issue. I have received countless reviews over the years, both favorable and unfavorable, but this is the first time I have ever felt the need to write a rebuttal. The criticisms were unfair, and, in my opinion, detrimental to the long-term health of our industry.

I object to the repeated implication that HODJ 'N' PODJ is derivative. From the extensive board game to the completely original mini-games like Beacon and Barbershop Quintet to the profusion of "easter eggs" hidden in almost every mini-game, HODJ 'N' PODJ is full of new material.

More importantly, I object to the jaded attitude that Charles exhibits throughout his review. Reading between the lines, it appears that Charles is unhappy that I created HODJ 'N' PODJ rather than my dozenth or so adventure game. Let me respond this way: out of my circle of acquaintances, there are a mere handful who would enjoy, or even understand, a typical adventure game. Yet there is no one—NO ONE!—to whom I would hesitate giving HODJ 'N' PODJ; for the first time, I have designed a game which my 4-year-old daughter and my 70-year-old mother both enjoy.



As you mention in your editorial in the same issue, the number of households with multimedia PCs is exploding; millions of these people are brand new to the universe of computer gaming. Unlike Charles, and I, and other hard-core gamers, these are people who are not familiar with every variation of every kind of game produced over the last 15 years. They may not have played SAM AND MAX HIT THE ROAD, let alone games going back to the early '80s. Like many in the game development community, **Boffo Games** is striving to appeal to this potentially huge new audience. At the same time, I know that *CGW* is trying to broaden its circulation tremendously. Ever more complex flight simulators and role-playing games will not appeal to these newcomers, neither will reviews which appear to be aimed only at the hardest core portion of the audience.

Charles, in his most jaded statement, compares HODJ 'N' PODJ to a screen saver, and writes that he'd be surprised to hear of anyone playing with it for more than a few minutes. Well, drop that jaw, Charles. From our publisher to the companies that produce our graphic art, from right coast to left, people who've never liked or even played a computer game before are hopelessly addicted to HODJ 'N' PODJ.

I also object to the cheap shot about the HODJ 'N' PODJ installation placing its icon in the Games group "right next to SOLITAIRE and MINESWEEPER," implying a similarly shallow gaming experience. True, most WINDOWS games create a group named after the company producing the game. I find this self-serving and annoying; invariably, I immediately move the icon to my

"One Must Fall 2097 is the best fighting game available for the PC, bar none"

COMPUTER GAME REVIEW

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Are you tired of PC beat-em-up games that don't live up to their hype? PC Gamer says "this is a truly excellent game" and "you won't be disappointed" with One Must Fall 2097. PC Answers calls it "outstanding", PC Home calls it "a must" and PC Gamer says it "plays brilliantly". Computer Game Review says One Must Fall 2097 is "fast, furious and fun above and beyond the call of duty". PC Gamer also calls it "the definitive" and "most awesome beat-'em-up on the PC". Even people who tend to not like fighting games seem to enjoy the sheer playability and fun of One Must Fall.

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Games group and delete the unwanted new group. I've talked to several people who appreciate HODJ 'N' PODJ taking a friendlier, less arrogant approach to installation.

With HODJ 'N' PODJ, I tried to craft a game which would have tremendous appeal to these newcomers, while still providing a great deal of quality playtime for most of the current game players. Although Charles may disagree, I think I succeeded, and so do most of the people who've seen HODJ 'N' PODJ—including most other reviewers.

Steve Meretzky
Concord, MA

We know not what course other reviewers may take, but as for us, give us criticism and give us depth. We have to meet our readers' needs. Though we hear your concerns, feel your pain, agree with some of your points, and understand your disagreements with the Ardai review, we still feel Charles' perspective was right for our audience—hard-core, dedicated gamers who are neither four-year-old girls nor 70-year-old women. We congratulate you on the success of your effort to reach an expanded *market.*

AVOIDING MIDI-OCRITY

I am a new subscriber to *CGW* and would like to take this opportunity first of all to say GREAT MAGAZINE!! I find your reviews to be right on the money most of the time and they heavily influence my purchasing decisions.

I have a question that has been plaguing my mind for months now. What will the Creative Labs Wave Blaster daughter card do for *gamers*? Mike Weksler advises in his article "Stalking The Great White Sound Card" to purchase a 16 bit card augmented with a General MIDI daughter card. I have a Sound Blaster SCSI 2 and have been considering dropping the dough for the upgrade. But before I do that, I must know more about it. What is General MIDI wavetable synthesis? Are wavetables even used in most popular games? Will I notice a considerable increase in sound quality and /or performance? Also, while on the audio subject, what will the Advanced Signal Processor upgrade also by Creative Labs do for the average gamer. Is it just a gimmick or a tool for the professional recorder? I have contacted Creative Labs already on my own over phone and modem. They don't seem to be able to give me an answer that applies directly to the user with gaming as the primary interest—or I just don't get it. Give it to me straight in layman terms... I'm not much of a General MIDI kind of guy.

Richard Amos
Canton, MI

We cornered Mike in between turns of PANZER GENERAL *for this reply:*

General MIDI is a widely accepted standard for wavetable synthesis. Using wavetable synthesis, real instruments are sampled (i.e., recorded) and stored onto ROM chips (or in some cases, as small sound files on your hard disk). Think of a MIDI file as a player piano scroll that can tell the computer what wavetable sound to play back. The result, in the better implementations of this technology, is rich music with instruments that sound like their real-world counterparts (not tinny approximations as with FM synthesis—the synthesis that we all know better as "Ad Lib" or "Sound Blaster" music). Note that General MIDI peripherals enhance the music in a given computer game—they have nothing to do with sound (i.e., voices and sound effects).

Most, if not all, of the compelling games in the market now are compatible with General MIDI synthesizers. The difference simply must be heard by you, the consumer, in order to justify its value to your overall gaming experience. In my opinion, listening to some of the wonderful game music that's out there on a sound card without General MIDI wavetable synthesis would be like listening to my favorite audio CD through a couple of tin cans and a string!

The ADVANCED SIGNAL PROCESSOR *upgrade is mainly for the computer audio enthusiast who wants to add effects, such as an echo on recorded sounds or play with Q-Sound. It's not supported in any computer games that I know of, and I haven't heard developers, sound card companies, or PC game music composers refer to it when discussing current audio technology.*

For a gamer's perspective on the difference a General MIDI board can make, check out the following letter.

ONE TROPHY SOUND CARD

I am writing in supportive response to the "Under The Hood" in the May '95 *CGW* ("Stalking The Great White Sound Card").

As luck would have it, I purchased this mag on the same night I bought Roland's Sound Canvas Daughtercard SCD-15. Installation to my Sound Blaster 16 was very simple. But I am still in awe of the difference it has made in my games. I had always judged the SB's performance as "pretty good," as it was "humming" music to my favorite games.

Then I reinstalled my fav, WINGCD to configure it to GMIDI music and started the game.... WOW! X-WING now sings to me! It's as if John Williams himself was conducting in my computer! The "orchestral" quality of GMIDI has brought a new life to my game-playing. DESCENT has taken on a new edge with its techno-funk music, and TIE FIGHTER has become more oppressive and more ominous.

Add on the 2MB+ of MIDI music files I've picked up over the past year, and GMIDI really does justice to these files that 16-bit audio could never do. I'm still trying to get used to hearing actual drums and realistic piano coming out of my speakers!

And before I was like your typical safari-hunter...I'd never heard of GMIDI outside of actual synthesizers. Retailers were of no help, they used buzzwords like "16 bit" this and "32 bit" that and had no idea of the actual difference between GMIDI and FM synthesis. One dealer tried to sell me a $300 sound card he said was GMIDI but in reality was only GMIDI-capable. I only purchased the Roland upon recommendation of an online gaming friend.

The impact of GMIDI on my system has been a tremendous joy, and pure gamers should see and hear what a $200 upgrade can do for their enjoyment!

Saturn S. Padua
San Francisco, CA

SPEAK UP!

Got something to say? Write to us at:

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* A picture is worth a thousand words.

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Impressions

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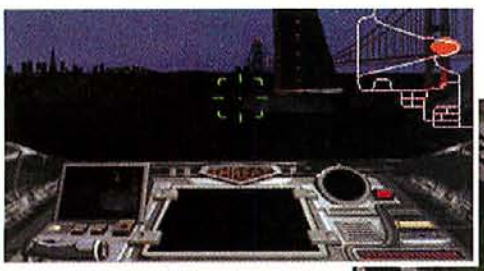
Aliens, Body Snatchers, Chessmasters and Quarterbacks

Mindscape's New Blueprint Calls For Aggressive, Quality Game Designs

"Blue 32! Blue 32! Alien Blitz! Pawn to King four! Hut, Hut!" Such a confusing mix of digitized sounds echoing through the halls of **Mindscape**'s game division is easily understandable with a dozen games, covering nearly every genre, planned for release in 1995. This is hard to believe from a company that, when it was known as **Software Toolworks**, released an average of two games per year.



The most high-profile product would seem to be the WARHAMMER FANTASY BATTLE SYSTEM, adapted from the **Games Workshop** miniatures game. The real-time tactical combat system allows you to set your Orcish, Dwarven, Elvish or Human formations prior to battle, stage ambushes and engage in frenzied melee very similar to its tabletop cousin. The intricate plot is still early in development, but seems to offer plenty of opportunities for your mercenary captain character to negotiate, uncover fiendish plots and role-play his/her way through a dark future world.

Then again, Mindscape's biggest license might be ALIENS. Those walking biological nightmares begin the tale by annihilating a human outpost, and it's your job to rectify the situation. Surprisingly, instead of another DOOM-clone, the designers are creating a graphic adventure based on the successful **Dark Horse** comics series. They've already captured much of the dark, moody atmosphere in the graphic novels. So, if the storyline can come anywhere close to those in the comics, ALIENS could be a major hit.

EXPLORE WORLDS OLD AND NEW Mindscape opens up science fiction and fantasy lands alike for gamers, with THE RAVEN PROJECT *(top left)* and WARHAMMER FANTASY BATTLES *(above)* scheduled for this fall. For more down-to-earth action when the leaves turn, every major college team will be represented in NCAA FOOTBALL *(right)*, possibly the FRONT PAGE SPORTS of the college gridiron.

Other aliens are attacking, as well. **Cryo**'s THE RAVEN PROJECT has a little space combat and even some giant robot blast-fest fun to go with its wide range of live-action and cinematic-style graphics.

Back on Earth in 2069, strange oblong objects rain down from orbit and attempt to take over the world, as STEEL HARBINGER plays off the *Puppet Masters/Invasion of the Body Snatcher* theme for modern audiences. In a welcome twist, the character you portray is female.

A more unusual kind of alternative fiction forms the basis for AIR POWER, where dirigibles become the dominant military technology in a very different 20th century Europe. Designed by **Rowan Software**, this is like crossing CARRIERS AT WAR with ZEPPELIN, and adding sexier graphics *a la* DAWN PATROL.

For more down-to-earth action, CYBERSPEED is essentially MEGARACE on steroids: futuristic race courses, supersonic speeds, near-elastic collisions, and network play for up to eight players ups the ante for this offering. And, while it will never challenge NASCAR RACING for realism, AL UNSER JR'S ARCADE RACING delivers what you'd expect from its name—especially with the added attraction of better computer opponents than the average arcade racer. If you have any doubts that Mindscape is going all-out for the action market, merely look at SAVAGE WARRIORS and its new 3D Bio-Motion technology. In addition to the smooth character animation of the fighters, there are a number of secret moves, cheat codes, camera angles and even hidden characters to provide a rationale for more replayability.

Mindscape's multi-faceted attack on the gaming market includes a pumped-up METAL MARINES and LEGIONS EMPIRE (which may finally include the tactical module Ancients fans have demanded). CHESSMASTER 5000 has more opponents modeled after all-time great chess masters, plus a new tutorial, a wider range of chess puzzles, and of course, an AI which can beat 99% of the pawn-pushers on the planet. With that in mind, the designers will have both tougher and *easier* levels this time around. The strangest strategy game of the bunch, though, is THE DOONESBURY ELECTION GAME. Can you imagine Zeke or Boomer running against Bob Dole in '96?

To complete the eclectic picture Mindscape is trying to paint, consider that their NCAA FOOTBALL game is not only one of the toughest licenses to obtain, but the design is trying to target FRONT PAGE SPORTS FOOTBALL PRO's audience—quite a hurdle. Huge players, SVGA graphics, plenty of stats, and an easy-to-learn play-calling system have given them a good start, but it's too early to tell if the AI will be up to the task.

It will be a busy year for the Mindscape folks, and hopefully a busy one for gamers as their ambitious schedule of releases nears completion.

PLAYING LATELY?

Here are the games that your fellow players are blowing the most time with. Let us know which game you've been playing the most by writing the name of your current addiction in the "Playing Lately?" blank of the *CGW* Top 100 ballot (page 160).

Readers' TOP 10

Results for *CGW* #130, MAY 1995

1. **Panzer General** (SSI)
2. **Dark Forces** (LucasArts)
3. **X-COM: Terror From The Deep** (MicroProse)
4. **X-COM: UFO Defense** (MicroProse)
5. **Master of Magic** (MicroProse)
6. **Wing Commander 3** (Origin)
7. **Descent** (Interplay)
8. **NASCAR Racing** (Papyrus/Virgin)
9. **Jagged Alliance** (Sir-Tech)
10. **NBA Live** (Electronic Arts)

Notable Quotes

Wit, wisdom and caustic quips from gaming's harshest critics

"I just got X-COM: TERROR FROM THE DEEP. I haven't seen daylight in a week, and I'm living on canned tuna. Thank God this one is not as addicting as the first."

Tom Esposito, Atlantis Base

"I now have a dozen board games, complete with lengthy rule books, sitting in my closet gathering dust thanks to PANZER GENERAL."

Allen Kaczor, Goldsboro, NC

"DARK FORCES is a great game that only needs a save game feature to be perfect. What was LucasArts thinking anyway?"

Robert, Puzzled in Akron, Ohio

"You know life is good when you are faced with the decision to race around Talledega, push some tanks around in PANZER GENERAL, or take on Shaq with Vlade in NBA LIVE!

Scott Morze, Alhambra, CA

"My wife says to me, 'I'm a computer widow again! Why didn't you kill all those aliens the first time?' "

W.S. Corney, Oneida Castle, NY

BETA bits

BURIED IN TIME

It's tough being a temporal security agent. You make it through a long, demanding adventure, put the flow of time back on the straight and narrow path, save the universe in the process, and quite reasonably expect to return as a hero. Instead, you find that someone has been wreaking havoc with history again. And worse yet, they've framed you for it! But then, what would an adventure game be without a little chaos? So you once again don your cumbersome yet essential bio-suit and go flitting through the ages, looking for clues to your innocence.

HAVE SUIT, WILL TIME-TRAVEL Your biosuit a little confining? Maybe, but its interface lets you look up at high towers—and even to pass as an armored knight from a distance.

This sequel to THE JOURNEYMAN PROJECT retains the cinematic feel of its predecessor and supplements it with such technological brilliance that even MYST fanatics will be impressed. The bio-suit construct is clever, and provides a neat justification for the game's interface. One big improvement over the original is that your view of the world isn't as limited as it once was. You can look up at towering battlements or down into ditches, as well as the usual side-to-side views.

And then there are the four painstakingly detailed and wondrously varying locales to which you travel. Chichen Itza has ancient Mayan monuments that INCA II could only dream of. And there's enough chain-mail machismo at Chateau Guillard that even a medieval scholar would feel at home. More visionary gamers can peruse the artistic and scientific treasures of Leonardo Da Vinci's studio, or get a peek of the future in the 23rd-century Farnstein Lab. But BURIED IN TIME isn't all pretty pictures. The environment is very interactive, with lots of "hot spots," and the puzzles actually relate to the storyline (unlike those of many adventure games these days).

Of course, not everyone is an expert on Mayan religious rituals, so the designers have included several difficulty levels. There is also a special personality-on-a-chip named Arthur who will give clues (albeit at a loss of victory points) while making pithy references to everything from Mayan minutiae to Monty Python. While the script won't make you forget Poul Anderson's *The Time Patrol*, the story and the puzzles are a lot more integrated than most "interactive fiction," and there is much more game than multimedia fluffery inside this package.

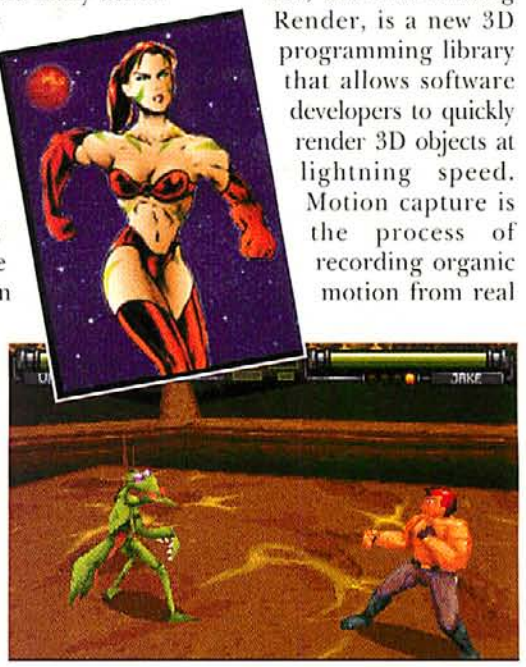
FX FIGHTER

Fighting in the Streets is great, and Kombats to the death are Mortally thrilling. But the 2D fighting genre is growing old, and many action gamers are desperate for something to put the karate back in their chop.

Well, from what we've seen, hope is in sight if **GTE Interactive** and **Argonaut Software** deliver on the promise of their new digital brawlfest FX FIGHTER.

While keeping intact the underlying concept of the one-on-one "fight sim," GTE has extended the genre into a new dimension—the third dimension. As the two outer-space combatants square off, the camera constantly changes vantage points to give the game a TV-broadcast feel. The "ring," a large, square-shaped platform, has an open boundary like a Sumo wrestling circle, and it's possible to lose a fight by simply being tossed out of it.

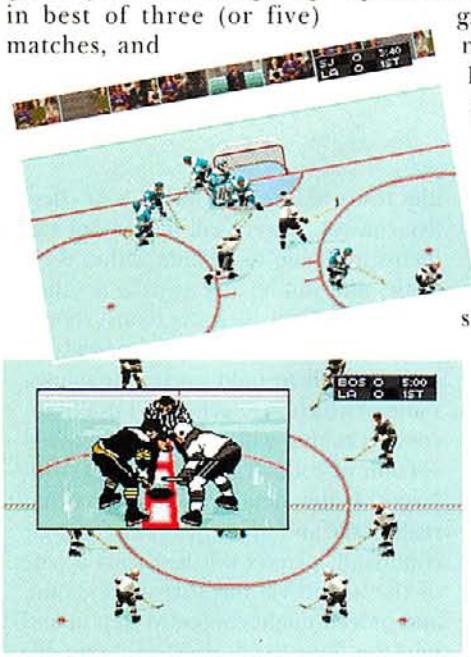
The graphics are simply amazing. Using comic book style art and beautifully rendered backgrounds, this game's visuals rival its coin-op counterparts. FX FIGHTER's incredible visual appeal rests primarily in Argonauts' decision to utilize two budding new technologies: B-Render and motion capture. B-Render, short for Blazing Render, is a new 3D programming library that allows software developers to quickly render 3D objects at lightning speed. Motion capture is the process of recording organic motion from real



THE MONSTER MASH The best hand-to-hand combateers in the universe have been handpicked to test your mettle in FX FIGHTER.

creatures and then using it to animate digital characters; used in films like *Jurassic Park* (elephants were used for the movements of some dinosaurs), it is finally making its way into the realm of computer gaming.

These technologies should give FX FIGHTER, which should be shipping this summer, a leg up on the competition. At its core, this is a MORTAL KOMBAT type of game—you'll still be fighting in best of three (or five) matches, and the challenge ladder will remain intact. But gamers are going to be spoiled once they get the opportunity to exchange hostilities in a deadly 3D world.



STICK IT TO 'EM With two different ways to shoot and five different types of checking, ESPN's hockey season promises to be full of strikes (the good kind, of course).

ESPN NATIONAL HOCKEY NIGHT

Flawless graphics, fluid motion, and incredibly accurate statistics. In short, the perfect game—that's all PC hockey fans want. Currently **Electronic Arts** has the digital Stanley Cup race locked up, but the developers at **Stormfront Studios**, in conjunction with **Sony Imagesoft** and **ESPN**, are feverishly attempting to build a title challenger.

ESPN NATIONAL HOCKEY NIGHT is that would-be contender. In keeping with the spirit of the number one sports network, players will be greeted with what is now becoming the ESPN computer game standard—a full screen digitized video introduction. Also consistent with the ESPN line is the slick TV style interface. Novices and veterans alike will appreciate the ease with which they'll be able to jump into statistics, gameplay and team rosters.

Graphically, like most hockey sims, HOCKEY NIGHT won't stray far from the NHL HOCKEY look, utilizing a vertically scrolling screen that provides close-to-the-ice action (a slightly steeper angle than BRETT HULL HOCKEY). And although the gameplay won't be radically different than other entries, we witnessed a little more speed and finesse in the players than we've seen in other hockey sims.

So what's going to separate ESPN HOCKEY from the rest of the hockey sims on the market? Well, according to Sony, more than a few things, starting with the game action. In addition to faster play, gamers will have much more control over their players' movements. Not only will gamers be able to attempt slap shots and wrist shots like most other games, but wannabe Messiers will be able to execute five different types of checks, which should provide for some hard-hitting action. Another feature that caught our eye is the ability to control a single player throughout the course of a game. While we're not quite sure if Stormfront will be able to pull this off (if you don't have the puck, your teammates' AI had better be good), this control mode could be an appreciated change of pace from most games where you simply play "puck hog."

Additionally, ESPN's name on the label means access to the sports network's resources. Dan Patric will providing the play-by-play and Bill Clement (of the National Hockey Night show) will be doing the pre- and post-game commentary. A new feature for the ESPN sports games is the presence of a digital library containing some of the best plays in ESPN's extensive video library.

Statistically, Stormfront is going to provide the basics and not much more. In addition to the +/- ratings common to the sport, the obvious statistics will be provided, all of which will be tracked and saved throughout the course of a season.

PIPELINE

ESTIMATED RELEASE DATES BASED ON THE LATEST INFORMATION FROM GAME DEVELOPERS

NAME OF GAME, COMPANY	RELEASE DATE
11TH HOUR Virgin	7/95
ACROSS THE RHINE MicroProse	7/95
AWFUL GREEN THINGS QQP	7/95
BATTLES IN TIME QQP	7/95
BEYOND SQUAD LEADER AH	9/95
BURIED IN TIME Sanctuary Woods	8/95
CAESAR II Impressions	9/95
CHESSMASTER 5000 Mindscape	9/95
CONQUEST OF THE NEW WORLD Interplay	8/95
CYBERMAGE Origin	9/95
DAGGERFALL Bethesda	9/95
DUKE NUKE 'EM 3-D Apogee	7/95
DUNGEON MASTER II Interplay	8/95
EMPIRE II New World	9/95
EXPLORATION Interactive Magic	7/95
FAST ATTACK BOATS Time-Warner	8/95
FRANKENSTEIN Interplay	9/95
G-NOME 7th Level	8/95
GUARDIANS OF DESTINY Virgin	9/95
LAST BLITZKRIEG SSG	7/95
MAGIC: THE GATHERING MicroProse	8/95
MECHWARRIOR II Activision	8/95
MILLENNIA GameTek	9/95
METAL LORDS New World	9/95
MISSION CRITICAL Legend	9/95
NAVY STRIKE MicroProse	9/95
NECROBIUS Microprose	7/95
NETWORK CIVILIZATION MicroProse	7/95
PHANTASMAGORIA Sierra	7/95
POLICE QUEST: SWAT Sierra	9/95
PRISONER OF ICE I-Motion	8/95
7TH FLEET Avalon Hill	10/95
SILENT HUNTER SSI	9/95
SIMISLE Maxis	10/95
SPACE BUCKS Impressions	10/95
STAR CONTROL III Accolade	8/95
STEEL PANTHERS SSI	9/95
TEKWAR Capstone	9/95
TFX 2000 Ocean	10/95
THE DIG LucasArts	9/95
THIS MEANS WAR! MicroProse	9/95
THUNDERSCAPE SSI	7/95
TOP GUN Spectrum HoloByte	7/95
WARHAMMER Mindscape	9/95
WOODEN SHIPS & IRON MEN Avalon Hill	10/95

Matrox 3D Accelerator Board Takes Graphics To Next Millennium

Wanna add a little zing to your gaming? Check out the new **Matrox** MGA MILLENNIUM. This 64-bit PCI Windows and 3D polygon accelerator has hardware support for texture mapping, uses new WRAM (which is both cheaper and faster than VRAM) and has a hot-rod 32 bit VGA core for running your DOS VGA and SVGA games at hyper speeds. Note, however, that a game must be specifically written to take advantage of the 3D acceleration, so the MILLENNIUM will not enhance an existing game's 3D graphics.

We tried the MILLENIUM driving an enhanced version of NASCAR RACING in hi-res with all the textures on using a 90MHz Pentium, and it's the fastest we've seen the game run. The MGA MILLENNIUM is compatible with leading 3D libraries like Criterion's RENDERWARE, and is positioned to be a 3D-DDI (WINDOWS' 95 low-level 3D library) accelerator. The software bundle includes an enhanced version of NASCAR RACING and nifty 3D demos. At a suggested retail price of $379 for the 2MB version, you'll get the first 3D accelerator on the market that's poised for the next generation of 3D games without killing your existing games dead. For more information, call (800) 361-1408.

The 64 Gigabyte QUESTION?

If there were a Parliament in the Computer Gaming industry, David Lester would probably sit in the House of Lords. Born and raised in the land of nobility, Lester is a self-made publishing Lord with games such as AIR BUCKS, DETROIT, LORDS OF THE REALM, CAESAR and the soon-to-be-released CAESAR II to his credit. We thought Lord Lester would make a fine guest speaker to address this distinguished audience on the topic: what game would you design given unlimited processing power and an unlimited budget. May we now present, Sir David Lester!

I see an "ultimate" version of LORDS OF THE REALM, where up to six human players compete over cable in real-time. Each player assumes a "virtual" identity from a wide selection of rendered physical forms; these forms will be used on-screen for all interactive scenes between players, where the virtual chacters' animations are rendered on the fly according to the circumstance's needs; players will be able to "speak" their minds using either computer-resident voices, again from a wide selection, or using their own. A greater level of economic management detail will be available, with several computer-controlled stewards available for hire to relieve you of some of the micro-management, should you so wish.

Of course, the AI will not only be of a high standard, it will have multiple difficulty and style settings, and will use neural net techniques to develop strategies to beat your opponents. Castle-building will be a more necessary task, with tax collection and conscription abilities restricted to areas within your effective control. Players will have more elements available to include within their castle, and will be able to take a virtual tour throughout their creations, should they so wish. Dungeons will be available within which to hold worthy prisoners, some of which may generate ransom income. Combat will be a more detailed version of today's crude attempt, with larger, better detailed soldiers moving realistically and in swift response to your command; players will feel truly a part of the action via the surround sound, and indeed might choose to step in and join the fight themselves, using an advanced first-person perspective "medieval melee" simulation!

Graphics and audio will be an equivalent resolution to HDTV, and installation hassles will be long-forgotten!

In short, the game will be, if not all things to all men, more things to more men: more bells and whistles will attract a wider audience, more detail will be available for the micro-managers, while a seamless interface and challenge as good as their friends can muster will keep the grognards long into the next century! *Plus ca change*... as we say in Europe! [The more things change...]

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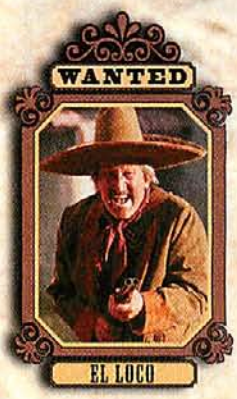

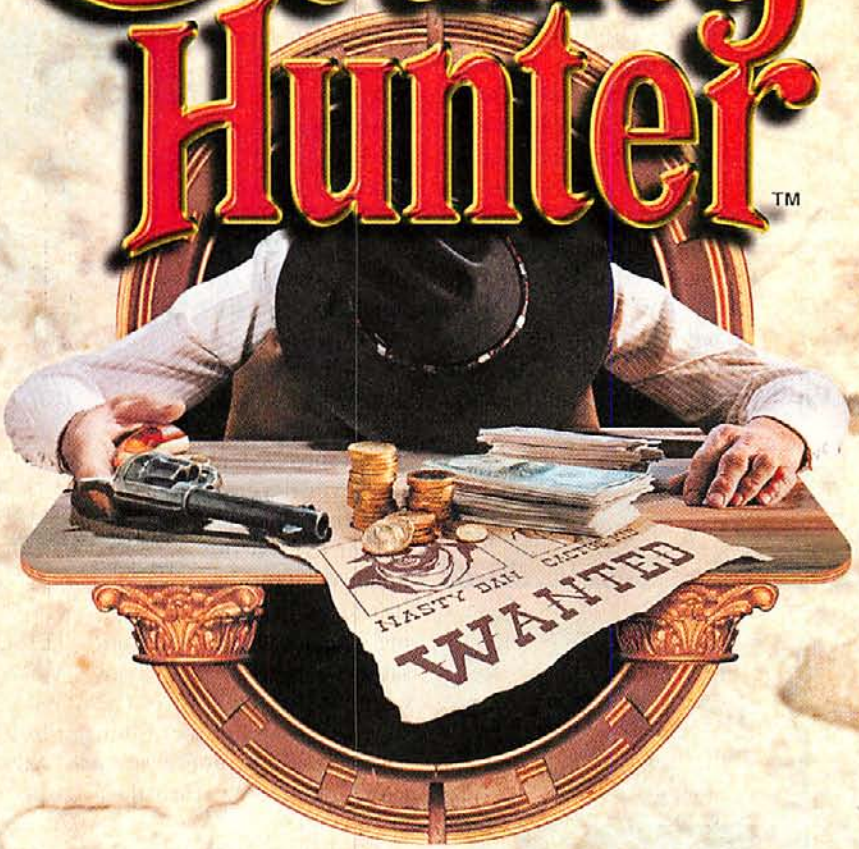

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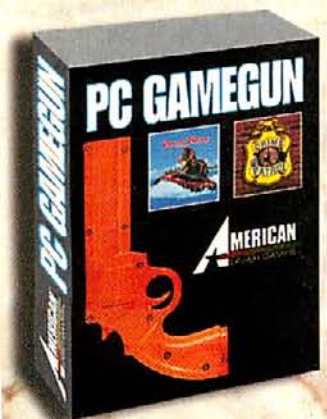

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C:\Game\Gurus\Grow

More Than 2,200 Attend Eighth Annual Computer Game Developers Conference

In 1987, 27 game designers convened in Chris Crawford's living room to discuss their art. The meeting lasted one day, but left the attendees clamoring for more. This year, nearly 100 times that number of designers, artists, musicians, and programmers from as far away as Moscow and Melbourne attended the conference.

Ironically, founding visionary Chris Crawford chose a few moments at the end of his lecture on Interactive Fiction to announce his removal from the board which oversees the conference and to offer his formal good-bye to assembled admirers. Crawford received a well-deserved standing ovation for his past efforts and is expected to continue his work of challenging developers in some type of small group work, a strong point in the Crawford style.

Although Crawford's farewell focused on the past, his lecture clearly focused on the future, positing the need for algorithmically driven storylines and artificial personality for satisfying interactive fiction. As he has done for several years, Crawford clearly demonstrated the futility of branching structures for building games and the bogus, unsatisfying nature of story loops which fold back into the branching structure. Such work must continue if story games are ever to reach their full potential.

STAND AND DELIVER Origin Executive Producer Warren Spector appeals to designers and programmers to join his company by saying, "We've got the money to take chances."

Another major moment in the conference was the annual banquet where the developers recognize the quality games of the year. Unlike guilds and professional societies which usually present awards for outstanding achievement, the CGDC has always steered clear of the "C" word—competition. Ironically, the creative talent behind an industry which is built upon competition prefers *not* to have a competitive awards program. Instead, the registered attendees nominate games to be recognized as *primus inter pares* (i.e. first among equals). This year, presented in random order on a special videotape, the honorees were: ROAD RASH 3DO (**Electronic Arts**), X-COM: UFO DEFENSE (**MicroProse**), WING COMMANDER III (**Origin/Electronic Arts**), MAGIC CARPET (**Electronic Arts**), RELENTLESS: TWINSEN'S ADVENTURE (**Electronic Arts**), TIE FIGHTER (**LucasArts**), FIFA SOCCER 3DO (**Electronic Arts**), MASTER OF MAGIC (**MicroProse**), UNDER A KILLING MOON (**Access**), and DESCENT (**Interplay**).

By far the most significant event at the conference, however, was **Microsoft**'s unveiling of the Windows '95 Software Developers Kit for games (previewed in CGW #130, p. 26). As Origin's Richard Garriott (Lord British) commented, "Windows '95 is a fact of life." The SDK unveiled at the developers conference will insure that the promise of Windows '95 (described in *CGW* #131, p. 58) will become available for gamers before this time next year.

AFFAIRS IN THE CYBURBS

What Did Gibson Say? Play TERMINAL VELOCITY And Visit CGWeb

The "Father of Cyberpunk" William Gibson conducted an on-line interview recently to promote the game based on *Johnny Mnemonic*. For a transcript of the interview, which was moderated by *CGW*'s own Johnny Wilson, crack the ice of Computer Gaming World's Forum on ZiffNet, Library 16, Special Event Files. The download code is GIBSON.TXT.

While you're jacked in, swing by Library 5, Arcade Action to download Apogee's new action game TERMINAL VELOCITY, code-named 3DTV.ZIP.

Well, it's already been three months since *CGW* carved out a Web site on the net, so we decided it was time for a major facelift. Featuring *CGW* reviews, original editorial content, downloadable patches, game cheats, saved games and more, CGWeb is becoming the focal point for gamers with Internet access. Surf http://www.ziff.com/ and you'll see what we mean.

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Captain Kirk Gets Tekkie

An Interview With William Shatner

William Shatner, best known as the captain of the starship *Enterprise* in the original *Star Trek* television show, has discovered computer gaming, and has taken the game design plunge. Although Shatner did voice-over work for **Interplay**'s *Star Trek: 25th Anniversary*, it wasn't until **Capstone/Intracorp** pitched a game based upon his *TekWar* books and television series that he trully caught the bug. We caught Shatner between shoots on the set of his latest project to ask him a few questions about his involvement on the TEKWAR game and his take on the future of computer entertainment.

Computer Gaming World: Just how involved are you in TEKWAR?

William Shatner: I'm really involved. I think that this is the entertainment of the future. Computer games, up until now, have heralded the entertainment that's going to be. So I've gotten my feet wet with TEKWAR, but I have ideas for other games as well, which I'm currently speaking to **IntraCorp** about. And TEKWAR has the potential to be a great game. It follows the outlines of the television series and its concepts, like the matrix and the information highway. This game should be able to take the visualizations we've done on the show so far and extend them. Plus I think that there is much that can be learned from the game itself and applied to future episodes of TEKWAR. I'll probably use the creative elements IntraCorp will bring to the game in some fashion on television. There's also potential from other components of my life for more games; I can't say what it is now until it becomes reality, but the possibility exists for something really large. I'm immersing myself in ideas. I just put down *Computer Gaming World*, and as I thumb through it and see what other people are doing—the games about war, the games about naval technology, the games about fantasy—I get intrigued as hell about the possibilities of game development.

BEAM ME IN TEKWAR, designed by Capstone in conjunction with William Shatner, is a hybrid action/adventure that will feature 16-player network play as well as head-to-head modem play.

CGW: Have you had a chance to play any other computer games?

WS: Strangely enough, I haven't. I'm really a computer novice. It's really bad. I only recently found out where the "on" switch was on my new system; to my astonishment it was in the back of the computer, not in the front. They're trying to make these things idiot proof, but they made it so that this idiot couldn't prove himself. I've only been able to play one game so far, but in my imagination I've played the games that I've seen in the arcades and those that I've read about. What I saw in that one game, MYST, was enough to make me realize that I could visualize a game concept. But I also realized that I couldn't be so callow as to think I could make the game by myself, with all these experts lolling about looking for work. So my contribution to TEKWAR is that of idea man, editor, and as the person with the vision they are striving to bring to the screen. And according to them, [my role] is an important one. This seems to make the game somewhat different from everything else.

CGW: So how are you approaching this particular project and this particular medium?

WS: I'm approaching it like a movie. I suggested the thrust of the game and the mix of arcade action and puzzles using the type of planning, storyboards, and other devices I'm familiar with. I saw the [game] engine for example—they sent me a tape of it—but first I had to learn what an engine was and what it could do. So I'm beginning to learn the alphabet of the game while trying to create Hollywood sentences out of it.

CGW: What unique perspective and twists do you anticipate incorporating into this game?

WS: Well, the computer hacker is an integral part of *TekWar*, so it's my expectation that we'll be sliding down the tubes of the information highway solving some sort of problem. At the same time, we'll be trying to enter an environment that is riddled with Tek Lords, from which we'll also have to escape. Arcade and puzzle elements should be interwoven throughout.

CGW: What do you see as the future of entertainment?

WS: The future of entertainment is in the direction that we're all headed; I see the science fiction element of what we're attempting to do here. Computer generation is the spectacle of the future; we can no longer afford to have 10,000 extras pulling a Sphinx like in Cecil B. Demille's *Ten Commandments*. These huge productions will be artificially generated. The future of entertainment belongs to the computer painters and those artists who can use the computer for dramatic advantage.

—Interview conducted by Shane Mooney

COMING SUMMER 95

Historical Strategy Game

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"Battle View" showing American defense of Stoumont against determined assualt by Peiper's troops

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THE PERFECT GENERAL II

THE PERFECT GENERAL is a most beloved WWII wargame, and justifiably so, despite its lame artificial opponent. One of the best of the early modem-play strategy games finally gets a much-needed upgrade in PERFECT GENERAL II. The AI, while hardly up to say, PANZER GENERAL standards, is improved over the original, and the SVGA graphics are an immense improvement over those in **QQP**'s recent THE PURE WARGAME. If bang for the buck is what you're after, PG II has 98 scenarios, including such esoterica as *Persian Stalingrad* and *Octa-Spider*, along with more reasonable what-if battles such as *Operation Olympic*. The new battle toys include fighters, armored cars and machine guns, but these don't really work that much differently than the old units, so PG vets can fire up the modem and jump right into the action. IBM, $64.95. Circle Reader Service #3.

QQP, INC., FLEMINGTON, NJ 08822, (908) 788-2799

THE PERFECT GENERAL II adds SVGA battlefields, machine guns, *Elefant* tanks and more pyrotechnic explosions to its strategy game engine.

SLIPSTREAM 5000

Blast 'em and pass 'em—that's the key to SLIPSTREAM 5000. Set in the distant future and undoubtedly inspired by the frustration of travel-weary commuters, **SLIPSTREAM 5000** casts you in the role of ace combat racer on a 10 race world circuit. But that's not really important. What is important is pulse-pounding action that can even create sweat on the hands of *CGW*'s battle-hardened action gamers. Perhaps learning a lesson from **New World**'s ZEPHYR, this game seamlessly integrates impressive visuals, fast-paced (but not unplayable) racing action and simple, ruthless combat. Sure it's fun to hammer away at the opponent in front of you (and with full network play it's even more fun), but what really counts is what place you finish, not how many opponents you blow away. SLIPSTREAM 5000 looks like an action game winner, and not even the cheesy voice acting and campy pre-race antics can bring this one down. IBM PC CD-ROM, $59.95. Circle Reader Service #4.

GREMLIN INTERACTIVE, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, (312) 244-0040.

Burn out is a serious occupational hazard in the fast lane of SLIPSTREAM 5000.

ZIG-ZAG

QQP seems to have a knack

FULL THROTTLE

He's tough as a roadkill fillet, got more guts than a slaughterhouse flume, and a chin you could dig a ditch with. He's Ben (and he ain't gentle), the hawg-mounted anti-hero of the post-apocalyptic Interstate and the lead in **LucasArts** latest adventure game masterwork, FULL THROTTLE. Ben's been force-fed a bum rap, accused of murdering the one man in the world he respects. And he ain't going down for it, not without a fight. Gamers take control of Ben as he rides, punches, kicks and solves puzzles in an almost classical adventure game mode. Almost, because you've never played such a well-produced adventure as this. Everything in it—artwork, puzzles, music, and voice-acting—is on a level touched by few games. While the game is a bit short by most gaming yardsticks, it's as dense as re-bar concrete. And while strict adherents to the No Reflex school of adventure gaming might be unsettled to find a number of action sequences, they should set their jaw, grit their teeth, find a spine, and deal with it, cause the ride is worth it.

Players take the role of the hard-riding, hard-drinking Ben in LucasArts' new action-adventure, FULL THROTTLE.

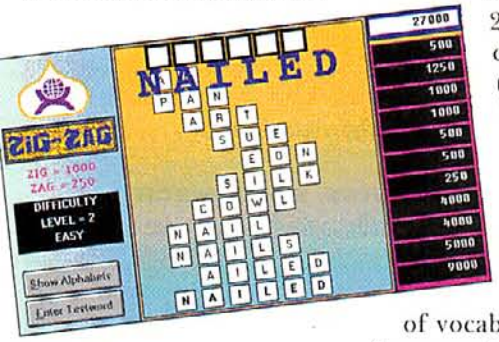
IBM CD-ROM, $69.95. Circle Reader Service #1.

LucasArts Entertainment, San Rafael, CA. (800) STARWARS

PLAYING

of putting new spins on classic games. At its best, ZIG-ZAG is a game comparable to any puzzle this side of the *New York Times* crossword. In this anacrostic style word game the object is to deduce The Secret Word by guessing smaller words (from two to six letters each). The twist is that the computer offers instant feedback, scoring 1000 points for a correct letter in the correct place within the "mystery word" (a "zig") and 250 points for a correct letter alone (a "zag"). The higher levels are increasingly difficult, with enough obscure terms to please even the most sesquipedalian of vocabularies. Finally, SOLITAIRE'S JOURNEY-like "quests" offer the professional puzzle-buster near-endless tours of word mazes. Mac, Windows (same CD) $49.95. Circle Reader Service #5.

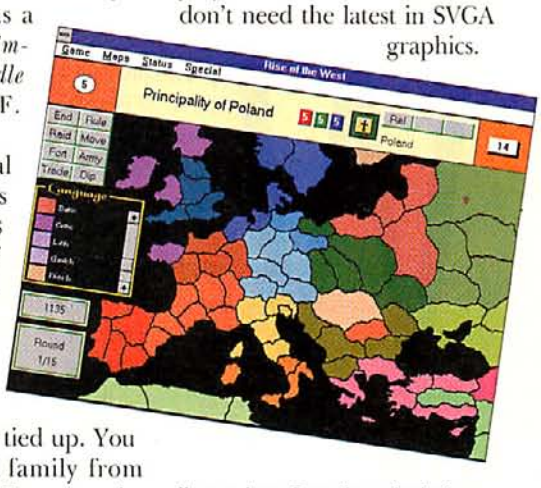
QQP, INC., FLEMINGTON, NJ 08822, (908) 788-2799



Why wait for tomorrow's crossword in the local paper when you can click on ZIGZAG at your leisure?

RISE OF THE WEST

Back in wargaming days gone by, when gamers had to suffer through thick rulebooks and cheap cardboard components, there was a game called *Empires of the Middle Ages*. James F. Dunnigan's unique medieval romp now comes to WINDOWS courtesy of **RAW Entertainment**, retaining its charm and with its rules loopholes neatly tied up. You portray a royal family from one of the great European dynasties of 600-1500 AD, playing "cards" to advance the social state of your empire, raise armies, and conquer your enemies. The formulae used to resolve your actions are handled by the computer, making for much quicker play than in the boardgame. Minor empires, diplomatic coups, assassinations and a myriad of random events make for good solitaire or multi-player e-mail play—at least for those who don't need the latest in SVGA graphics.



You can be as Byzantine or barbaric as you like in RISE OF THE WEST; just make sure that your royal family doesn't end up heirless.

WINDOWS, $34.95 plus shipping & handling. Circle Reader Service #6.

RAW ENTERTAINMENT, HOUSTON, TX 77058, (713) 286-2386

JOHNNY MNEMONIC

We've never seen a game that looks as much like a good movie as JOHNNY MNEMONIC. Unfortunately, when measured as a game, it doesn't hold up as well. Based on William Gibson's short story of the same name, **Sony Imagesoft's** JOHNNY MNEMONIC places you in the role of a cyberpunk data courier with 320 gigabytes of smuggled data overloading an implant in his head. You've got 12 hours to build a "data rig," jack into cyberspace and find the codes necessary to download the data or it's cranial meltdown time. Enhancing the appearance of an "interactive movie" is the game's minimal interface. As the storyline (and video footage) unfolds, there are opportunities (indicated by the screen's shift to letterbox format) to interact via a few simple key strokes. The fighting sequences, against bad guys like Kurt Rambis, are the most interactive and exciting parts of the game. We became immersed in the hip, subversive near-future setting that captures the essence of Gibson's characters and the ambience of his world, but we were disappointed by the presence of a maze in cyberspace which serves little purpose than to extend gameplay. IBM CD-ROM, $69.95. Circle Reader Service #2.

JOHNNY MNEMONIC faces a bubbling brain if he can't overcome several cyberpunks and dump his data.

Sony Imagesoft, Santa Monica, CA. (800) 922-SONY

Clan Destiny

Activision's MechWarrior 2 Is A 31st Century Slagfest

by Johnny L. Wilson

When **Dynamix** was developing the first MechWarrior computer game for **Activision**, I didn't know much about the *BattleTech* universe. I knew that there was a boardgame. I knew that there were miniatures to use with the game. I knew that there were novels that took place in the *BattleTech* universe. And, I knew that **Virtual Worlds Entertainment** was about to open the first BattleTech Center, a cockpit-oriented multi-player gaming experience. I knew that the fans I had watched at gaming conventions were passionate about the universe, but I didn't know that I would personally get hooked.

Long before I finished the sneak preview on that first MechWarrior (CGW #66, p. 22), I was hooked. I couldn't understand it. I had never been much of a fan of real-time, first-person gaming experiences and, at first glance, this game seemed like a computerization of the Rock-'Em Sock-'Em Robots of my younger brothers' generation. Then, I read Michael A. Stackpole's Warrior: En Garde series. Suddenly, I understood. These weren't giant robots. These were giant robotic extensions of the warrior mystique. The 'mech pilots were analogs for knights in shining armor; their 'mechs were suits of armor that had evolved into machines of destruction. Even the feudal politics which undergirded the universe gave chivalric overtones to the entire concept.

The 'mech pilots were a nobility, saddled with the *noblesse oblige* of defending their House (a monarchy within a balkanized group of monarchies). They fought small tactical battles, battles where the heroic acts of single individuals could turn the tide. Simply put, much of the appeal of MechWarrior is that you play the role of an elite warrior who can turn the tide with bold, successful actions.

BRED FOR WAR

MechWarrior 2 has not strayed from this basic appeal, this emphasis on the heroic individual. Indeed, by placing the gamer in the role of a clan member, the game universe expects brilliant success from the gamer because he or she (to the clans, gender makes no difference) is *Bred For War* (the title of Stackpole's latest book and an apt description of the clan ethic). The clans firmly believe that being a warrior is the highest calling. So, all advancement within the clans and the clan's system of justice depend upon individual rites of combat known as trials. You move from light mechs to medium to heavy to "star" commander (small unit command), if all goes well.

So, where the original MechWarrior allowed you to assume the role of a mercenary during the battles for the stabilization of the Inner Sphere (The Fourth Succession War—AD 3028-3030—House Steiner and House Davion versus the Capellan Confederation), MechWarrior 2 moves the story along and allows you to advance within either the Jade Falcons or the Wolf Clan (Post-Tukayyid Line—AD 3052—Internecine Clan Warfare). The Falcons want to continue their Pre-Tukayyid Line invasion in order to conquer the Inner Sphere, while the Wolf Clan wishes to align themselves with the monarchies of the Inner Sphere.

In order to move up through the clan, you can fight with approximately 15 different clan mechs, as well as some possible Inner Sphere (traditional) mechs and Elementals (another group of alien warriors which, like the Clans, appeared at a later point in the history of the *BattleTech* universe). If you don't like those mechs, the game provides a mech laboratory where you can reconfigure some of your mechs by allocating armor, swapping out engines, weapons, and ammo, and adding/subtracting heat sinks.

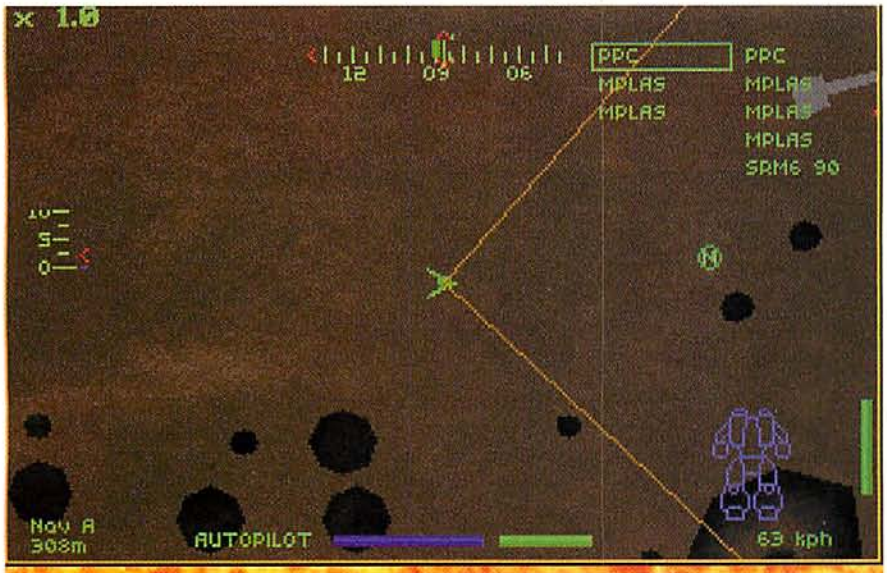
As in the game's fiction, you will have to face trials by combat. Such one-on-one battles, combined with training missions, will swell the number of missions in the game to approximately 40.

SUNRISE, SOME MECH

Naturally, in the five years since Activision released the original MechWarrior, more than the fictional history behind the game has changed. The mechs are not only 3-D, like the polygon-filled mechs of MechWarrior, but the machines in MechWarrior 2 are texture-mapped with enough detail to let you see clan insignia on the cockpit, missile tips peering out of opposing rocket launchers like hungry eels, and degrees of charring on the opposing mechs as you pulverize them toward polygon purgatory.

The 3-D mechs also enable you to fight from different perspectives. MechWarrior 2 features the standard first-person cockpit view, but offers a 3-D virtual

JADED IMAGE A Jade Falcon pilot readies a medium plasma burst against a close-range Wolf Clan's rocket launcher.



RAMBLIN' MECH FROM LUNAR TECH A mechwarrior is viewed moving toward a navigational point in this top-down 2-D map view of a lunar-like planet.

cockpit complete with dynamic light. The lighting of your cockpit changes as you move, and there is even a dynamic color palette to reflect the sun's changing position as the battles rage and time moves on. Not only does MechWarrior 2 allow you to fight from the traditional view, however, but it allows you to switch to an oblique outside perspective and fight your mech "remotely." This doesn't help your suspended disbelief, but it lets you catch some of the rich graphics from a more cinematic perspective. In addition, MW2 gives you small windows to represent a rear camera view, a top-down camera view, and a weapons camera view.

Also, since you will eventually be commanding other mech warriors, you will need something of a tactical perspective. The first MechWarrior gave you a crude overhead map with your team members and enemies marked by colored letters. In MechWarrior 2, you can jump to a similar overhead map view on the fly and have full zoom capability in order to keep tabs of the "points" in your "star" (your subordinates).

The special effects are light years beyond the primary red polygon blasts of the original, as well. Now, there are blue blasts for PPC hits, fiery bursts of destruction when missiles tag the enemy, and fast pinpricks of light that lance out from your mech when you fire lasers. Add to the visual effects the sound design provided by **Sound Deluxe** media labs (the shop who did sound effects for the movies, *True Lies* and *Cliffhanger*) and you gain significantly more satisfaction from the combat than in previous mech games.

The use of digitized voice is particularly effective within the game context, as well. On training missions (whether learning to use the navigational system and weapons system or how to pilot through a slalom course), your DI berates you with epithets like "free birth" (a tremendous insult to warriors cloned by an intergalactic eugenics program to insure superiority) and talks you through the exercise with a patronizing hostility. I don't recall any interactive tutorial quite like it and it's *very* effective. Also, the computer voices (both male and female) are perfect for setting the stage and establishing a mood for each mission as they offer status reports on planetary conditions and weapons status prior to actual combat.

Finally, there is a greater variety of missions and combat environments than were available in the first MechWarrior. There are the requisite ice worlds (but now, they sometimes feature a convincing and effective fog) and desert worlds, but the combat situations in MW2 also feature dark urban environments with high-rise buildings and dark streets and alleys to navigate, as well as worlds with ruins, canyons, mesas, volcanic craters, lunar craters, and sand dunes. There are also a number of smart objects within the terrain, such as pop-up turrets which start firing as you approach, that add to the variety of the game worlds. MW2's missions also vary from the traditional rescue, search and destroy, and patrol assignments of the earlier game to escort missions, insurgent pacification (zone securing) missions, and trials (one-on-one duels which take place in totally enclosed domed obstacle courses) that have an entirely different dynamic than those all-out combat scenarios of the past. This is especially so when you encounter mechs of other clans and neutral vehicles during the missions. Fortunately, even the mission objectives do not all look the same as did the bases and ammo dumps of its predecessor.

MECH MY DAY

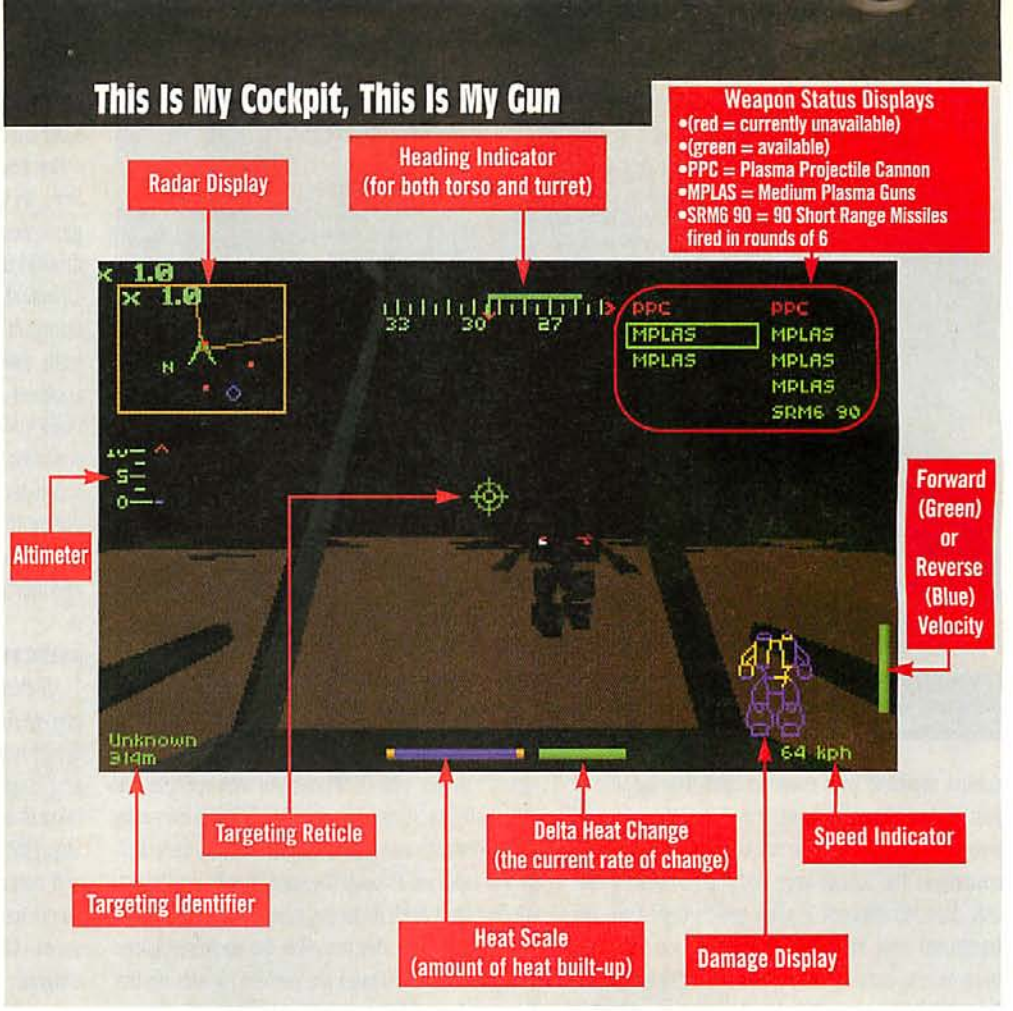
Of course, the real point of any game is its game play. MechWarrior 2 appears to be strong in the game department. You earn your way upward through ranks and mech classifications and this provides something of a role-playing shell. Each mech has different strengths and weaknesses due to speed, weaponry and armor. So, you have to learn how to exploit the former for yourself and the latter against your enemies. This will require dodging

through various terrain types, learning how to ambush your enemies when you're outnumbered, selecting the right weapon for the job, and developing your skills in small unit tactics.

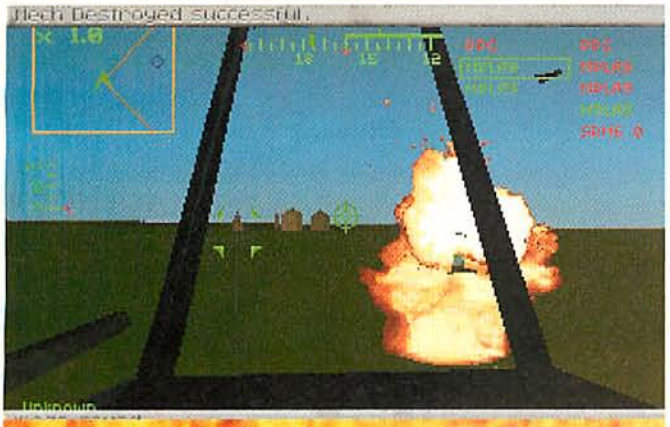
Most mechwarriors will play MW2 from the first-person cockpit view, using the keyboard to pilot the mech itself and the mouse to direct the turret and aim the reticle. However, the game also supports Thrustmaster and CH Flightstick joysticks. Either way, it is much more efficient than the pure keyboard layout of the first game. Either way, you will also be able to do something with nearly every key on the keyboard. There are lots of systems and lots of options within the game.

Perhaps one of the most important options is the ability to command the other points of your star. You were limited in your ability to command the non-player mechwarriors in the original game, but now you can tell them to: 1) attack your target; 2) disengage your target; 3) join up in formation; 4) patrol around your target; or 5) flee the area in full-scale retreat. This makes the group missions much more enjoyable.

This Is My Cockpit, This Is My Gun



After playing an early version of the game, I found two aspects of the original game missing, features which I considered worthwhile and which may disappoint fans of MULTI-PLAYER BATTLETECH on **GEnie**. In the earlier game and in the on-line game, it was possible to aim for a leg of an opposing mech and concentrate fire upon that leg. Once you caused that leg to crumble, you had virtually neutralized that enemy and could move along. I haven't been able to duplicate that in the new game, but have gotten extra satisfaction at being able to concentrate on the business end of the mech and blow away the weapon arms of the enemy. Also, I liked the fact that there was an explicit cost to using ordnance in the earlier games. If you expended an entire rack of missiles, you had to replace them with your funds. This doesn't happen in MW2, but the designers say that your honor/prestige will suffer if you get a reputation for using too much ammo. If so, it needs to be made clear to the player and I don't see that yet.



MECH WOLF BURGER A Falcon pilot toasts his Wolf Clan opponent with a 31st century Molotov cocktail of short range missiles and PPC fire.

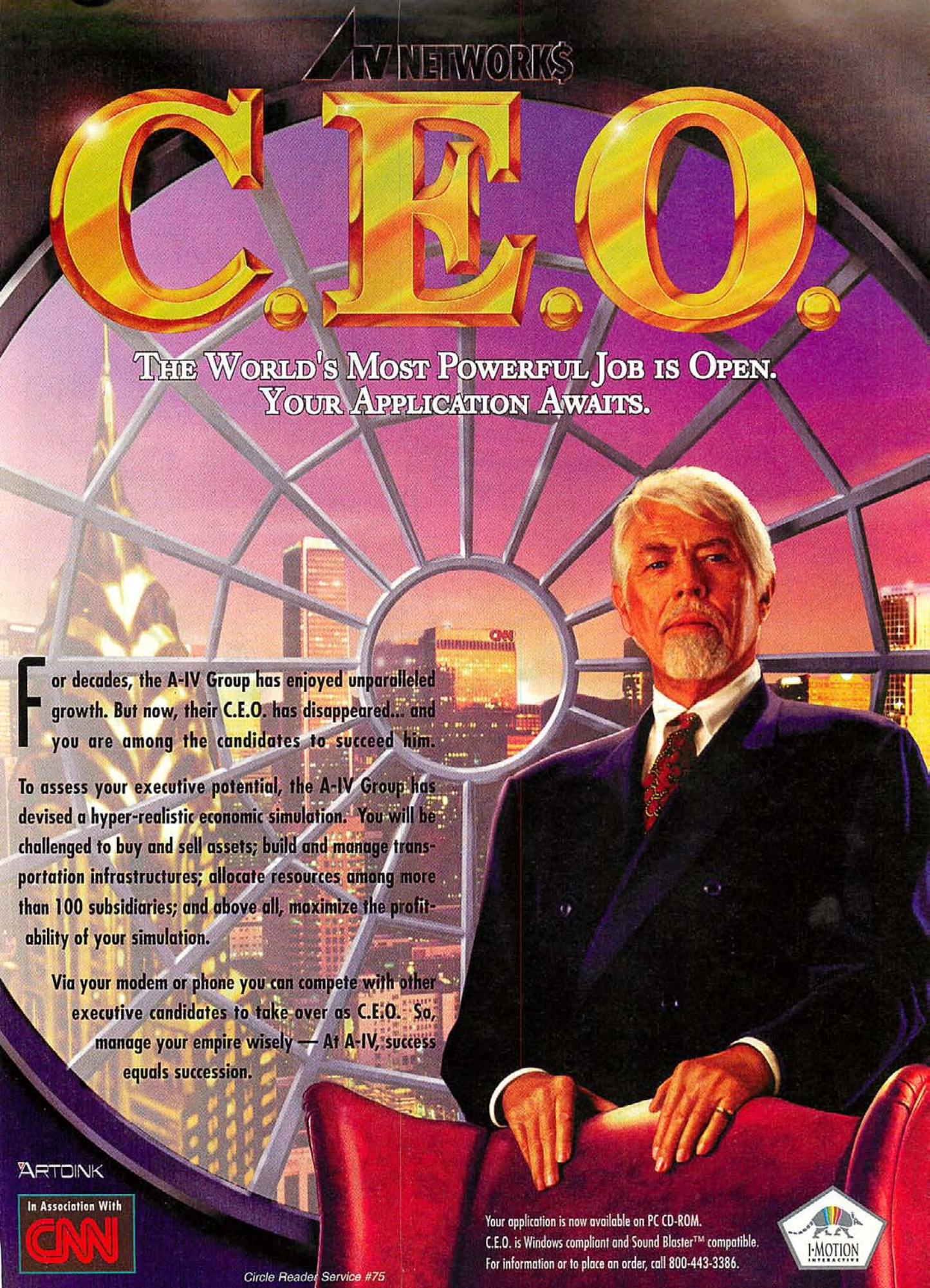
My early experience with MW2 also convinced me that the enemies are going to be tougher in this game. They are fast. They know how to take evasive action. They don't get stuck up against walls or terrain like they did in the first game. They have excellent aim and, usually, superior numbers. You'll need to be able to use *all* your tactical resources to be successful in moving up the clan chain of command.

About the only thing MW2 is missing for the sibkoborn (you know who you are) is the clan tradition of bidding prior to combat. For those unfamiliar with the *BattleTech* novels, one measure of both bravado and courage is to bid away air support or part of your troops to show that you don't need all of your resources in order to win. Some type of bidding sequence would have added a lot to the game's atmosphere. Also, at press time, it is as yet unclear whether you will be able to win your blood name within the game's context or not.

Finally, we can't help but be disappointed that the net version of MW2 will not ship with the original product. The net version will ship later as a package for up to eight players (assuming each has their own copy of the MW2), but the shipping version will only have a demo of the net version. Two years ago, the plan was for the both versions to be in the same package. Now, gamers may merely be thankful that MW2 is going to ship at all after encountering so many technical difficulties in the past.

WOLF AT THE DOOR

Yet, the big question many would-be mechwarriors are asking is, "Was it worth the wait?" For those in doubt, I have to say, "Yes!" In fact, it is so worth the wait that I wish Activision would use this technology to rework the first game, even if it took them another two years.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by Martin E. Cirulis

While the real world seems to be turning its back on the stars and concentrating instead on profit margins and nationalism, our world of entertainment software is thankfully embracing deep space for all it's worth these days. The Science Fiction realm of spaceships and starfighters has always been popular fodder for games, but only recently has the game industry started to churn out in-the-cockpit space combat games *en masse*, with the intention of challenging the reign of The Big Two: **Origin**'s WING COMMANDER series and the *Star Wars* series (X-WING and TIE FIGHTER) from **LucasArts**. And rest assured, these two space-simulation giants, not content to rest on their laurels, continue to push the boundaries of Man and Machine. But new contenders are arriving almost every month, each looking to carve out a niche of their own.

One of the nice things about the resurgence of this genre is the variety of gaming experiences available to the player, especially those new to the scene. If you've ever been intrigued by the glitz and glory of flying and fighting in the depths of space, now is the perfect time to cruise the stars. And while sophisticated games like TIE FIGHTER or WING COMMANDER 3 may intimidate the novice crowd, there are new products out there that provide varying levels of detail and immersion. Starstruck gamers of any experience level can find a product to suit them.

"YOUR PRIMER, MR. SKYWALKER"

As with most discussions, it's best to start with the basics. If you have no combat experience at all then it might be a good idea to start off with a game that offers some of the feel of space combat without an encumbrance of details. Games at this level closely resemble straight arcade games in both their ease of play and graphic punch, but even here the major difference between space and flight sims becomes apparent—most of these games have some sort of plot line. While historical flight sims can depend on common knowledge as a backdrop to set their missions against (I hope the educational system is still pointing out little things like WW II), space combat sims usually create some sort of storyline in order to keep the player coming back for more after each mission. At this level of simulation detail, the storylines involved are more or less eye-candy, but they also serve as a clue that bigger and better things await those who graduate from elementary space school.

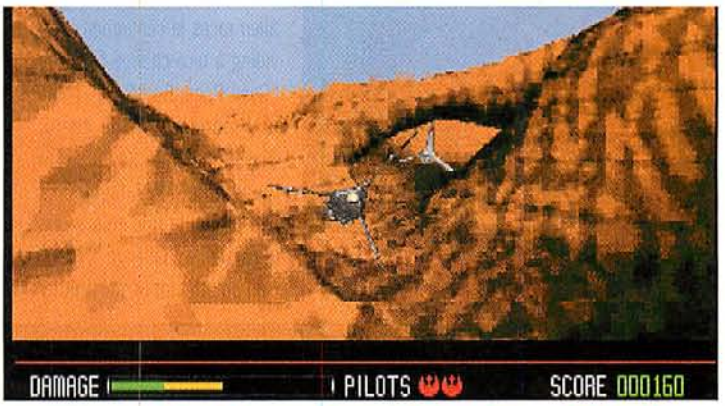
Probably the most popular (and possibly the most bundled CD-ROM in existence) intro-level sim these days is REBEL ASSAULT, from the Jedi Knights at **LucasArts**. With an eye towards the novice gamer, REBEL ASSAULT takes the player through training missions, the battles for Hoth, and finally into the Death Star itself in a series of arcade-style flying sequences. While the portions of the game that take the top-down, slide-and-shoot view of things aren't very helpful, there is still plenty of cockpit for those looking to make a career out of this sort of thing. Though you never really have true 3-D freedom (you're more or less flying in a constrained path), novices will be able to get the hang of cockpit perspective and the whole aiming on the fly concept that is so valuable in the more serious sims.

A step up from REBEL ASSAULT, at least as far as actual control of the ship is concerned, are a couple of games that make fine trainers not because they were specifically designed for that purpose, but because they missed their intended mark as serious space sims so badly. Sim pilots of even moderate experience should avoid these titles, but newbies, especially youngsters, might want to give them a whirl. A good place to continue our training is in the universe of RETRIBUTION, a title imported from Europe by **Gremlin Interactive**. Here, players take on the role of a brave pilot who must, with the help of a single human-controlled space-station, defend and alert humanity against the predations of a traitorous alien race intent upon serving man—for dinner. The player proceeds to execute a series of missions against the insidious Krell in two different vehicles: a starfighter and a ground-based All-Terrain-Vehicle. After each combat run, you return to base for debriefing and further plot developments. Then you're sent out again. Though you aren't quite flying—fighters can only fly so high above the surface and cannot roll over or loop—you can at least practice some of the basics, like trying to avoid the ground while making things go boom.

For those who are ready to slip into full three-dimensional space-flight, but still want an arcade-like experience, there is INFERNO by **Ocean**. Overshadowed by its own hype and crippled by uninspired design, this game might serve adequately as a trainer, especially if you can find it in the bargain-bin, as it contains what has become standard in the space-sim world: full 3-D situational awareness, linked missions, and eye-candy in-between.

Finally, there is a little product, all but gone from the shelves but well worth searching for, called WING COMMANDER: ACADEMY. Of all these Novice-Class games, ACADEMY is the only one truly intended to be a primer. Using WING COMMANDER II-era technology and a scenario generator, this game gives you all the bells and whistles of a full-powered sim in an environment where things can be tailor-made as easy or hard as you want. While its primary purpose is to draw you in and train you up to speed in the **Origin Systems** side of The Big Two universe, it will also teach you all the SF combat skills you could want except ground attack. If you want an introduction to the genre, this is about the best place to start. Perhaps Origin will re-issue it, bundled on some future space-sim CD-ROM.

Of course, once you've played one of these games, or any standard flight-sim for that matter, you'll probably want to see something a little more "realistic," or at least a little deadlier.



WOMP RAT ALLEY Although the gameplay is pretty limited in LucasArts' REBEL ASSAULT, the production values are (or *were*) high. See the box on page 38 for info on the sequel.

PAY BACK TIME Players battle man-eating aliens by land and by air in Gremlin Interactive's RETRIBUTION.

HIGH SCHOOL CONFIDENTIAL

These mid-level games for the most part are all strong, quality simulators and pretty much equal the initial accomplishments of The Big Two. While sometimes lagging a little in terms of gameplay, graphics or story, most have something to offer to even the experienced sim-pilot. They certainly demonstrate what this genre is really capable of. The other advantage to two of the three games at this level is that their computing-power requirements are a little more down-to-earth, so gamers away from the upgrade curve can still get a good game for their buck.

Take 2's STAR CRUSADER is a nice piece of work from a company with little sim experience. The graphics are well done, using all the tricks of the trade to make VGA all that it can be, although sometimes their concept of color and shape is a bit alien. The plot is solid and more involved than your average sim, allowing players to explore questions of ethics and loyalty as well as who has the best fighters. Another nice touch in CRUSADER is that there are a half-dozen odd alien races in contention, providing a nice change from the "Good-Race, Bad-Race" political standard of the genre. Players not yet caught up in the world of SVGA flight sims will probably find this game an enjoyable challenge.

In an attempt to add a little strategy to the endless action, Origin tried to broaden the scope of their Universe by offering up the graphically-stunning WING COMMANDER: ARMADA. Unfortunately, they sacrificed brains for looks. While the idea was more than worth the effort—they tried to create a simple SPACEWARD HO! kind of spaceploitation game wherein combats are resolved by the player in the cockpit instead of the computer—the execution left something to be desired.

The speed and beauty of the combat graphics in ARMADA were a real breakthrough. Players could actu-

WING COMMANDER TOO Take 2 Software enhanced the concepts of branching stories and wingman management in STAR CRUSADER.

ADMIRAL OF THE FLEET WING COMMANDER: ARMADA brought strategic considerations to the space combat table.

Return Of The Rebel

LucasArts Dusts Off Darth's Helmet For REBEL ASSAULT II

Few games have been as eagerly anticipated and as terribly disappointing as **LucasArts'** REBEL ASSAULT. Maybe it's not fair to expect that *anything* on a computer could compare with that glorious experience of seeing *Star Wars* in the theater. But, dammit, why is the flight path restricted, and why can't you save the game when you want? Despite these problems, the lure of the *Star Wars* Force simply proved too great, and REBEL ASSAULT sold over a million copies worldwide, making it one of the highest selling (and most "bundled") computer games of all time.

The lure of The Force also pulls at its creators, albeit for different reasons. So when the creators conspire to develop a sequel, their efforts are a lot like the Empire's—they get bigger and badder with each onslaught. Which is why it's possible that LucasArts' upcoming REBEL ASSAULT II may once again surprise gamers, this time by exceeding expectations.

REBEL ASSAULT II (tentative title) will be a graphical leap over the original. It will feature full-motion video segments of real-looking *Star Wars* characters blended seamlessly into high-resolution 3D rendered sets. That means that there will be scenes in the game that look something like the movie: you'll see a Rebel pilot at the controls of his fighter bouncing in the cockpit just before the perspective changes so that you are flying the ship. Or you'll shoot at real Storm Troopers with blaster weapons like every kid in America dreamed of nearly 20 years ago. Other levels let players fly speeder bikes or take the controls of the Millenium Falcon for that long-awaited date with destiny when your senses and those of Han Solo finally converge.

ALL CHOKED UP Darth Vader puts the telekinetic squeeze on an Imperial lackey in this scene from REBEL ASSAULT II. This is the first original *Star Wars* footage George Lucas has allowed to be shot outside of a *Star Wars* film.

There will be a total of 15 different levels in the game, all cinematically designed, richly detailed, and actually SAVABLE after each one. Unfortunately, the flight paths and range of motion will still be limited, but from what we've seen of the game, it should be engrossing and impressive nonetheless. And if that isn't enough to lure you to the dark side, maybe this guy will: Darth Vader, in all his dark-helmeted glory, cuts a menacing swath through the game. He'll even choke an admiral with the famous pincer grip if you succeed in disabling his Star Destroyer. It's enough to make even a skeptic of the Alliance think about signing up this winter for a tour of duty.

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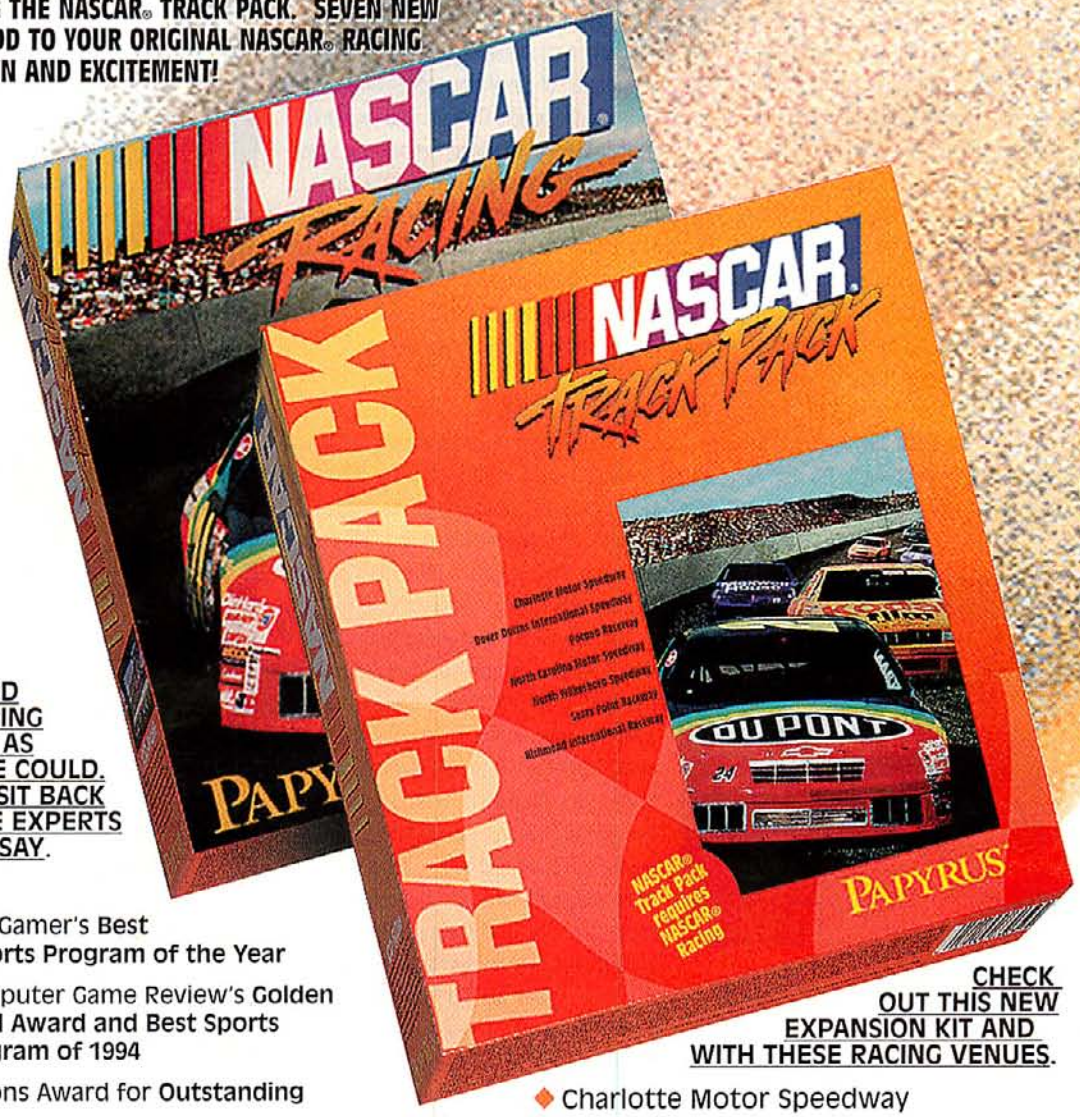

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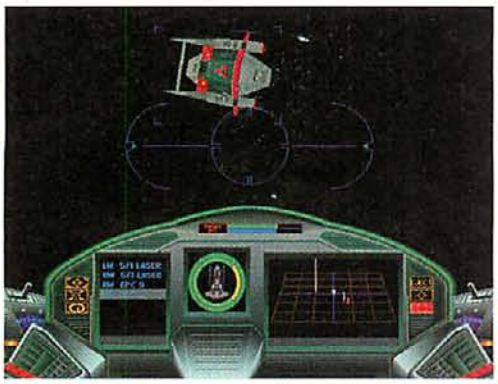
ally see the shields light up on enemy fighters as their shots hit home. In some ways they are still superior to the VGA mode of any sim around, WING COMMANDER 3 included. Added to this were the wonders of networking, which made for the first multi-player space-sim to grace our screens. But while everything looked great on paper and on the screen, the initial product offered only two-player support. And even more disappointing was the lobotomy given the artificial opponents and flight-models, a serious departure from the usually high Origin standard. This oversight basically ruined this game's promise. Multiplayer play does shine however, and remains the only way available to resolve those "Who's the best star-pilot?" arguments. In other words, the search for the space-sim equivalent to network FALCON 3.0 goes on. To their credit, though, Origin did release a patch allowing up to six players to join an arena-style dog-fight. It's nice to see this kind of support from a big company these days.



GREAT CAESAR'S GHOST SSI's RENEGADE pits the player against a revived Roman Empire in a Super VGA forum.

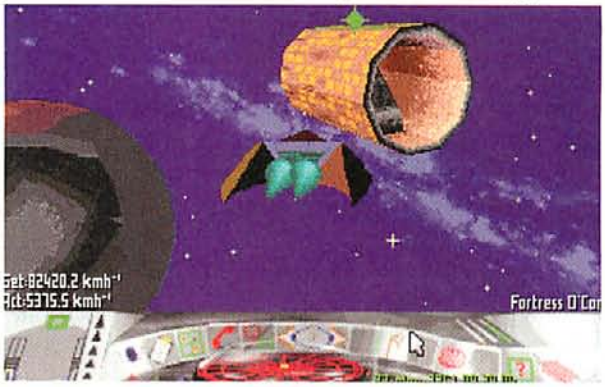
The last of the contenders is also the newest on the shelves at the time of this writing. RENEGADE: BATTLE FOR JACOB'S STAR is a simulation by **SSI** drawn from **FASA**'s popular *Renegade Legion* series of boardgames. The player is suddenly thrown into command of a Renegade squadron and charged with defending a backwater system against a Blitzkrieg invasion by the seemingly endless forces of an evil Neo-Roman Empire. The player must not only be a hot pilot, but must also be able to wisely allocate personnel and machinery in order to successfully complete missions and eventually win the game.

This SVGA space combat sim is a pleasure to look at as well as to fly in, but it's a little too Spartan at this point to seriously challenge The Big Two. Oh, the elements are all here: extensive background, great graphics, smooth flight models and an accent on squadron tactics. But everything lacks that extra bit of detail required to immerse the gamer fully into the action. Cockpits and instrumentation are too sparse to be useful, the plot is a shade too thin to keep things interesting, and the game is just a little too short for comfort. While these could all be growing pains of a series with real potential, SSI has yet to publicly commit to a full series of games, and without a strong sequel RENEGADE will remain a mid-level game more suitable to newcomers.

TRADE SCHOOL

"Sure," you say, "being a hero is great, but it doesn't get the bills paid. I want to get some job skills here." Well, there's even a branch of the space-sim universe dedicated to a more bread-and-butter perspective. There's even a little room in this class of sims for actual reality.

The idea of the lone merchant and his rust-bucket Starship has been a staple of SF since the 1930's; thankfully this concept hasn't been overlooked in the modern age of space-sims. One of the first to enter the vast reaches of the mercantile universe was ELITE, where you had literally hundreds of worlds to venture, buying cargo low and selling it high, all the while dodging pirates and the police, if you chose to run some of the more illicit goods. While the action of this combat-sim was basically non-existent, you still flew from a cockpit view and combat, when it did come, was something you took a little more personally since every hit you took meant money out of your virtual wallet. And if you were a real pilot-type you could sweat out manual space station docking yourself.



NOT THE FIRST OR LAST From the name, you'd never know it, but GameTek's FIRST ENCOUNTERS is actually the next installment of ELITE.

The Interviews with The Stars

Conversations with a Kitty Killer

An interview with WING COMMANDER designer, Chris Roberts

CGW: So Chris, tell me what do you think of the other sims out there?

Chris Roberts: Well, X-WING and TIE FIGHTER are fun but, to be honest, we've been playing DESCENT a lot around here lately. It's great but I don't know if it counts as a space-sim. <laughter>

CGW: The wingmen in your games have always been strong, sometimes stealing a kill from under your guns. Was this a conscious choice or more of a side-effect of the character-driven plots you use?

CR: Yes, strong wingmen were a very conscious choice for me because of the core approach we took that you were not alone and there were always going to be others flying with you, with all the pros and cons involved with that. WING COMMANDER 4 will have even more detailed personalities and flight characteristics. The player will be capable of giving more complex commands to wingmen such as ordering them to go in and complete the primary mission while the player covers them.

CGW: What direction do you see space-sim engines taking over the next couple of years?

CR: Well, I think everything is equaling out

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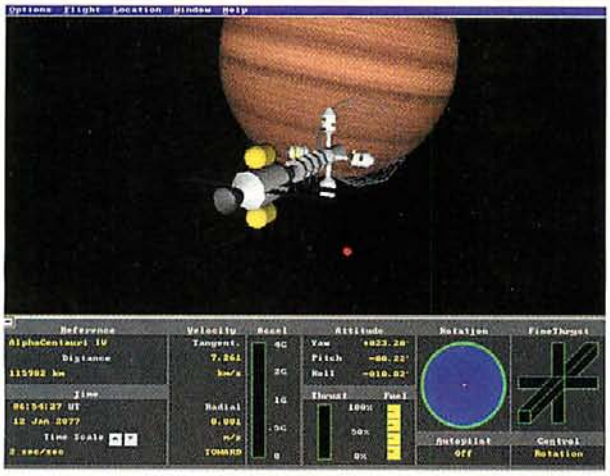
While ELITE had no real end, there were a series of missions embedded in the free form of the game. Through them some semblance of a plot developed, albeit not much of one. The most recent incarnation of this series is called FIRST ENCOUNTERS and will be marketed by **GameTek**. It boasts better graphics, more worlds and nigh-infinite replayability. Though the word appears nowhere in the title, this is an ELITE game. Trust me.



MICROSOFT IS *EVERYWHERE* SPACE SIMULATOR is more an educational tool than a game, as it lets you explore the farthest reaches of the Milky Way.

Origin, in an effort to expand their WING COMMANDER universe (and, incidentally, to have a game in every category of this article) took the ELITE concept and narrowed the focus. In PRIVATEER, you are still a lone captain with a little freighter trying to make a living, but here there is a tighter plot with fewer worlds to visit. While you're still free to explore at will and make a profit whenever you see fit, events in the WC universe eventually draw you into the danger-zone where Humans, Kilrathi and crazed cultists vie for power. While the flight model is much simpler than in the ELITE series—no tough docking maneuvers here—the action is definitely hotter, and most captains will find themselves struggling to survive, with the majority of profits being reinvested into better weapons or stronger ships. Origin published an add-on module called RIGHTEOUS FIRE which fleshed out the game even more. They also released a speech pack for PRIVATEER, and all three products can now be found bundled together on a discount CD-ROM being published by **Electronic Arts**. A great deal for all but the most jaded.

The third and most practical of the "working" space sims is from the hallowed halls of **Microsoft** and is called, appropriately enough, MICROSOFT SPACE SIMULATOR. This game is different from most of the fare we are covering here in that there is no plot or even combat in this game. The SPACE SIMULATOR is all about real physics and real spaceflight. Not since **Micro-Prose**'s debacle with MANTIS: EXPERIMENTAL FIGHTER has anyone attempted to make a realistic spacecraft sim. Microsoft pulled it off fairly well, and although it is not the most exciting sim ever made, it is educational and has just the right mix of the historical and fanciful. Players can explore a rich galaxy in ships

SPACE SWABBIE Origin's PRIVATEER cut players loose to live the life of a money-grubbing rogue in the WING COMMANDER universe.

as far as the technology goes; we've hit a plateau of sorts. Instead of driving for better looks I see a turn towards more strategy and story in space-sims.

CGW: Any plans for another multi-player product after ARMADA?

CR: No, we have no immediate plans for another network game but I see things evolving in two directions. The first is the single-person cinematic games like WC3 while the other will go towards networked strategy games where you set up situations and then invite others to come and play in your sandbox. After all, playing against other people is always fun.

CGW: Where do you see the WING COMMANDER franchise evolving over the next couple of years?

CR: Well, first of all there will be more ground interface in WING COMMANDER 4 and even more of that sort of thing in the PRIVATEER sequel. After all, just flying around in space can start to get boring after awhile. <laughter> And yes, there will be more side-products with less cinematic budgets but with at least as good simulator engines. PRIVATEER 2 will have better graphics than WC3.

CGW: Wow! Well thanks for taking the time to answer a few questions for our readers.

CR: Any time.

Tales From The Jedi

An interview with Larry Holland, the designer of X-WING and TIE FIGHTER

CGW: Assuming you have any spare time at

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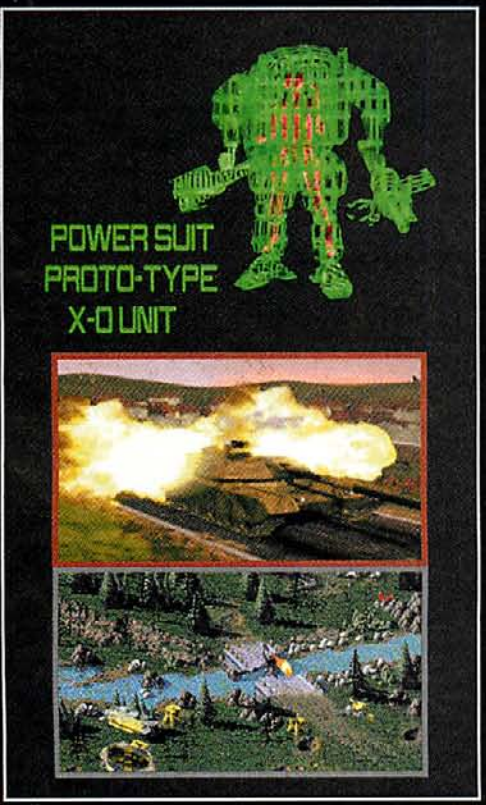

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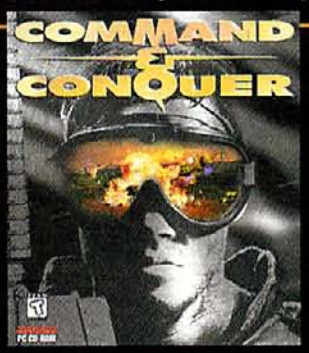

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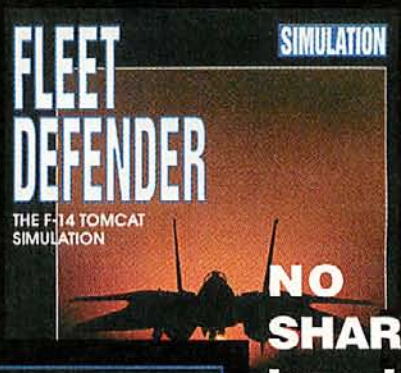

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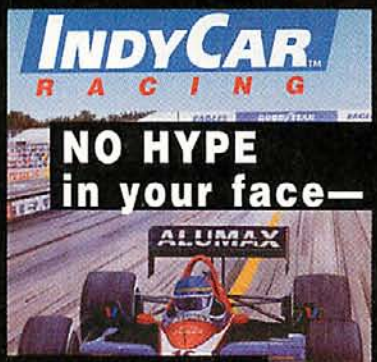

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all over there to look over the competition, what do you think of some of the other sims out there?

Larry Holland: Oh, I can't imagine who you'd be referring to! <laughter> You mean WING COMMANDER 3, etc.? Well, certainly one can't be but impressed by a number of things WC3 has done. They've taken some different directions than I have with projects but I think that is good for the field. I've also heard good things about the hi-res graphics in Renegade but haven't played it myself yet.

CGW: X-WING and TIE FIGHTER are generally regarded as having a more "realistic" flight model. What are your thoughts on that?

LH: It's interesting actually, a lot of my entry into the sim side of things was through historical sims which prepared me well for doing *Star Wars*. If you look at the movie closely the sort of spaceflight modeling they prepared for the spacecraft was actually a very WWII-ish, dogfights and cannon-fire sort of thing and actually when they were doing the research work for the original movie they spent a lot of time studying gun-camera footage from WWII. I enjoy the visceral feeling of a dogfight and that is what our flight model tries to focus on.

CGW: Speaking of WWII, in your historical sims you modeled some more complex aircraft, like the B-17 or the German medium bombers. Do you have any plans to model more complex starships in your space sims?

LH: Absolutely, as we design and plan for multi-player games, multiple position craft are a natural choice. Frankly the way I enjoy playing multi-player games is cooperatively, and a multi-position craft with, say, a pilot and a few gunners is the perfect design for future multi-player games. There's no technical reason preventing us, it's just a matter of coming up with a well-balanced design of craft. And I find balance to be a much more important factor in multi-player environments.

CGW: And that leads nicely into my next question: What are your thoughts on networkable space-sims?

LH: Absolutely exciting and absolutely part of our future though I can go into much detail about it now. Certainly one of the hot topics in our office is getting the wrinkles out of multi-

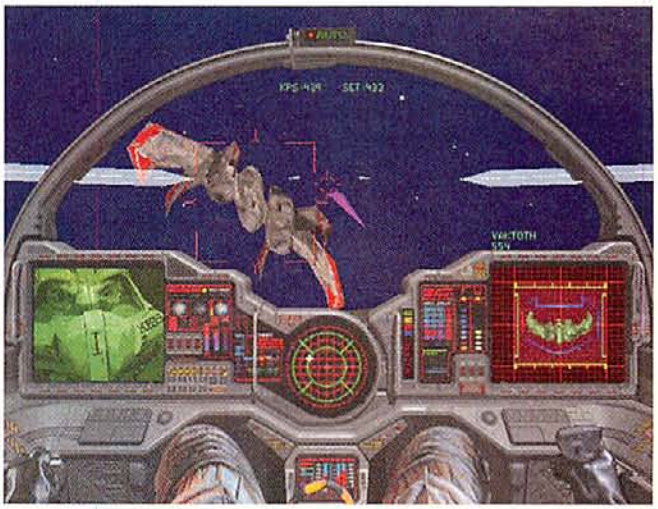
ranging from the Apollo lander to an alien scoutship, all of which are beautifully rendered and behave realistically. One can re-create the historic moon landings or fly low and slow over a near-future Mars base in an EVA transit suit. If you'd like a feel for real spaceflight, then this is probably the best sim for you.

GRADUATE STUDIES

Now we come to the cutting edge of space-sims: The Big Two. For the past three or four years the space sim genre has been dominated by two companies, LucasArts and Origin, and the visions of two men, Larry Holland and Chris Roberts. They have brought two long wars to the small screen; Rebels vs. The Empire and Humanity vs. The Kilrathi.

Origin started years ago, searching for success independent of the successful ULTIMA series. They couldn't have gone farther away if they had tried. Fantasy role play gave way to space opera of the highest order.

WING COMMANDER broke onto the computer gaming scene while I still had an AtariST, and I remember thinking that this game would be converted or I



WING COMMANDER 3-D In addition to the vaunted live-action video, WING COMMANDER 3 added a true three-dimensional combat engine to its universe.

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player TIE FIGHTER. We are pretty far along developing the technologies required for multi-player capability.

CGW: Well, just to wrap it up, Larry, can you ever see yourself doing a non-*Star Wars* space-sim?

LH: A non-*Star Wars* sim? Oh definitely. But we still have a lot of places to go with *Star Wars*.

A Long And Winding Road

A BATTLECRUISER 3000 AD update from the designer himself, Derek Smart

CGW: Well, It's been a long trip, hasn't it?

Derek Smart: In the four years I've been doing BATTLECRUISER it has grown totally out of proportion because I wanted it to be the ultimate game and it is, as far as I am concerned. Basically the main reason it has taken so long is that I have been working on it by myself with the help of a handful of people scattered across the world. The bottom line is I haven't given up on BATTLECRUISER and it's pushing a million dollars in development cost over the past four years.

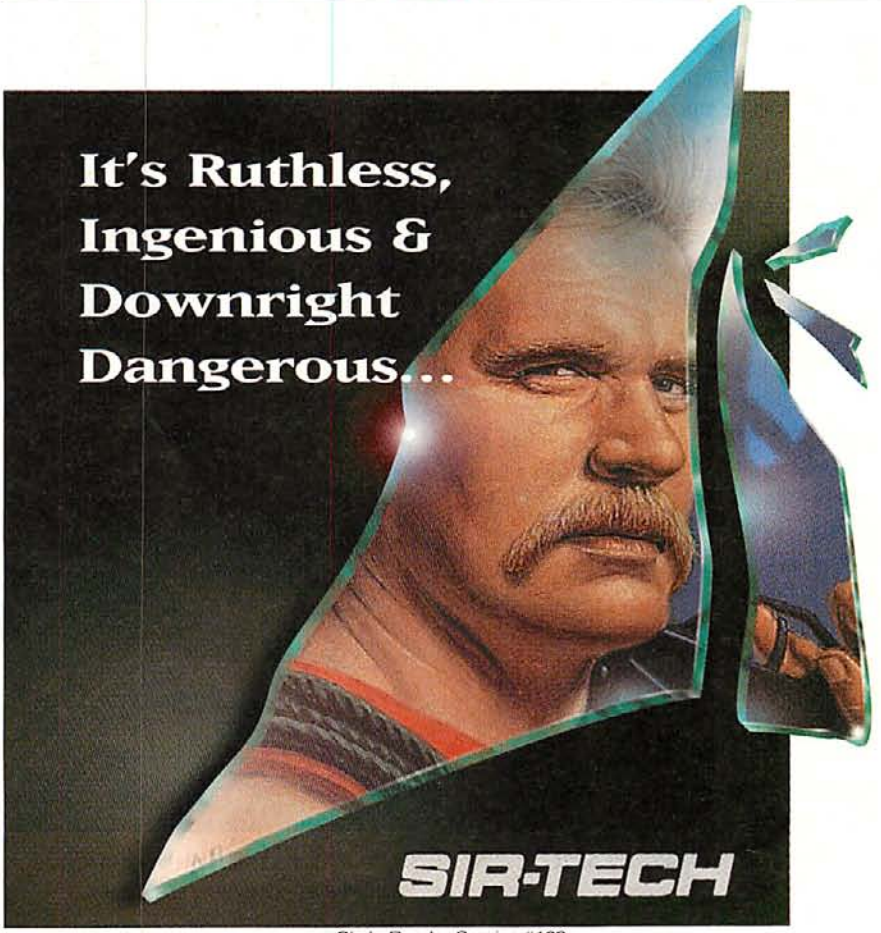
CGW: Wow. So refresh our memories. What is BATTLECRUISER?

DS: It's basically three games in one. It's a space-flight sim, a planetary flight sim and an adventure game. I've recently switched it completely to 32-bit mode and it now supports SVGA and the planetary graphic engine has been completely rewritten and will put MAGIC CARPET in the shade. There's nothing like it in the industry, pe-

would. Well, they never did put out a version of WC for the old ST, so here I am, DOS-ridden and a few thousand dollars poorer, but very content. WC was like nothing I had ever seen before. I suppose I will always have a soft spot for the series, in memory of how blown away I was by the darn thing at the time. Here was all the action of the best arcade games, looking a hundred times better, and there was an involving storyline to boot. Here was the prototype almost all space-sims would follow.

WING COMMANDER was set in a universe where humanity had explored the stars and found somebody far more vicious than themselves, the Kilrathi, a race of big cat-like creatures that made Klingons look like crossing guards. It wasn't the most original idea around—I'm sure Larry Niven rolled in his grave, and

TRANS-DIMENSIONAL THESPIAN Mark Hamill and the latest in video technology showed the gaming world how full-motion video could advance the art of storytelling in games.



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he wasn't even dead yet—but what the hey, it looked and sounded *so* good. And you weren't even alone in the fight; there were other personalities fighting alongside you with their own unique styles and attitudes. Even better, the story and missions to be flown branched along different paths depending on your success and failure, like one of those "Make Your Own Adventure" books we read when we were kids.

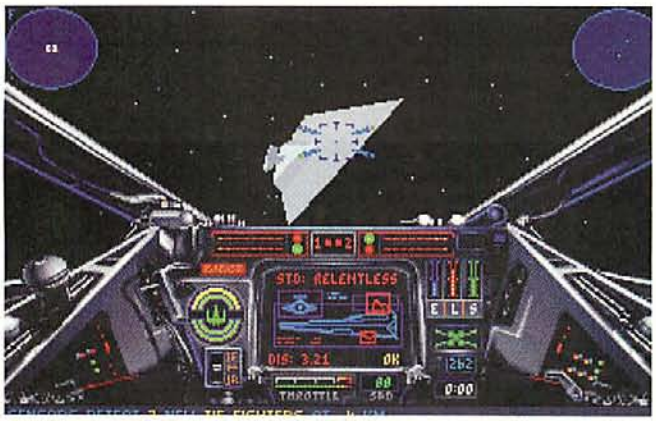
Hot on the heels of WING COMMANDER's success came a couple of mission disks, and then WING COMMANDER 2, with improved graphics and intelligence, taking the universe and turning it upside down. All the fame you had gained by defeating the kitties in the first game vanished, as a cosmic frame-job forced you to start at the bottom and re-earn the respect of your fellow pilots. As in the ULTIMA series, characters followed you from game to game and became, if not friends in a weird sort of way, at least familiar faces. Along with better programming, the SF technology created faster ships and deadlier weapons for both sides.

At about the time of WC2, Origin wisely began to flesh out their little Universe with associated WING COMMANDER games, all of which have been covered in other sections of this review. These served the purpose of establishing WC as a real franchise, as well as keeping interest up while work on the truly revolutionary WC3 was in progress, a multi-media extravaganza in every sense of the word and the most expensive computer game ever created. Built on the identical gameplay concept as the first game, WC3 used full-motion video, live actors—with the stature of Malcolm McDowell and Mark Hamill—and SVGA graphics near in quality to computer-generated SFX for TV shows.

Together, the three main games are almost identical as far as game mechanics and controls. While the first game is graphically simplistic compared to the latest offering, its flight mechanics are nearly identical, so one doesn't really get to learn much by starting at the beginning and novice gamers may find things a little fast and complicated for them. On the other hand, anybody with some flight-sim experience will have a field day, and WC3 does allow for multiple skill settings that can make the game enjoyable for any player. And just for the sake of continuity and a good story, I encourage people new to the series to start at the beginning. It's more fun to see the live actors playing roles that have become so familiar, and the first two installments of the WC series are very easy to get at a good price these days, being the second most bundled pieces of software in the CD-ROM world.

YODA IS MY CO-PILOT

Meanwhile, on the other side of the galaxy we have LucasArts and the Mother of all Space Operas, *Star Wars*. Although WING COMMANDER came first as far as sims go, it probably owes its existence to the movie that revitalized SF on the silver screen and spawned



X MARKS THE SPOT Larry Holland's WWII flight sim experience served him well when he designed X-WING, which set the "look-and-feel" standard for space combat.

riod. Take what you read in the CGW preview article last year and multiply it by four and you have the game in it's current state.

CGW: That's an impressive accomplishment.

DS: The neural net has been revamped to immense proportions. I mean the entire game lives and everything is free form. It will support campaign disks, add-on modules where you switch to a first-person perspective and walk through the BATTLECRUISER. Not only can you fly the BATTLECRUISER and four interceptors, but you can now fly the shuttle and deploy ATVs to ride along the planet surface to explore. It's a complete commander's game. It has eight different flight models built in for the different vehicles you can fly. If you went to the store and bought WING COMMANDER 3, FALCON, BREACH, EARTHSIEGE and then DARK FORCES you still would not get the equivalent of BATTLECRUISER.

CGW: Now that you mention FALCON, how much will resource management be a part of BATTLECRUISER?

DS: The flight model for BATTLECRUISER is actually built on top of the resource management system. You have access to your entire crew who are moving around the ship eating, breathing and doing things. If a crewmember gets tired they will walk to their quarters and if combat is occurring and they get injured they will end up in the medbay instead of their quarters.

CGW: Any plans for a network module?

DS: Yes. I don't have the networking built in because it is a complex issue in itself, but I do have plans to have a multi-player version available for on-line services and the network version will probably ship with the first mission disk or the boarding module. It will allow the game to be dissected into 16 different alien groups and allow players to join any group and help or hurt each other.

CGW: Well, this all sounds very ambitious, I wish you luck and know space-sim fans are rooting for you.

DS: Thanks.

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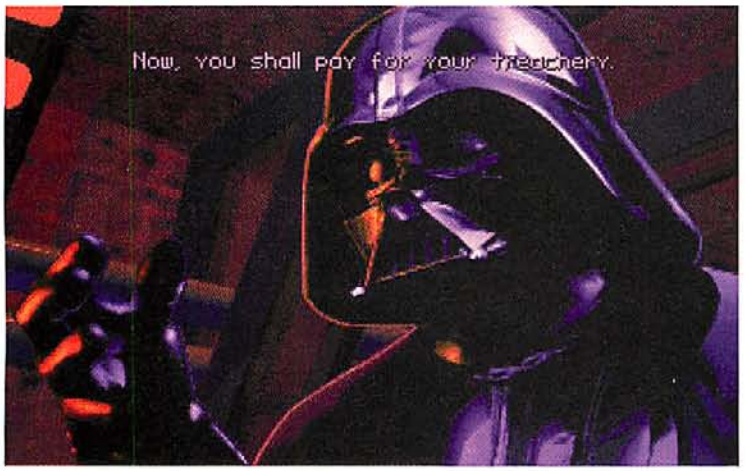
so many imitators. Larry Holland, fresh from his successful WW2 triumvirate, BATTLEHAWKS 1942, BATTLE OF BRITAIN, and SECRET WEAPONS OF THE LUFTWAFFE, took all his experience as a pioneer of the flight-sim world and applied it to the depths of space, creating the legendary X-WING. With a built-in recognition factor that made marketing executives slaver like dogs at a Pavlovian bell festival, plus a kinder, gentler learning curve and a flight model that gave a real sense of being in a fighter, X-WING was an instant hit and suddenly there were two horses in the race for our space-sim buck. Lucky for us, and the companies involved as well, most of us eagerly bought and played both.



THE TIES THAT BIND LucasArts' TIE FIGHTER added gouraud shading to the X-WING flight engine, and shady morals in a pro-Empire storyline.

X-WING was true to Larry Holland's design philosophy; it looked and sounded exactly like the "period" it was meant to emulate, it was easy to pick up but harder to master, the player was always at the center of the mission and, while the enemy pilots were competent, your own wingmen tended to be on the useless side; all the more glory for the player, I suspect. Also reflecting a more traditional flight-sim aesthetic, the campaign game had a story to it, but it was purely linear; the player either succeeded at a mission or tried, tried again. The lack of a branching story cramped a bit but allowed for many more missions to be laid out before the player. X-WING also followed in the footsteps of SECRET WEAPONS by creating add-on disks featuring other "famous" Rebel fighters, namely the A, B and Y-Wings which made for more missions and more details of the Rebel military.

While this early segment of the series was a hit, Holland didn't try playing it safe; instead, he took a walk on The Dark Side and developed TIE FIGHTER. Here was the chance to play in the real high performance machines, and move in the really scary political circles of the Empire. To his credit, Holland not only tried hard to give the game the proper "Champions of Law and Order" fascist feel for the Imperial Navy, instead of just giving you the impressions of thousands of guys shuffling around in Star Destroyers congratulating each other on how evil they are, but he also stuck to the "reality" created by The All-Powerful Lucas. Even though a designer might be tempted to make those pesky little TIE Fighters a little more durable for the sake of the player's happiness, he retained the feel of the movies, and TIE's remain the Zeroes of Space. You better know how to fly fast and hard if you want to survive a mission.

TIE FIGHTER also showed that the *Star Wars* series of sims were not only loosely following literary developments in the Lucas Universe, but that the sim line itself was going to be a dynamic entity. Many of the limitations of X-WING were addressed and improvements made, aside from the obvious ones of graphic quality and frame rate. Though the missions were still linear and failure still meant repetition, there was less of a "puzzle-solving" feel to things, and the story line became a truly interesting thing with betrayal and intrigue surrounding the players in every mission. The add-on disk, DEFENDER OF THE EMPIRE, continued to develop the twisting plot and complex missions where one must fight not only for The Imperial Navy, but also for the Emperor himself, and sometimes the two have opposing desires.

As for which of these two great Sim-lines is the best, I leave that to someone wiser or pickier than I. For some, the *Star Wars* sims are number one because they just "feel" more like a starfighter; others swear by the branching missions of the WING COMMANDER universe, and eagerly await the next generation of ships and weapons. Certainly WC has diverged into the strange world of game-movies, while *Star Wars* remains true to the spirit of the flight simulation. All I know for sure is that while The Big Two continue to try and outdo each other, the space gaming public will be the ones really coming out on top.

THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

This current wave of space-sims shows no sign of breaking yet, and there are many titles yet to come in the next year or so. For the arcade pilots out there,

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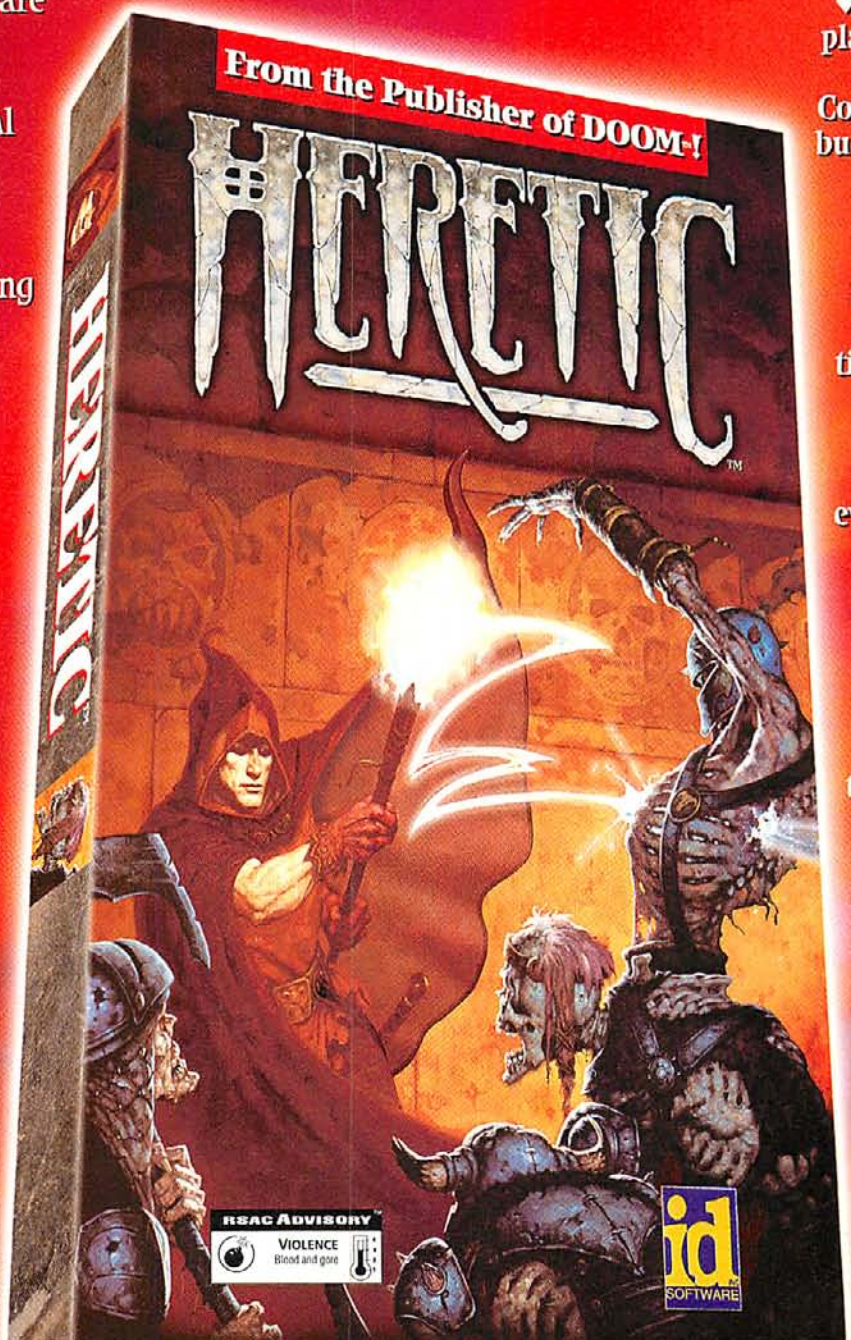

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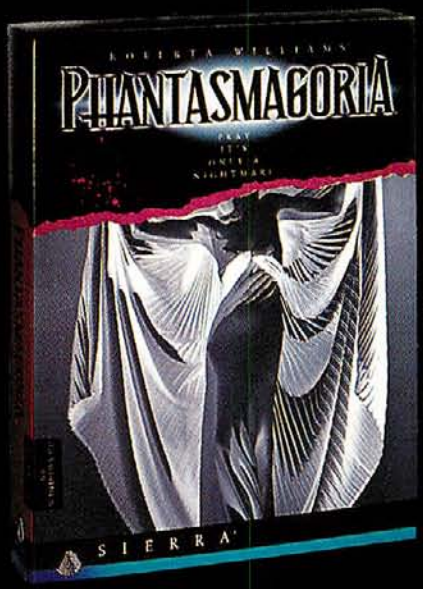

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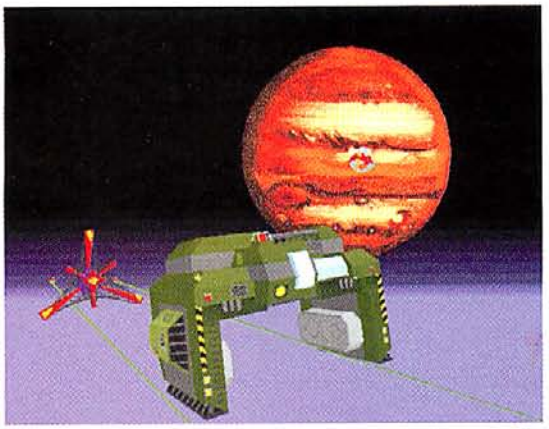
LOOK FAMILIAR? Microsoft's FURY^3 uses the same graphics engine as TERMINAL VELOCITY (previous page), but it will be WINDOWS 95 only and won't support network play.

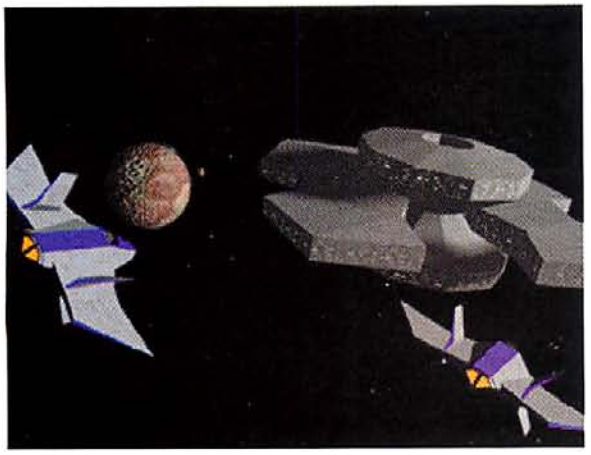
both **Microsoft** and **Apogee** are currently developing entry-level starfighter-sims, with the accent on ground attack on beautifully rendered alien worlds—a kind of DESCENT meets MAGIC CARPET. The Apogee offering, TERMINAL VELOCITY, will arrive first, and recent version look great, while Microsoft is currently calling their sim FURY^3, and it boasts very high frame rates in both WINDOWS 3.11 and '95. Both games will be offering smart enemies and dynamic worlds riddled with tunnels to find and explore, but I suspect the edge will go to whoever offers multi-player network capability first.

Interactive Magic, the new company headed by MicroProse founder "Wild Bill" Stealey, will submit an entry into the genre this Christmas. STAR RANGERS is, in Stealey's words, "an homage to STAR RAIDERS," the Granddaddy of all space combat games, originally released in the prehistoric days of the Atari 2600. Indeed, the mission structure is modeled after STAR RAIDERS, which is to say that the player will hyperspace around several sectors of space defending bases against attack. The graphics will be Super VGA, but they probably won't challenge the established competition in the genre. Still, STAR RANGER's might make for a nice bit of nostalgia, and, with its adjustable difficulty levels, should be a perfect game for newcomers to space combat and the junior star pilots in the house.



YOUR SPACE OR MINE? Players protect a human mining colony from alien invasion in Domark's upcoming ABSOLUTE ZERO.

Domark will be applying its tool kit technology to a different kind of space-sim, called ABSOLUTE ZERO, where players will be forced to defend colonists on Europa from an alien menace hidden deep under the ice. Instead of the usual military might at the disposal of players, pilots on Europa will have to make do with weapons and ships cobbled together from mining equipment. Whether this game will mount a serious challenge to The Big Two should be better known by the time you read this, as it should



TIME WARP Interactive Magic's STAR RANGERS is a blast to the ancient past, being a tribute to the first space combat game, STAR RAIDERS.

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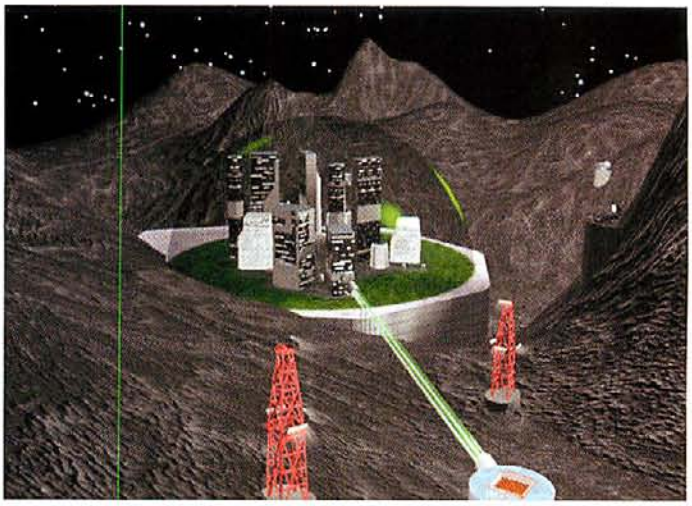
be on the shelves. Later in the year, Domark will follow up with BERSERKER, a space combat sim set in the universe created by SF author Fred Saberhagen. Although the details of the game as still sketchy, the Super VGA graphics look very nice.

As for The Big Two, their plans continue apace. but both companies are relatively mum about details. Rest assured there is more cinema in the future for Wing Commanders, and other portions of the *Star Wars* universe will be fleshed out before the Imperial Navy is done. As it stands now, WING COMMANDER 4 is due out around Christmas, using much the same engine as WC3, while the PRIVATEER 2 project has become a full-fledged multi-media extravaganza and will arrive sometime in '96.

Of course the sim that everybody is still waiting to see is Derek Smart's BATTLECRUISER 3000 AD, which is seemingly about to see the light of day. BC3000 promises to be far more of an immersive experience than anything yet seen, with the player responsible for the actions of an entire cruiser as well as auxiliary ships in a dynamic universe. If this game turns out to be half of what its designer says (see sidebar), then by this time next year we may be referring to The Big THREE in space-sims.

THE BIG PICTURE If it's ever finished, BATTLECRUISER 3000AD could be the most comprehensive and sophisticated space game yet.

I personally would like to see sims take a turn towards detail as the technology begins to even out a bit. While the sims we have now are great, there is still no equivalent to FALCON 3.0 out there, wherein the full implications of managing a squadron are worked into the sim—and of course, multi-player linked missions would be nice. Being able to get through a plotline with the help of a friend would be a pleasant switch from the solitary nature of space games. It also might be nice to see other SF properties developed as sim themes. While *BattleStar Galactica* has faded from memory, it might be fun to play against the backdrop of *Babylon 5*'s warfare and intrigue, and most of the computer graphic work has already been done.



BITE THE DUST, SPACE CADET Domark's forthcoming BERSERKER is a space combat opera starring an alien menace of Fred Saberhagan's design.

Regardless of what products actually do appear and how well they perform, you can be assured of two things: there will always be another space-sim just around the corner, and the best ones will probably make you upgrade your machine in order to play them.

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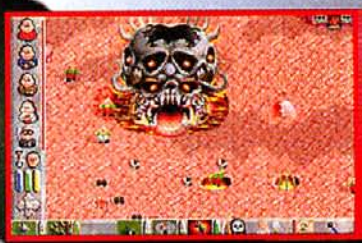

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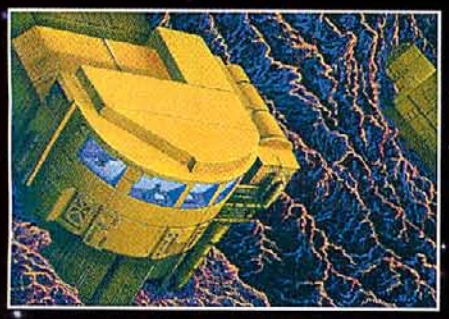

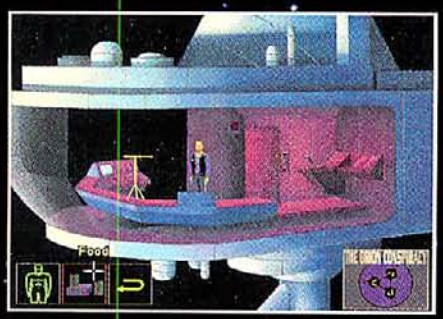

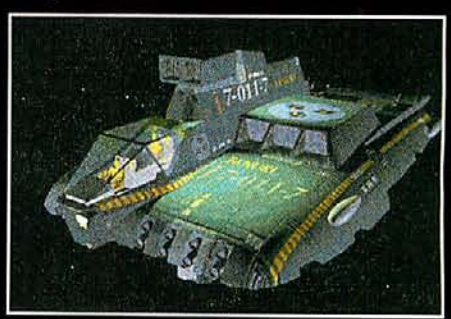

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Dances With Dinos

SCORPIA SEARCHES FOR AN ADVENTURE GAME PARADISE IN VIRGIN'S LOST EDEN

by Scorpia

EVERYONE (OR ALMOST EVERYONE) LOVES DINOSAURS, so it's not surprising to see a product where they play a major part in the story. LOST EDEN, the new adventure game from **Virgin/Cryo**, takes place on a sort of alternate Earth where dinosaurs have evolved into sentient beings, although not much more than that; aside from being able to speak, they still live like dinosaurs.

Dinos and humans used to get along well, until the rise of Moorkus Rex, of the breed T. Rex. He gathered up his brethren and began a campaign of slaughter and carnage throughout the land. Only one place is secure from this rampage: the great Citadel of Mo, an impregnable fortress in the land of Mashaar. Huge and indestructible, the fortress provides a safe place for the people of Mashaar, and is the home of the story's hero, Prince Adam.

Adam dreams of rediscovering the secret of building the citadels (lost thanks to the treachery of his own grandfather) and of reuniting the populations against the Tyrannosaurs. These actions form the basis of play in LOST EDEN.

That's a big job, and Adam isn't left to do it by himself. He has several traveling companions throughout the game; some are with him to the end, others for only a short time. Some are dinosaurs, and some are human. They provide help and occasional advice during the quest, but the main burden rests on Adam's shoulders alone. He is, after all, the leader.

The action starts in the Fortress of Mo where Adam must first relearn the means of citadel construction. After that—and persuading his reluctant father to allow him to leave the fortress—Adam begins his journey across the lands to reunite humans and dinosaurs.

Interfacing with the game is simple, and quite reminiscent of DRAGON LORE. The graphic style and presentation are similar to Mindscape's game, although instead of a dragon cursor, you have a small cube that changes into various icons as it moves over hot spots on the main screen. A hand appears on items that can be taken, while an eye indicates something you may want to take a closer look at. An arrow appearing on the cube's surface means you can move in that direction.

Below the main screen is the scrolling inventory bar, showing what Adam is carrying with him. Above the main display is the companions screen, with small portraits of Adam and those who are currently in his party. Clicking here brings up a full screen showing all the party members in detail, and you can then talk to them or give them objects from the inventory bar.

Movement is accomplished in one of two ways. On the edge of a land, the travel map comes up, and clicking on any available area takes the party directly there. Once in the land, the group moves from location to location via the arrows on the tumbling cube.

Conversations are a one-way street. Adam him-

LOST EDEN

Price: $49.95
System Requirements: IBM compatible 486SX-33 or better, 4 MB RAM, VGA graphics, 2x CD-ROM, mouse; supports Sound Blaster (+Pro) compatible sound cards.
Protection: None
Designers: Cryo Interactive Entertainment
Publisher: Virgin Interactive Entertainment
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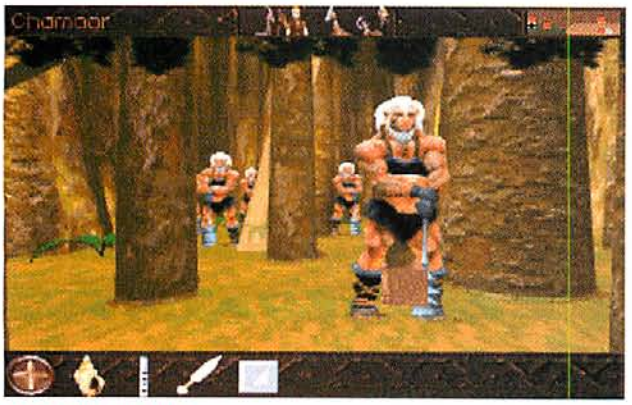


FOREST OF THE APES Each map location has people who need your help; unfortunately each races' problems are exactly the same.

self never speaks; others talk to him when he first meets them, when he shows/offers them some object from the inventory, when he clicks on someone in the companions screen, or sometimes spontaneously in certain situations.

The game supports only Sound Blaster and Ad Lib cards; if you don't have either of those, or can't emulate them, you can turn on the subtitles, which display text in place of speech. This wise provision (which more games ought to have) thus allows you to play LOST EDEN regardless of sound card.

Game controls are brought up by clicking on Adam himself in the companions screen. This displays the save/restore functions, music and speech volume bars, and the tape replay. In case you missed something in a speech, or want to review what you've heard recently, the replay allows you to hear again any of the 32 most recent comments made.

LOST EDEN ran cleanly; the game never crashed or exhibited other bizarre behavior. Everything worked as it was supposed to, which, alas, is something of a minor miracle these days.

For all that, the game is not without its drawbacks. Much of the action is repetitive; Adam treks from valley to valley, doing mostly the same things to get the citadels built. That doesn't mean the game is strictly linear; a fair amount of running back and forth between locations is necessary before the citadels can be fully constructed.

Still, play becomes mechanical after a while, even with a few interesting plot twists involved, and the game descends into a dreary round of rote actions. None of the puzzles (such as they are) are especially difficult, especially if you just follow along as suggested by the various characters.

The save game feature is irritating. You have only three slots, and they are automatically named for you. Unfortunately, they are named by location and visit, and you can't change that. For instance, when you save at the start of the game, it's called "Citadel of Mo 1." *All* the saves you make while in the Citadel are called the same thing. After you've been out a while and return, the saves are named "Citadel of Mo 2."

THE BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE Although this group looks straight from a prehistoric Beverly Hills 90210, each party member plays a valuable, albeit completely programmed role.

After a few saves, it's easy to lose track of which one is the most recent, and there are times when you might want to go back to an earlier position instead. Unless you've been noting down the saves on paper, you may end up trying all the positions to find the one you want. Surely it would not have been difficult for the designers to allow you to name your own saves.

Overall, LOST EDEN is a step up from DRAGON LORE, having at least a real story to it, but more diversity in the playing would have been welcome. This one is more a game for the novice adventurer or family play (dinosaurs being likely to appeal to children); experienced gamers are likely to find it no more than an idle afternoon's entertainment.

ERRANT EDITOR ERRATA

Last issue, sorry to say, some ham-handed editor inserted an error into the opening paragraph of my article on STONE PROPHET.

For reasons known only to himself, the editor inserted the subtitle "Wake of The Ravager" after "Ravenloft," thereby causing great confusion, prompting puzzled calls to SSI, and making me look like an idiot. Everyone (well, *almost* everyone) knows that RAVENLOFT and DARK SUN are two separate and independent series. How a title from one became attached to the other is a mystery, but I would like to clear that up. Below, therefore, is the correct paragraph as originally sent to *CGW*. My apologies to all who were in any way inconvenienced by the error.

RAVENLOFT: THE STONE PROPHET follows in the wake of the original RAVENLOFT and MENZOBERRANZAN. It isn't exactly a sequel to the first game; while you can transfer in characters from RAVENLOFT (but not MENZO), there isn't much connection between the two products otherwise.

There are a couple of other mentions of "Ravager" in the text; when you see them, simply substitute the word "Ravenloft" for a correct reading.

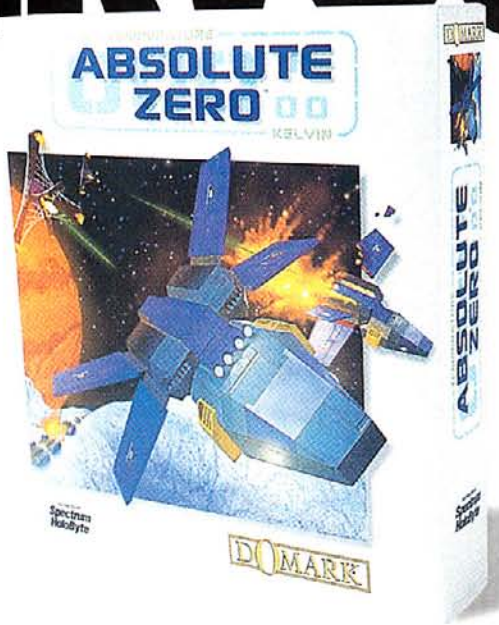
Also, for space reasons, a paragraph was excised from the article that mentions a small but important flaw in the conversation interface, which I now add here:

On a minor note, the appearance of "talk balloons" is inconsistent. Ordinarily, when the cursor touches on someone (or something) that you can talk to, it changes into a little balloon with a question mark on it. However, often this did not happen in the village; the cursor stayed the same when it passed over many of the inhabitants (including some important ones), and the first time around, I missed a few things there.

Since you can pick up a couple of "karma-building" quests by talking to the villagers, it's important to know that you can, in fact, speak to them. Especially if things go wrong at the Harvest Temple and you need some extra brownie points.

[We offer our humblest apologies to our readers and Scorpia for the errant edit. We would sack the responsible editor if he hadn't already sacked himself. -Ed.]

EVEN SPOCK WOULD BE NERVOUS.



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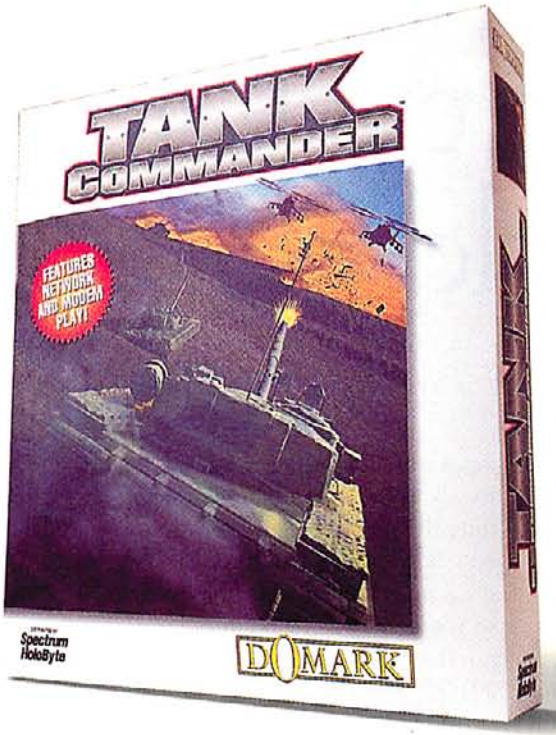

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The Secrets Of Discworld

Scorpia Leads A Tour Through Psygnosis' Latest Adventure

So, the summertime is upon us, and once again Fred is looking forward to the annual Grues Convention in Colossal Cave (held, as always, in the Dark Room). It's about all he has to look forward to this time of year, which, lately, is more than gamers have had; the warmer months aren't noted for being bountiful in new releases. The market flattens out, as it were, and speaking of flat...

Discworld is a tough and zany adventure game based on Terry Pratchett's books; if you've read any of them, you may have some idea of what's in store for you. If you haven't, not to worry; the game isn't derived from any of them in particular, just set in the environment of Discworld.

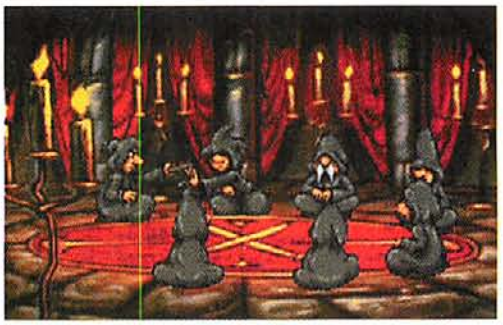
The game is divided into four acts. During each of the first three, Rincewind (our hero) collects a bunch of improbable items, and in the fourth, has his final confrontation with Big Red (the dragon, of course). Hold on to everything you come across in this one; some items are picked up early and used later in another act, so don't assume an object is worthless because you can't do anything with it right away.

An important aspect of the game is revisiting locations in each act; often new items will have appeared in them. So whether or not a place is mentioned, you should always look in on it to see if anything is there. This is also true of talking to people; some of them have new things to say each act, so be certain to have a chat with everyone.

ACT I

In this episode, our hero gathers five items to build a dragon locater. It's best to talk to the Arch-Chancellor before visiting the library, otherwise you won't get very far down there. Once you have the dragon book in hand, read it for yourself, so you know what Rincewind has to pick up; the Arch-C's rendition of the items is a bit obscure.

In the dining room, you'll want to pay special attention to old Windle Poons, particularly what he's holding. This is a good place to make a clean sweep. By now you've seen most of Unseen University, and it's time for the great outdoors. The Town Square is a good place to begin.



COUNT THEE NOT UNTO FOUR...BACKWARDS Infiltrating the Brotherhood requires a lot of time-travel. Doing a little research in the library will put you on the right track.

Remember that being in the middle of things can net you an item, but only if Rincewind is persistent. A chat with the lovable street urchin brings a handy (ha!) skill. Don't overlook the man in the stocks, and feel free to express yourself at his expense a couple of times.

A tour of the Street should prove interesting, especially the barber shop. Do take a good look at his customer before indulging in conversation. Then a stop at the Broken Drum for some refreshment and a fascinating little tale from the Scared Guy should revive Rincewind for more action.

A quick swing through the Livery Stable and Palace, and Rincewind is about ready to poke into the Alley. The view from the rooftops is marvelous, especially the tower in the background. Yes, that *is* the dragon across the way. If you reflect a little, what to do here will become obvious.

As long as you're here, drop in on the Alchemist and see if any corny ideas pop into your head (Rincewind needs that imp more than the Alchemist does). Finally, a return trip to the University and a peek through the window in back should provide our boy with the last of the locater items.

ACT II

Rincey collects six gold items from the Brotherhood to free the dragon from their enchantment. This episode is a complicated one, because Rincewind makes several trips through L-Space, travelling back in time to the previous night, and has a lot to do in both the past and the present.

The first order of business is learning who belongs to the Brotherhood, which means spying on the theft of the library book (do *not* prevent that from happening!), and then getting inside the hideout. That last can't be done on the first visit, but while you're here, also stop at the inn, park, street corner (the light is important) and tavern.

On the day side, you'll want to see if anything is hanging on the line next to the privy by the Fishmonger's. If not, Rincewind neglected to do something last evening. If yes, another trip to the tavern

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and our hero should be ready to enter the hideout. Now he knows who's responsible, and the serious work of collecting the gold items can begin.

The jester is an easy one; it's hardly worth mentioning how he gets trashed. However, if grabbing his item is a problem, perhaps the solution will come bubbling up from your mind in time.

At the barber's you should see a customer in his chair. If not, Rincewind hasn't talked to the Dibbler or given something to someone. Of course, you have to get rid of the barber, but he's still lovesick, so that ought to be simple.

By now, Rincewind is probably longing for the wide open spaces, and should have the gate pass. There's no one at Nanny Ogg's, but don't leave empty-handed. Ditto for the Edge of The World.

Our hero has likely had his eye on a certain belt buckle. He'll have to give the owner that "get up and go" feeling, but certain preparations are necessary beforehand. Try not to get all tangled up, or go to pot.

It's about time Rincey proved he's a man, and Big Sal in Shades can definitely help with that (if he's having trouble getting the "special," Rincewind hasn't been reading the right door at the right time). This makes obtaining the fourth item ridiculously easy, and while you're in the vicinity, Rincewind might just as well drop in on the thief and help himself to the key. Too much noise? Try a little padding.

That leaves one more item, and the procedure is a bit complicated, requiring a bit of stuffing in the right place, and a blowout down below (Rincewind did, of course, note the boxes by the city gate?).

Now the dragon is free. Yay! Unfortunately, it wasn't happy about being ensorcelled, and wants some revenge. Ooops. There's nothing for it now but to prevent the summoning. Check out Nanny Ogg's stall for a couple of things. Remember, you can't just take the library book; you'll have to do something with it.

ACT III

Darn, all that work, and the dragon is still around. The only possibility, it seems, is for our boy to collect another bunch of items to prove he's a hero, and then confront the dragon. In this act, it's important to talk to people to find out what items denote a hero, so you know what to get. Many new objects have also shown up, and going around to all the locations is a must.

Speaking of locations, a new one has appeared in the game, namely a dungeon at the palace. A couple of old friends are there for (haha) a stretch. If Rincewind can't do anything here, maybe he's not feeling cranky enough. Oh well.

At the inn, Rincey may have trouble talking to the morose sailor. Probably the dog hasn't had its calcium ration today. This could be a sticky situation. When you finally do have that chat, be sure you've noticed the man's decorations.

BARBER'S HEAD REVISITED Avoid a close shave later by asking the right questions now—the lady and our hairstylist are more closely linked than they might at first seem.

Finding Polly isn't hard, but getting her is another matter. Rincewind will have to do something not approved by the ASPCA. Even then, the parrot may be out of reach. Our boy will need a new handle on things. Good thing Windle Poons is still around. When you lose the whistle, try a hat trick.

There's still the matter of that elderberry wine for the Dwarf. As long as Rincewind is returning the parrot, he may as well check out the bedroom door. And there's no need to be nice about it, either (by the way, when you do get that wine, don't give it to the luggage).

Round about now, you ought to be able to get the barber back to his shop and talk to him there. Well, transfers are better than needles any day. Too bad the lovable street urchin isn't cooperating. Rincewind will just have to steal the item. Note how the kid holds it over his head; a new angle of attack is needed here. The dunny machine (or part of it) will be useful here.

We haven't been to the Alchemist's in a while, and now would be a good time to visit. Once you get him out of the way, help yourself to anything you may not have, and then look in on the Livery Stable. The bumper bar is important. Not only do you finally "get the number of that donkey cart," Lady Ramkin's Dragon Sanctuary shows up on the map. She has a few things you'll be needing.

And let's not forget Nanny Ogg; that truth potion of hers can come in handy when dealing with the less-than-humble. Sorry to say, this time Rincewind really does have to kiss her.

Speaking of braggarts, a fourth picture is necessary, but sea life just won't do the trick. Something a bit more cuddly is called for. That will get you to the Temple of Offler. Regarding the Monk in the way, it takes a rugged man to deal with him. As for the temple (or rather, the altar), I say only "Indiana Jones," which should be more than enough.

So now our hero really *is* a hero. Unfortunately, he blows his million-to-one chance of dispatching the dragon. All that work, and the world still hasn't been saved. Obviously, Rincewind needs a new approach.

ACT IV

This episode is extremely short and fairly obvious. Rincey needs just three things: the right dance step, a small explosion, and a slapstick comedy act. And they lived happily ever after (and I want a copy of that clickie....).

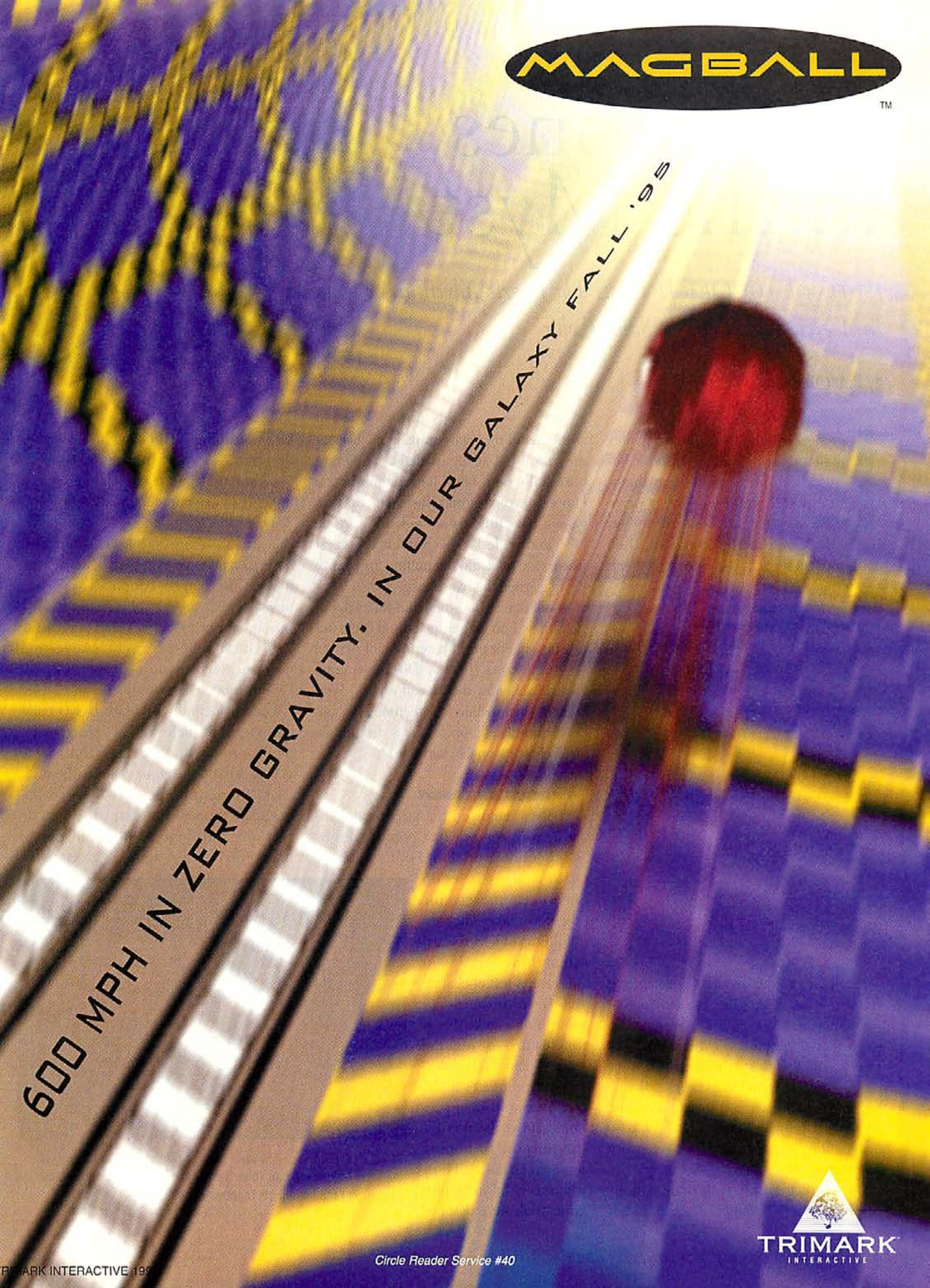
Whew! That visit to Discworld should hold you for a while. In the meantime, if you need help with an adventure game, you can reach me in the following ways:

On Delphi: Stop by the GameSIG.

On GEnie: Visit the Games Round-Table (type: Scorpia).

By US Mail (enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you live in the U.S.): Scorpia, PO Box 338, Gracie Station, New York, NY 10028.

Until next time, happy adventuring!



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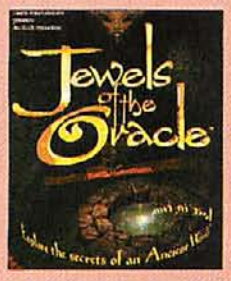
Gemstones in the Myst

JEWELS OF THE ORACLE Casts The Puzzle-Adventure In A New Light Of The Same Color

by Peter Olafson

I've never really liked puzzle games all that much. Mainly, I suppose, because I am not very good at them. Sure, I still play them—they drive me crazy, yet I am strangely attracted to them. But in the long run, they make me feel stupid. And I don't like feeling stupid.

JEWELS OF THE ORACLE



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Mac: 68040 or better, 12-16 MB RAM, 2x CD-ROM, System 7.1 or later.
Protection: None
Developer: Eloi Productions, Inc.
Publisher: Discis Entertainment
Buffalo, New York
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I suspect puzzles are like chess in that you are good at them to the extent that you can see ahead. And I've never mastered that prophetic art. My cousin Nick knocks off puzzles as though he were washing dishes or writing checks. My dad couldn't start his day without first solving the "Word Jumbles" buried in the Classified section. My wife completes crossword puzzles as easily as I tie my shoes.

But *my* relationship with brain twisters consists of the following: I stare helplessly at them and they stare impatiently back at me, disgusted at my inadequacy. We are brick walls, both of us, and nothing much happens except mortar dust falling. Puzzle games, obviously, are some kind of inside joke, and while I've been granted a guest pass to the pool and the putting green, I've never learned the handshake.

I still don't know the handshake, but at least now I no longer feel stupid (well, not *as* stupid). For this, I have to thank JEWELS OF THE ORACLE (JEWELS), **Discis**' gem of a puzzle game for the Macintosh and Windows, which, while it sometimes persuasively simulates a brick wall, is delightfully free of unreasonable barriers.

A FOOL'S ERRAND?

JEWELS builds on the puzzle-game-as-adventure concept first popularized by Cliff Johnson in THE FOOL'S ERRAND. That is, the puzzles do not exist merely for their own sake. They are building blocks toward something larger—in this case, a test of character. Despite the documentation's talk, this is much more of a game than a "place." The background postulates a lost complex built by a pre-Sumerian civilization for the purpose of honing logic and reason. Those who successfully completed its trials were destined for good things. Those who didn't...well, weren't. You know the routine; there's good and not-good-enough and not much in-between in computer games.

This is hardly another "15" (you know, that little sliding tile puzzle where you have to rearrange numbers in sequence), though there are a couple of very neat turns on that mother of all sliding-block puzzle games in here. You'll notice the 7TH GUEST influence right away as you navigate your way through the stony but lavishly modeled environment.

Your principal workplace is a circular chamber with high windows, three hieroglyphic doors and a central well. Once you've sorted out your task in the altar room (retrieve the scattered jewels), approached the well rim from any of six directions and depressed one of the 24 unadorned border stones, a green-tinted

PUZZLE OF THE ORACLE Several puzzles require that you figure out the rules before you can solve them; here you have to match these seemingly random objects together in pairs.

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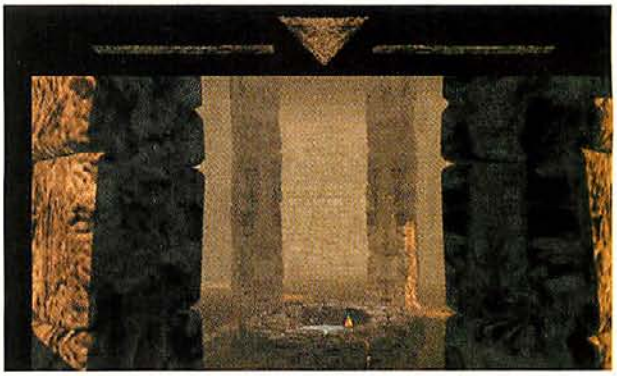
representation of a puzzle appears within the pool. Click on this, and you are transported to the relevant room amidst a blaze of lights, which could reflect either an out-of-body experience or previously-unseen archaeological floods. It all depends on the level of mysticism with which you approach this project, I guess.

And here, well, maybe over there just a bit, is the puzzle. Usually its location is obvious the moment you arrive, but now and then you'll have to seek it out by stumbling around in your immediate environment.

NEWFANGLED CLASSICAL LOGIC

These conundrums work on a lot of levels. They are clever yet rarely ever seem too smart for their own good. They treat conventional problems in innovative ways. A maze is spread over six sides of a cube. A sliding-block puzzle uses gravity. And while puzzle games typically adopt a handful of themes and stick to them like glue, each of JEWELS' rooms leaves the impression of being one of a kind. Upon reflection, you'll be able to pick out certain themes, but it isn't so obvious when you're playing.

Some of these games, variations on Hi-Q and Soko Ban, will be instantly familiar and, with patience, easily completed. Some are simple in concept but diabolical in execution, like the puzzle that has you transferring seeds among five cups, or the one that requires you to figure out relationships between odd household items. And some you'll first need to sort out by asking (or clicking on) the local Virgil, a slit-eyed guide shaped like an inverted pyramid. In response to your queries, he'll drone out riddles in lieu of instructions and instructions that sound like riddles.



MISTY INTERFACE JEWELS OF THE ORACLE has a MYST-like quality, although the environment in JEWELS is more a wrapper for puzzles than a full-blown adventure realm.

And in some puzzles, as in the twister dealing with a box full of odd emblems, you probably won't have even the faintest clue what you are doing, even with input from old inverted-pyramid head. Surprisingly, this didn't bother me in the slightest. It just added another layer to the puzzle, and gives the game an almost philosophical depth. You have to learn a society's rules before you can live in it.

JEWELS' charm is enhanced even further by its friendly approach to the puzzles. Not being able to solve a puzzle no longer means "game over." You can reset a puzzle at any point by clicking on the space-bar-like button at the top of the screen. You can also adjust the difficulty level (easy or hard)

to fit your puzzle-solving ability. But most importantly, you can simply leave it unsolved and return later, without penalty. Although you can bypass a game altogether with the "decline" option—a sort of borderline cheat mode that grants you the requisite jewel but forfeits your honor—you don't want to. The ending for the player who doesn't complete all the puzzles is a little like getting flushed down a toilet. Well, at least the game's puzzles don't loom over you like an entertainment guillotine.

This general friendliness makes for a mellow, restful tone. It's entirely controlled from the mouse; you're guided by an intelligent cursor that tells you what is clickable and what is not. No one's cracking the whip, watching the clock, breathing down your neck asking if you finished your homework. And when you're done, you're done. I found working at my own pace rather appealing.

THE FLAW IN THE GEM

One problem I have with JEWELS is that I can't help but feel that its lush environment is in some measure wasted. Don't get me wrong; the puzzles are splendid, even when you don't know which end is up, and that's what the game is about. But there's a pervasive feeling of empty space here, space that might have been put to better use with interesting gadgets (perhaps a false puzzle or two) or hidden clues to the tougher puzzles (found, say, by decoding those door hieroglyphics). You can coax old inverted-pyramid head into revealing something of the last, but there's typically more labored poetry than content in his spiel. Designer Courtland Shakespeare is perfectly right. This isn't a history lesson. But if a game adopts a theme and presumes to be a "place," the environment ought to reflect that.

As it happens, most of the gadgets here are the puzzles themselves. I can recall only one or two items that weren't directly related to a solution. Happily, one puzzle requires a five-part key, scattered throughout the various puzzle rooms, to gain entry. But while this will send players scurrying around the map revisiting much of the game and clicking on every rock in sight, this "quest" is little more than a find-the-hot-spot treasure hunt.

Perhaps the environment is only intended to be a commercial shell to make the game more salable. And from a marketing point of view, that is understandable. Puzzles for puzzles' sake probably do not sell all that well. People seem to want a colorful wrapper—a story, some jazzy visuals and some neat toys to wind up and set in motion.

But this is precisely where JEWELS OF THE ORACLE comes up a bit short. It's not that the environment is horrible. It just isn't that relevant. The puzzles, on the other hand, are wickedly brilliant and easily worth the price of admission.

THE EDITORS SPEAK

JEWELS OF THE ORACLE

RATING

PROS Brilliant puzzles in a graphically-rich, gamer-friendly environment.

CONS Aside from the puzzles, there's little interaction with the beautifully rendered world.

http://www.ea.com/eastudio.html

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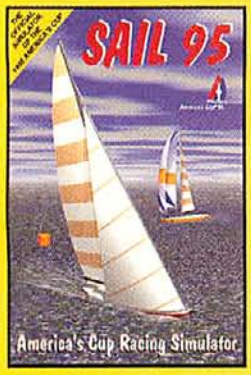

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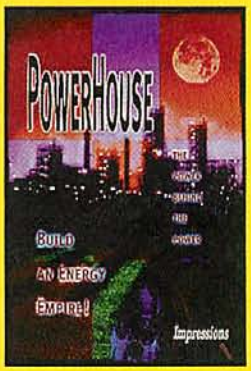

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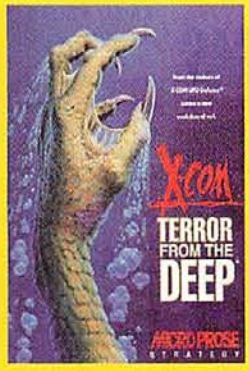

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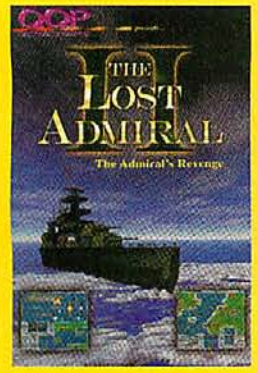

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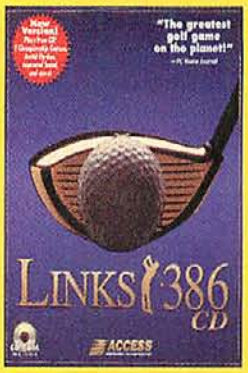

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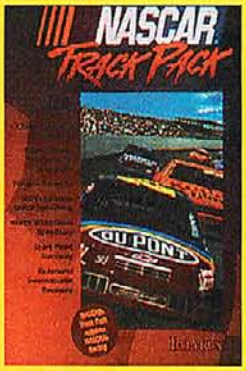

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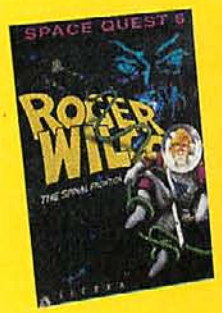

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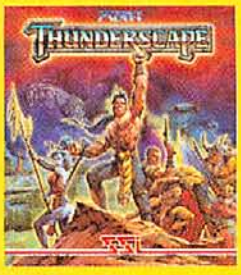

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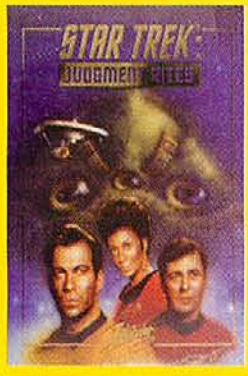

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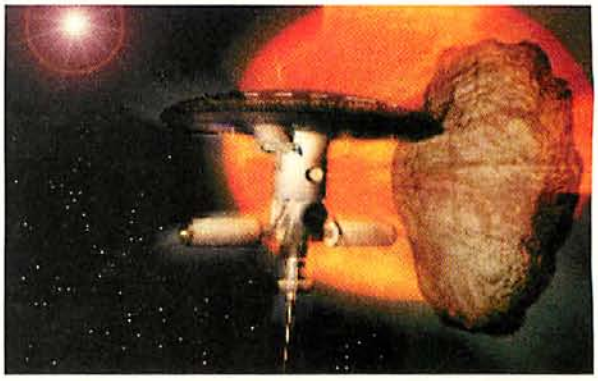


by Arinn Dembo

SOMETHING'S GONE WRONG ON STATION ZEUS. THE HALLS AND ROOMS ARE DESERTED, AND EVERYWHERE the deckplates groan with menace. It's a great set-up for a mystery: What the devil happened here? Where is everyone? In ALIEN VIRUS from **Vic Tokai, Inc.**, you will find yourself docking at a starbase in the deepest dark boonies of colonized space. It's a first-person game in which your viewpoint character is Joshua, a young pilot bringing cargo to the station, and hoping to rendezvous with his beloved, science officer Cara Oceana. Both Joshua and Cara work for the same megacorporation, owned and operated by the enigmatic Mr. Ukido.

ALIEN VIRUS

Price: $69.95
System Requirements: IBM compatible 386DX or better, 4MB RAM, 30 MB hard drive space, SVGA graphics, CD-ROM, mouse; supports Sound Blaster or compatible sound cards.
Protection: None
Publisher: Vic Tokai, Inc.
Torrance, CA
(310) 326-8880

Unfortunately, in a game in which the initial scenario, graphics, sound and animation prove at least competent, the plotting and writing of ALIEN VIRUS are surprisingly weak. After successfully "completing" this game, you will have rescued Cara Oceana, evacuated the majority of the human survivors, and reduced Station Zeus to sub-atomic particles. You will not, however, enjoy a satisfying resolution to the mystery. There are only a series of interesting hints which, ultimately, lead nowhere.

ALL SYSTEMS GO

The designers have put up some wallpaper and given you a few film clips to watch in the course of the game, but ALIEN VIRUS basically carries with it the limitations of the classic text adventure. It is a game that hearkens back to the days when small companies were trying to capitalize on the success of **Infocom**. They've made the format a great deal more playable for the average player, of course, since somehow it all makes more sense when there are pictures to accompany the story!

The interface is mouse-driven and easy to master. The default command is "Examine." Thus, commands such as "Examine door," "Examine corpse," "Examine melted alien" form your basic repertoire. The "examine" command yields a line of information at the bottom of the screen, which is either useful or sarcastic. For interaction with sentient beings, there is also a default "chat" command. Other than "examine" and "chat," you may also "use," "take," "open," or "close." That's it! The interaction with your environment is very limited, as limited as it has always been in text adventures, and there is never more than one solution to a puzzle, even when you have two objects that are similar in nature. You wander from room to room, collecting objects and using them to solve the problems you encounter—most of which have to do with getting to the next room.

ALIEN VIRUS is a CD-ROM product, and the designers have taken advantage of some of the features that can be added to a multimedia package such as graphics, sound effects, voice recordings and animation. There are approximately 65 "rooms" in ALIEN VIRUS which range from hangars and hallways to ventilation ducts, and even a spacewalk or two. The graphics are not consistent—it's easy to see at least two different artists at work here—but they are at least bearable, and in some cases quite nice. Water dripping from a cracked pipe, flickering lights, steam hissing out of a valve in an empty room...there are some careful, artistic touches here, which tend to obscure the fact that the rooms are just posters with a few action sites. Some effort has been made to elevate Station Zeus from a thinly-veiled "dungeon" to a rea-

HANGAR WITH A VIEW Upon debarking your ship, you find an eerily empty hangar and a lifeless robot.

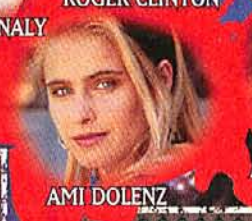
LOSE BLOOD NOW! ASK ME HOW

This fast-paced, splatter-packed CD-ROM movie-based interactive adventure features real movie clips (from the movie Pumpkinhead II: Bloodwings), real movie music, and real movie stars, such as Pumpkinhead himself, smiling above, and Roger Clinton, the President's more successful brother! You'll get everything but real blood on your computer. This game is sure to get your blood pumping!

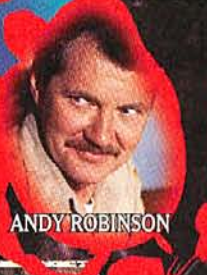
SOLEIL MOON FRYE

STEVE KANALY

ROGER CLINTON



AMI DOLENZ



ANDY ROBINSON

PREMIERS THIS SUMMER FOR YOUR PC CD-ROM

BLOODWINGS

PUMPKINHEAD'S REVENGE

MOTION PICTURE CORPORATION OF AMERICA INTERACTIVE

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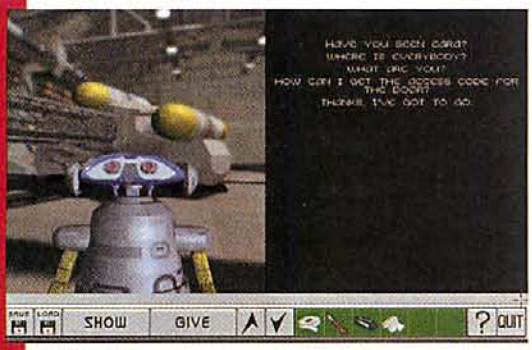
sonably interesting science fiction setting.

There are animated sequences as well. Not many, mind you, but most of them are quite grisly. As the player I came to dread them, because the start of such a sequence generally meant I was about to die, trapped aboard the exploding space-station, clubbed over the head by a crazed, starving survivor, sucked through the blades of a giant fan...you get the picture. On the other hand, there are also a number of animated sequences which serve to resolve plot points once you have completed a task or figured out a puzzle. Hence, the beginning of an animated sequence does not necessarily mean "Game Over." The style and quality of animation in the game are also inconsistent, but there's no great cause for complaint. Like the screen shots, they are competent, if not inspired work.

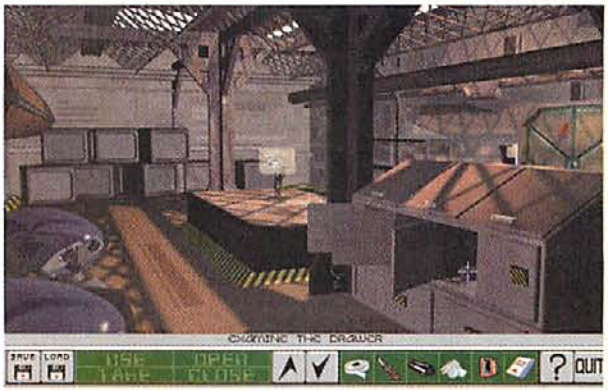
The best attribute of the game is its sound, which rates better than average. There are at least 11 conversations throughout the game, complete with individual voices. Your character, unfortunately, loses his voice following the introductory sequence. The sound effects, as you travel from room to room, are suitably creepy and ominous. The sound designers have done some outstanding work here, creating a background hum in every room that is both subtle and effective. It's their contribution, more than anything else, which is responsible for the chilly, unnerving atmosphere of ALIEN VIRUS.



YO, ROBOT Dialogue is handled in standard graphical adventure format—you select questions and responses and your talk buddy mechanically doles out the answers.

THE WRITE STUFF

Despite the work that has gone into the giftwrap, there is no way to hide the adventure's weak writing. Like a leaky vacsuit, you can slap a patch on only so many holes in the story before you're in real trouble. ALIEN VIRUS includes many interesting plot elements, but somehow the details are never knitted together properly. A decent explanation for the events on Station Zeus is never offered. Perhaps the program's greatest mystery is how it earned the title "ALIEN VIRUS."



MESSY DRAWERS One of the drawers in this room contains an important key card you'll need to get around the ship; grab it and give it to your robot friend.

What you will find as you play is that Station Zeus is suffering from a particularly horrible form of infestation. The halls are crawling with hideous alien monsters—creatures so gruesome that they beggar my powers of description. Not only are they nasty to look at, but their table manners leave a lot to be desired as well. These carnivorous alien party-crashers are running around in droves, attacking anyone who lacks the sense to stay in strong light. Furthermore, no one seems to have any idea what they are, where they came from, how they arrived aboard the station, and what they are doing with their victims.

Don't bother getting your hopes up, because you'll never find out! Even when you arrive at the top and track down the Captain, you'll find he's just another working grunt like you, without a clue in the galaxy as to what's happened. The aliens are just, well, there—and he just wants to get away from them. Understandable, of course, but not terribly satisfying from the audience's point of view. The closest you get to an explanation of the invasion takes place when you have to crawl through an alien habitat on your way to the station's generator room. Even this doesn't tell you much, except that the game designers weren't shy about ripping off a scene from the *Alien* films.

It is unlikely that "To Be Continued" will prove a satisfying conclusion for most gamers. ALIEN VIRUS may work as a game, but its fictional elements can't really stand alone. Had it only been the first half of a much larger game, in which the rescue of Cara and the survivors was followed by an expedition to track down your employer, Mr. Ukido, and squeeze some answers out of him, giving you a chance to figure out what the aliens were and how they arrived there, and then to discover whether or not you have made a terrible mistake by evacuating the human survivors from Station Zeus, the story could have been one of epic stature.

In addition, there just isn't enough danger. I was pleased at first, as I was playing, that ALIEN VIRUS wasn't annoyingly lethal: save every two seconds or end up doing things over and over. However, I soon realized that I wasn't able to find more than a half-dozen ways of getting killed, and none of them involved the monsters aboard the station. You're a lot more likely to be killed by the station's architecture than by the dread beasties in ALIEN VIRUS. Strange, considering how mindlessly homicidal they're supposed to be.

This game is fun to play and an improvement on the old text adventure format in many respects. However, it is also lacking in effective text, the greatest strength of the best text adventures.

THE EDITORS SPEAK

ALIEN VIRUS

RATING 2.5

PROS An intriguing premise, imaginative aliens, and impressive sound effects.

CONS The text is weak, and the mystery story leaves you hanging.

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I Have No Mouth, But I've A Screen

Life As A Brain In A Box In Virgin's THE DAEDALUS ENCOUNTER

by Charles Ardai

THE DAEDALUS ENCOUNTER IS A VERY GOOD-LOOKING GAME, A FACT LARGELY ATTRIBUTABLE TO ITS stars, Tia Carrere (from the *Wayne's World* movies) and Christian Bocher (from nowhere you've ever heard of), who are very good-looking people. These two grace the front of the game's unusual and very good-looking package and spend the better part of three CD's traipsing through some very good-looking computer-generated scenery.

You go along for the ride in the character of Casey, who was once a good-looking space marine like Ari (Tia) and Zack (Christian), but who recently suffered a terrible accident. Toward the end of the war against the Vakkar, a race of interstellar boogeymen out to enslave humanity, Casey got so badly hurt in a battle that the only part of him the doctors were able to salvage was his brain. (You should have seen the other guy.)

The Daedalus Encounter

Price: $69.95
System Requirements: IBM compatible 486/33 DX or better (Pentium recommended), 8MB RAM, Vesa Local Bus or PCI SVGA graphics, 2x CD-ROM, Windows 3.1 or better. Supports most major sound cards.
Protection: None
Designer: Mechadeus
Publisher: Virgin Interactive Entertainment Irvine, CA
(800) VRGIN07

Now, Casey's been bionically linked into the main computer on Ari and Zack's spaceship, which leaves you in control of all sorts of nifty electronic devices. Chief among them is a little flying probe that follows Ari and Zack around on their adventures. You can steer the probe around, turn its searchlight on and off, use its laser and grappling claw, and transmit pulses of light at any of a dozen frequencies. Rest assured that every one of these abilities comes in handy during the game.

Things begin with a simple salvage mission. Zack and Ari set out to scavenge useful scrap from Vakkar wrecks drifting around the solar system, which requires Casey to pilot his way over to a booby-trapped alien ship and briefly explore its innards. Ari and Zack coach Casey through this sequence, helping you get the hang of the controls.

It's when Casey's probe is back on board, though, that the story really starts. Zack sends the ship into hyperspace and, Han Solo-like, emerges at the worst possible time and place. (At one point he even says, "I've got a bad feeling about this," a line *Star Wars* fans will find familiar.) A monstrous spaceship is right in front of them, and there's no time to put on the brakes. The ensuing crash sends the two ships hurtling toward the sun. The only hope for survival is for our heroes to enter the alien vessel and set it back on course, but once they enter it they discover that there's no way back out.

Also, it turns out the ship's infested with Krinn, a species of acid-oozing space slug that make the Vakkar look like cream puffs and might even survive a few rounds of one-on-one with the face-huggers from the *Alien* movies. What's a team of hardy adventurers to do in a situation like this? A lot of exploration down spooky, intestinal corridors; a little target shooting when the Krinn pop out of a ventilation duct or an alien corpse; some innuendo-filled bantering and comradely one-upmanship; and, since this is a computer game, plenty of puzzle-solving and a pinch of maze navigation.

STAR-CROSSED

The exploration of the spaceship is pretty linear: there are six doors arranged in a circle around the perimeter of a central hub room, and Ari and Zack lead the player through each in sequence. There are six mysterious orbs to collect, basically one behind each door; if you don't get them all on the first attempt, the game lets you go back for a second try later.

The puzzles are fairly straightforward, too. There's one to unlock each door (plus a few scattered elsewhere) and they're all geometric brain-teasers of the tangram or *Rubik's Cube* variety. The target shooting is your basic target shooting—the mouse cursor turns into a

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Screens shown: 256-color SVGA.

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crosshair and you point and click to fire Casey's laser. The maze is your basic adventure game maze, and the less said about it the better.

BRAIN'S EYE VIEW Most of DAEDALUS ENCOUNTER is viewed from Casey's point of view, which also doubles as the game interface.

In what way, then, is this game an improvement over STARCROSS, the classic **Infocom** text adventure from 1982, that had you stranded on a monstrous alien spaceship with several unfriendly races, some tough brain-teasers to solve, a set of obscure artifacts to collect, and a maze to navigate? Well, that's a matter of taste. You see, STARCROSS didn't have Tia Carrere.

What it did have was smarter puzzles. The ones here are really quite easy, even if you set the game's difficulty level to "hard." (Doing so tends to lengthen the puzzle sequences, not make them tougher.) In fact, although the solutions are simple enough to figure out quickly, especially if you keep pen and paper handy, clicking randomly on the screen is almost as likely to see you through.

One puzzle has you rotating channels on a circuit diagram to create paths permitting current to flow from a central reservoir to receptors on the edges of the screen. Trial-and-error wins the day here, though a tight time limit means you'll probably have to try and err a few times before you're done. Another puzzle has you competing against the computer, taking turns to build a polygon out of electronic toothpicks. No time limit here, and the computer is easy to beat as long as you build trapezoids while it's trying to build parallelograms.

Yet another puzzle has you shifting colored triangles around on a board to form certain shapes the computer requests, while another has you building shapes out of various combinations of lines. Such is the variety the game offers. None of the puzzles are awful, and none are especially good. A few make no sense. The biggest problem is that they all resemble each other.

This sort of repetitiveness is a problem throughout the game. For instance, you would expect the various corridors of a spaceship to resemble each other, and they do here. Chalk one up for authenticity—but take away points for lack of variety. Granted, the corridors in *Alien* all looked the same, but Ridley Scott had the incomparable H.R. Giger as his designer. At their best, the sets in THE DAEDALUS ENCOUNTER look like Giger Lite.

RUBIK'S TRIANGLE Although there are plenty of alien puzzles in DAEDALUS ENCOUNTER, most of them are very familiar and not very interesting.

Then there's the endless procedural repetition. Each door needs to be opened in the same way: Casey analyzes the door at length, records a message, and then transmits a light pulse to trip the lock. Acquiring the orbs has its painstaking routine, too—more light pulses, and they'd better be in the correct order or you can just start over.

Exciting scenes do turn up here and there, and the designers do what they can to keep the tension level high. At one point Zack takes a tumble down an elevator shaft and at another, a queen alien emerges from a sticky cocoon to chomp Ari into little pieces. But in between there's not much to speak of.

Some of the banter is clever, but much of it's cheap stuff—gags about Zack accidentally drinking out of an alien toilet and the like. What isn't cheap is derivative: if it hasn't become clear already, *Alien* and *Aliens* are strong influences here, with smidgens of *Star Wars* and *2001: A Space Odyssey* thrown in for good measure. These are fine sources, but if I'm going to spend several hours with a game, I'd prefer one that referred to the classics a little bit less and told its own unique story a bit more.

DAED OR ALIVE?

So, what does this leave to recommend the game? Tia Carerre, looking sexy in her sleek space outfit, all bare arms and perfect makeup; about two hours of video scenes, displayed either in a little QuickTime window or full-screen depending on your preference and the speed of your system; Christian Bocher, who is a better actor than Tia (which isn't saying much, but actually he's quite good); and some simple logic puzzles for people who can never get enough of that sort of thing.

The story is fun and the sense of cosmic awe the designers appear to feel comes across. For this it may be worth a look. But while DAEDALUS ENCOUNTER is a respectable resume-piece for all concerned, it's a far cry from the groundbreaking interactive science fiction movie it clearly yearns to be.

THE EDITORS SPEAK

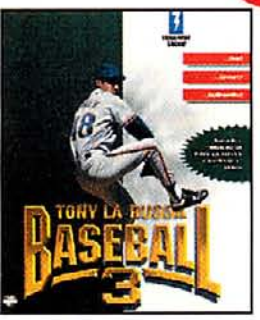
DAEDALUS

RATING 3 stars

PROS Tia, plus a pulp sci-fi story that will hold your interest the first time through, and some eye-catching graphics.

CONS The gameplay can get repetitive, and experienced gamers will quickly tire of the Rubik's Cube-style puzzles.

Big League Heat



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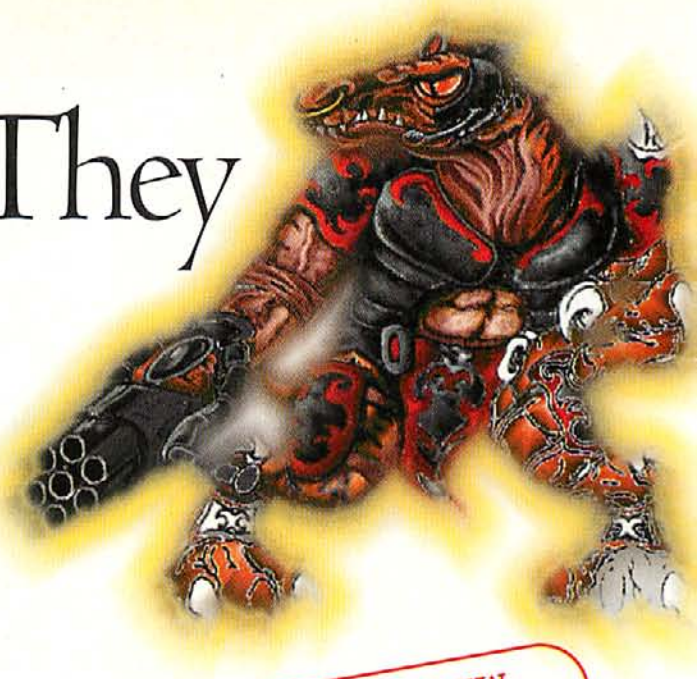
Nukem Til They Glow!



Apogee's New 3D Realms Label Launches A Full Scale Attack At The Action Game Market With DUKE NUKEM 3D

by Peter Olafson

SNEAK PREVIEW
Game Still In Development

THIS LAUNCH VEHICLE FOR **APOGEE'S** NEW 3D ENGINE COMES ON LIKE YET ANOTHER VARIATION OF DOOM: another metal-lined moonbase, another crew of single-minded troopers who evidently do not have Mrs. Troopers, another hunt for keycards and The Way Out.

Then you notice that spaceships—real 3D spaceships that you can ride—are touring the base perimeter. You notice that the drinking fountains and security monitors work. That toilets can be blown up, leaving blue geysers behind, and that one stall has a magazine on the floor. You'll also notice that lights can be made to flicker and plate glass to shatter. And that you leave muddy footprints on the pavement after leaving the sewers.

This is something else. Something with extraordinary potential.

DUKE NUKEM 3D, due in August on Apogee's **3D Realms** label, is not the first improvement upon **Id Software**'s seminal action game. HERETIC added a user-controllable inventory, DESCENT a full 3D world, and DARK FORCES a classic sci-fi mythology and sophisticated puzzles.

But the label that put PC action games on the map is back and on the verge of making its first generational advance since WOLFENSTEIN 3-D. There was talk, a couple of years back, of turning this Hall-of-Fame game into an RPG, but it never came off. Now, some years later, through the accrual of telling detail, this is essentially what Apogee is onto with DUKE 3D. You're not simply an exterminator. You're a visitor with a score to settle in a world where you can be as nosy as you wanna be.

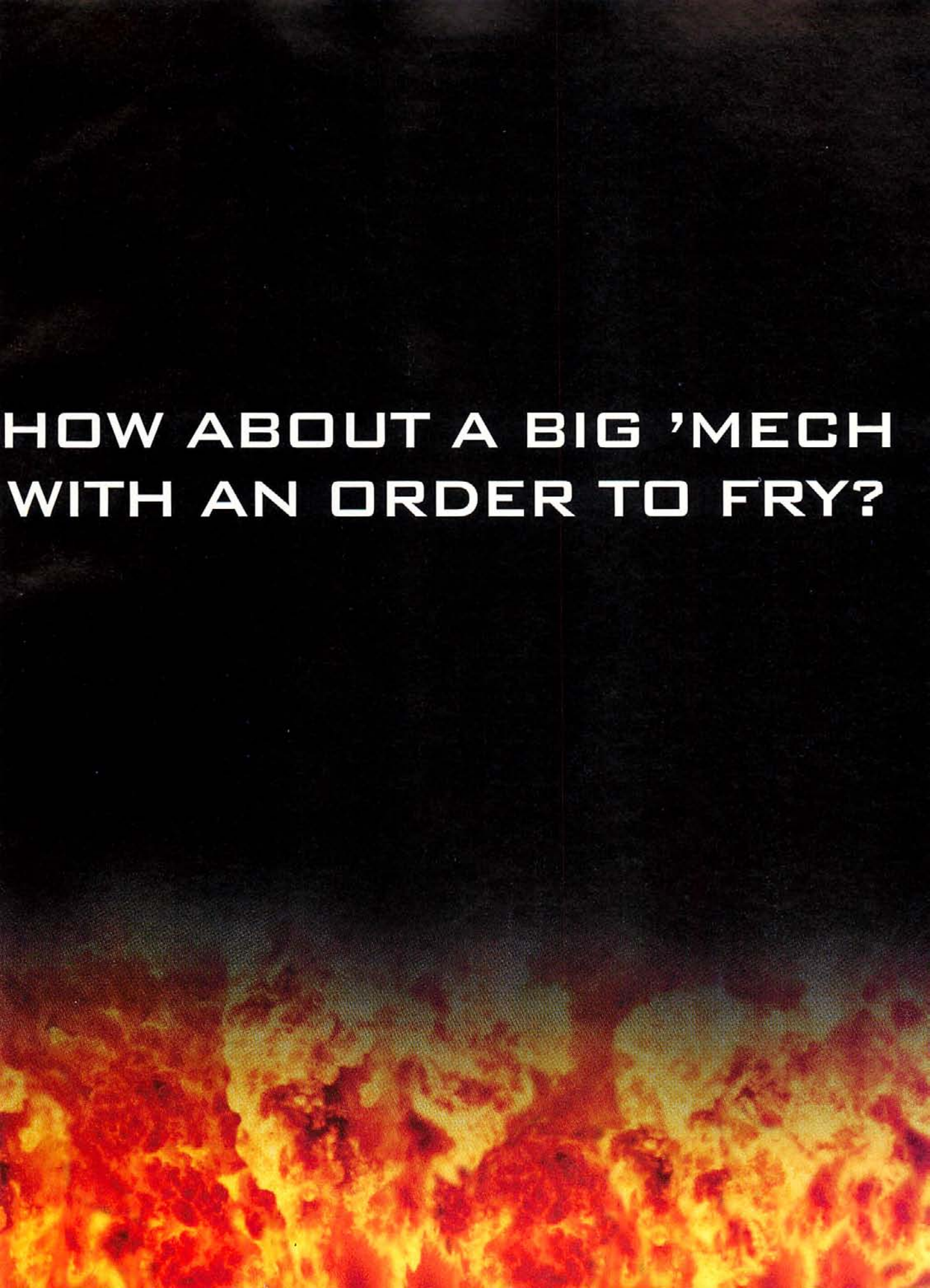
NEW AGE NUKEM Gamers familiar with previous Duke Nukem games will double-take at the rich, attractive graphical environment.

YOUNG DUKIE

The name should be familiar to Apogee devotees. Duke's life began back in 1991, in the era of COMMANDER KEEN as the key character in Todd Replogle's platform game, DUKE NUKUM. (Replogle remains on board as the coder of DUKE 3D.) In DUKE NUKEM II, released in late 1993, our hero got beefier and prettier (not to mention undergoing a minor name change). And now, here he is, man-high, impassive face, blond brush cut and big gun intact, roaming a richly interactive game world.

How do I know how he looks? Well, it's another one of those telling details. See, among other things, DUKE NUKEM 3D has mirrors at key locations, so your character can stare back at himself as well as spot anyone sneaking up behind him.

Wild, right? Put it this way: I'm told that, in the final game, you'll be able to step up to a urinal and, um, do your business (with an as-


HOW ABOUT A BIG 'MECH
WITH AN ORDER TO FRY?

sociated health bonus, yet).

The character isn't the only hold-over from the early days. The Cola cans that gave Duke a health boost in the platforms are on hand as well, sometimes hidden away behind panels or inside of lockers. And there are times when experience in platform-hopping will definitely pay off, as in a sequence that finds Duke atop a string of rotating interlocking gears, or exploring the subways in mid-game.

Speaking of subways, the game in fact has *two* subway systems, complete with running trains (the city one is covered in graffiti), stations, entry stairs, a nerve center and even the occasional would-be passenger. But gamers won't be overwhelmed by immense floor designs. The designers deliberately sought to keep the levels (24 are planned) to a manageable size, which is the most realistic for tight and compelling multi-player play. And Apogee, realizing that the best DOOM levels are often those most closely tied to real life, is designing their levels to mirror the real world. For example, the moonbase has a barracks, armory and mess. The futuristic Los Angeles in the mid-game comes complete with sleazy bars (with dance floor and disco lights), no-tell motels (there's some nudity in the game), a movie theater with a lit-up marquee and an abundance of very tall skyscrapers. And since the game *is* in 3D, you'll find bridges, air ducts, overpasses and spiral stairs littered throughout. You can even fly among the various buildings with a jetpack. Did I mention you can blow up bridges and buildings?

And things look good too, even in standard 320 x 200. But DUKE will also run in crisp SVGA at resolutions of up to 1024 x 768, although you'll need a next-generation Pentium to enjoy it. Although a Pentium will be necessary for smooth scrolling in the higher-res modes, gamers equipped with high-end 486 systems will be able to enjoy smooth scrolling gameplay as well. Even the auto-map looks good. Striking and innovative, it has several different modes, one of which even displays textures.

A WEAPON FOR EVERY OCCASION

Okay, okay, so a lot of DOOM-style games look good. Indeed, sometimes, that's all they do. But here it's a bonus. Among DUKE's neater features is the integration of weapons with strategy. That is, they're not simply a set of bigger and bolder kill radii, as was more or less the case in DOOM.

Consider, for instance, the Trip Bomb. It's about the size and shape of a TV remote, and it has an uncanny ability to turn enemies off...for good. A second or two after you fasten it to a wall, it emits a laser beam which crosses open space until it reaches an obstacle. Anyone, or anything breaking the beam will enjoy a really warm and close-up encounter with an orange fireball.

Among other things, weapons like this will invite multiplay players to devise completely new strategies, like laying traps and luring prey into them. This in turn should make opponents think twice before racing off in hot pursuit of a seemingly helpless opponent. And because you can jump and duck in DUKE, bombs can be placed high or low, setting up all sorts of potential barbed-laser entanglements.

Another nice touch is a Pipe Bomb that can be remotely triggered. Hit fire to toss it where you want to (which includes higher levels or down shafts—DUKE has look up, look down and tilted views). Hit fire again to detonate. Foom. Hope you weren't too close by. There's something most compelling about wreaking havoc in one section of the game while standing in another. It almost persuades you that you are indeed in a real place, where events proceed apace whether you're present or not. And that, of course, is precisely the point.

The Shrinker/Expander, another unique weapon, is more for fun than for strategy, and is probably intended for multi-player contests. It brings the enemy down a peg. Many pegs,

KICK 'EM IN THE RIGHT KNEE... Duke Nukem plants his standard-issue work boots squarely on the forehead of a foe.

THE BFG WAS A POP-GUN The BFG's got nothing on the sophisticated hi-tech weaponry at DUKE NUKEM's disposal.

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actually. Enemies struck by the Shrinker's green bolt shrink until they're about the size of a Ken doll, in which state they can be trod upon (with attendant squishy sounds). The Expander's red plasma inflates enemies until they pop.

Other cool weapons the designers are playing around with include the concept of a laser sword akin to the ones in the *Star Wars* movies, which didn't make it into DARK FORCES.

Incredibly, you'll be able to draw and code custom weapons and insert them into the game, as well as reprogram game characters. Apogee's also planning to release its internal editors and tools to the public, which means that gamers will have no need to wait for a DeHack-style program before they can tinker around with the levels.

MIRROR, MIRROR... Using reflective surfaces strategically placed around the levels, Duke can check his make-up and watch for foes around corners.

COLLATERAL DAMAGE

Weapons aren't the only things that can kill you though. Indeed, there's a spot on the first moonbase level where, if you're injudicious in your use of explosives (and placement of poor Duke), you can demolish a key section of wall and blow yourself out onto the moon surface. Thankfully, if you're far enough away, the airlock doors close before the sudden vacuum drags you out. The bulkhead doors are unforgiving, and will quickly reduce you and your opponents into a long thick strand of bloody muck if they pinch you.

Yes, DUKE NUKEM 3D is going to be violent, and I'm sure it will carry a warning label of some sort. But I'd be dishonest if I didn't allow to this same violence being a large chunk of the fun. Mindless destruction is a much-underrated part of the DOOM lifestyle. Remember the way bullet holes appeared in the walls in **Infogrames**' late 1980s strategy-shooter, HOSTAGE? It was the crowning touch that brought the game home, that told you that you weren't just a player but a participant. I've always liked the idea of an action game that reflects the chaos you've wrought in it and in which, conceivably, you could damage a level to the point where it became inescapable.

DUKE doesn't carry the concept quite that far, but if you're the temperamental type, there are loads of stuff for you to blow up. If you liked video screens shattering in DESCENT, you'll love this game, which allows them to be broken in at least four different ways. Containers are reduced to rubble and their contents (sometimes toxic) will spill forth. Computers react almost volcanicly when destroyed. Bottles disappear from bars. Whole sections of wall wink out. How's that for affecting your environment?

Sneak preview notwithstanding, I do have a few *caveats*. I saw DUKE in several incarnations over the course of its development, from pre-alpha to near-beta, and the game was never quite done. Only about a third of the levels were complete, certain features (a flashlight, for instance) weren't working fully yet while others were being added. The speed had yet to be optimized, and characters tended to move in an angular fashion that suggested that wires were attached to their joints. I have to admit that I'm a little concerned that so much attention is being paid to the environment that the critters, which gave DOOM such an immersive fear factor, may get short shrift. I hope not.

But I still have nothing but enthusiasm for DUKE NUKEM 3D. The haunted, if depopulated, darkness of the early versions is maturing into a beckoning world destined to eclipse the competition. It's not simply DOOM too, but DOOM articulated, its potential drawn out, its depths sounded. It is an event. Do wh[illegible] the Duke of

HOW TO BUILD A 3DREALM

DUKE NUKEM 3D is the first in an initial series of four games created under Apogee's "Build" engine. It is expected to be followed in two or three months by SHADOW WARRIOR, a ninja game with spectacular graphics. RUINS, an Indiana Jones-ish game with an Egyptian setting, looks set to arrive late in the year, and BLOOD, a horror-based game, will either appear in tandem with RUINS or early in 1996.

In the words of Apogee's Scott Miller, "'Build' is the DOOM engine carried to the maximum extent it can be taken. It is the most evolutionary step possible with the current technology." Although not a true 3D game engine, this texture mapping system provides sophisticated high-res graphics up to 1280 x 768 (although even Pentiums will take a steep performance

hit at that level) and is able to place the user in a richer environment due to its incredibly fast rendering mechanisms. The "Build" engine also permits the recording and playback of third person "chase" views popular in flight sims.

The new technology, with some RPG adaptations, will also be seen later this year in Capstone's WITCHHAVEN and TEKWAR.

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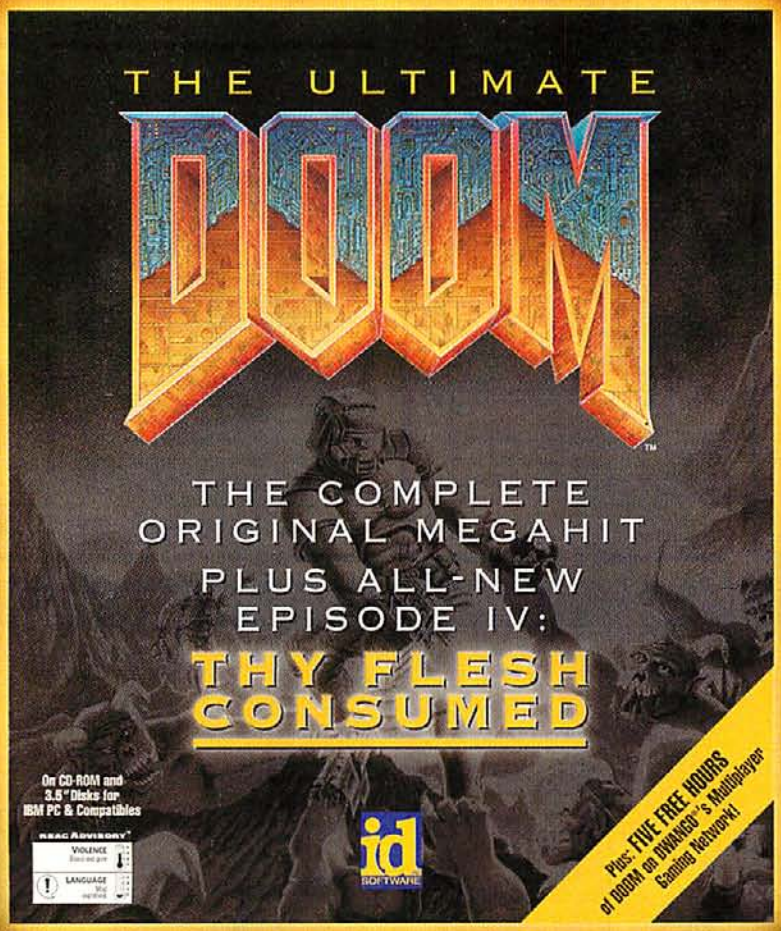

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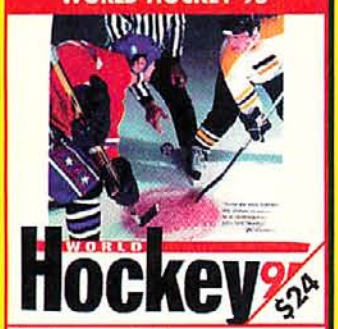

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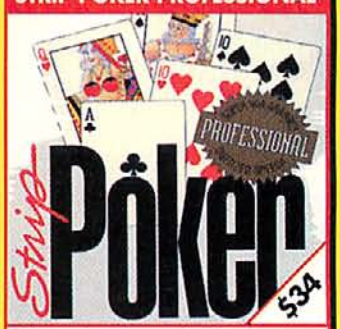

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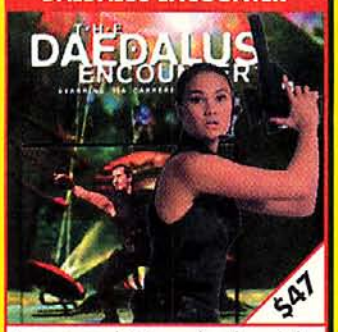

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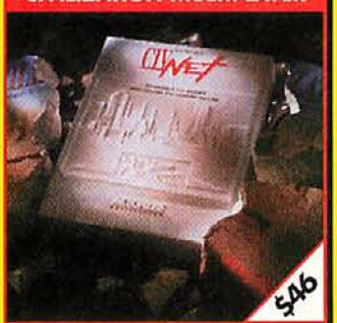

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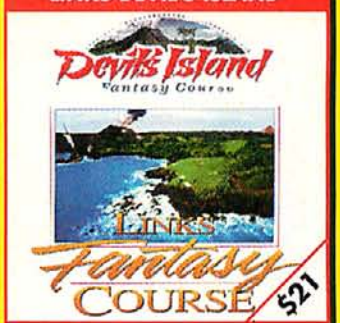

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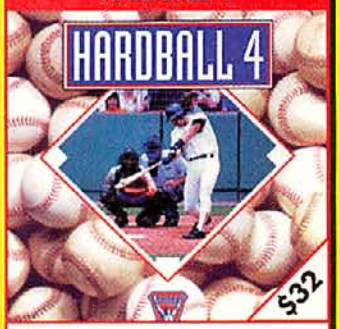

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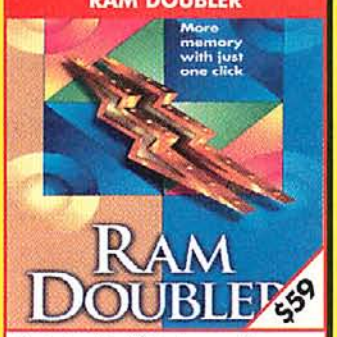

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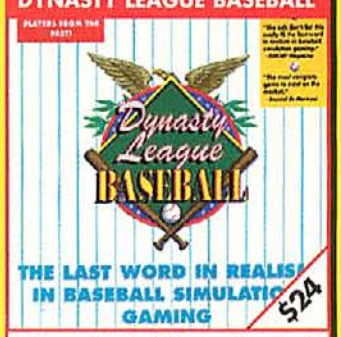

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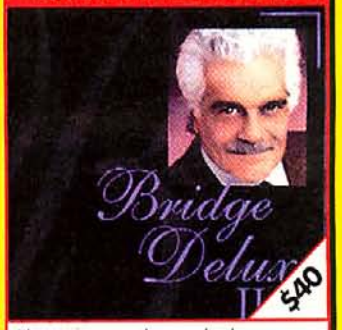

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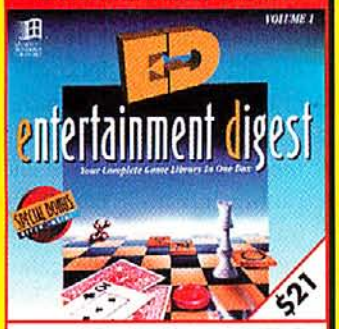

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Circle Reader Service #56

Kart Wheeling

SUPERKARTS Steers Small-Fry Racing Toward Big-Time Gaming

by Vox Day

IT'S THE DAY OF THE BIG RACE. THE HELMETED WARRIORS MOUNT THEIR WHEELED STEEDS, GUN THEIR ENGINES and head to the line. The throngs of fans come out to crowd the speedway, there to experience speed, strategy, and, yes, the possibility of a ten vehicle, high speed, pile up in turn #2. Is it Grand Prix? Formula One? NASCAR? Nope, it's Go-Kart!

SUPERKARTS

Price: N/A
System Requirements: 386SX/16 or better (486/33 recommended), 4 MB RAM, VGA graphics, CD-ROM; supports AdLib, Sound Blaster and compatible sound cards.
# of Players: 1 to 8 (network)
Protection: None
RSAC Rating: Violence (1)
Designer: Manic Media
Publisher: GT Interactive
New York, NY
(212) 726-6500

Okay, so maybe buzzing around a racetrack at 30 mph powered by a meager 125cc engine doesn't exactly inspire awe in racing sim fans. Some might even consider the thought downright boring when compared to the serious horsepower rush that premier racing simulations provide. But for sheer fun, it's hard to beat the concept of driving two inches off the ground in the open cockpit of a go-kart.

I have to admit that it was with some trepidation and rather low expectations that I popped SUPERKARTS into the PC. And although I was impressed by the lively pop techno audio track, I still expected the worst when an extremely long, 3D-animated sequence began playing. The colors were garish, the graphics were cartoon-like, and the driving controls seemed non-existent. Its style seemed to have more in common with a Saturday morning kids show than the average computer game—usually not a good sign, especially in a racing sim. Thankfully, my initial negativity didn't hold out.

After choosing between the four difficulty settings, I chose my driver from a diverse group of eight people from around the world. Drag racing has always excited me, so I elected to be one Katie Clark, a wild-eyed Aussie sporting a funky hairdo and a pink helmet. The first course, US #1, was on a Los Angeles beach. I was shocked midway through the first race: the computer controlled turbo-boosted karts were literally burning past me, accompanied by a signature 125cc whine. I was also surprised to learn that my first session took 3 hours and 17 minutes of real time, not the half hour I thought I'd spend.

"KART"-OLOGY

SUPERKARTS is a very simple concept and a very simple game. It's not very hard to drive a go-kart in the real world, and it isn't hard in this game. But this doesn't mean that races are easy to win, especially at the Pro level. The basic idea behind the game is not a difficult one to grasp: simply keep the joystick locked forward and move it left and right to keep your kart on track. With some skill and a little luck, you should be able to complete the five laps before any of the other seven competitors. Winners take home the whole enchilada; losers have to settle for table scraps.

While you can race individual tracks in the game's arcade mode, the real challenge is SUPERKART's 16-race full season mode. The eight host countries have two different racetracks, each of which has a "local" look-and-feel. The U.S. tracks are constructed on the beach, while the Moscow tracks are made of pure ice. The British and German tracks are both neo-industrial, the Brazilian tracks are grassy and tribal, the Australian tracks are wooden and wet, and the Tokyo courses are run at night under the neon lights. Sure, it's sort of a shallow, stereotypical form of multi-culturalism, but it does provide a nice variety of looks and keeps the scenery from getting boring.

EAT HEAT Using SUPERKARTS' turbo booster gives you some serious acceleration, but successful racers will avoid using it in the turns.

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TOP OF THE KARTS

In addition to providing you with the opportunity to race the great go-kart courses of the world, full season mode also gives you the chance to improve your racer over the course of a season. SUPERKART awards points and cash depending on what place you finish in. Points count towards the season title, of course, while cash can be used to purchase improvements for your SuperKart. Besides being able to purchase additional season points and powerups, you'll also be able to buy a bigger engine, stronger chassis, better tires, and a bigger fuel tank.

TWIN CAM RACING Eight players can race over a network, or two players can go head-to-head on the same PC.

It's the powerups that transform SUPERKARTS from a run-of-the-mill driving game into a serious threat to your sleep schedule. There are three different items that can be purchased from the shop between races or picked up as they appear randomly in the course of a race. Turbo provides your kart with a brief burst of super speed, which is extremely useful on the straight-aways. Oil is used not as a lubricant, but as a weapon that gives you the means of sending a closely trailing competitor sliding off the track into the side walls. SuperGrip usually proves to be the most important powerup though, since losing speed around tight curves and getting trapped in corners will do horrid things to your finish time.

Using the powerups in SUPERKARTS is admirably simple. Pressing the second joystick (or gamepad) button switches between the three Special Features, as the game calls them; button one activates the chosen Feature. When first playing, you'll find it tempting to keep the Turbo Boost at hand most of the time, but don't forget about the SuperGrip—you'll need to learn to use it properly if you want to win, especially in Brazil.

Despite the ability to use oil as a weapon, this is not a go-kart, PC version of ROAD RASH.

SuperKarters usually keep it pretty peaceful with only the occasional inadvertent bump in the corners to keep you honest. The computer-controlled competitors seem to prefer burning past you on Turbo over rough-housing and playing dirty. The same cannot be said, of course, for your networked human competitors. Bumping into walls and other karts racks up the damage to your kart, which requires a pit stop to repair. Too much damage, and you'll find yourself crawling along in a billowing cloud of smoke as your opponents fly past you.

RACE TRACKING Each track's brief write-up describes the terrain, gives race tips, and displays the fastest lap time ever recorded.

Like most games, SUPERKARTS is at its most intense when played against other humans. You can play with up to eight players on an IPX-compatible network, or you can go head-to-head on the same computer, using a split-screen view. Surprisingly, SUPERKARTS does not provide modem play support. Also, because it plays off the CD-ROM, each network player has to have his own copy of the game as well as his own CD-ROM drive. Some sort of multiplayer licensing would have been much more convenient.

KART BLANCHE

The race graphics are good, although they're remarkably bright, with a lot more neon and pastels than you'd normally expect to see. The cut-scenes and character graphics are a little cartoonish; apparently most of the drivers on the circuit either juice steroids or have a close, personal relationship with the Domino's delivery boy. The high-pitched hum of the karts occasionally comes pretty close to irritating, but as the game's action draws you in, you quickly cease to notice anything but the next curve on the track.

The graphics engine is a fast one, and consequently SUPERKARTS plays very quickly, even on a middle-of-the-road 486. However, the engine does have one glaring weakness: there are no diagonal walls. It is very easy to get trapped in the many little corners around the course, and you will often see a computer-controlled racer stuck in one, mindlessly butting against the walls. Of course, the solution is an easy one—keep your kart on the track!

Despite its shortcomings and econo-ESPN feel, I like SUPERKARTS. It has a funky sort of *Speed Racer* feel to it that will appeal to almost everyone. While it isn't going to blow the mind of most gamers, it does provide a fun, fast-paced way to spend some quality time with your PC. Because it is so easily accessible, this is also an excellent game for new gamers, as well as for younger gamers whose parents can't deal with video violence.

THE EDITORS SPEAK

SUPERKARTS

RATING 4

PROS: It's fast, it's fun, and it's easy to get into.

CONS: Once you've quickly burned through the 16 tracks, the game runs out of gas. Sweet, but short-lived.

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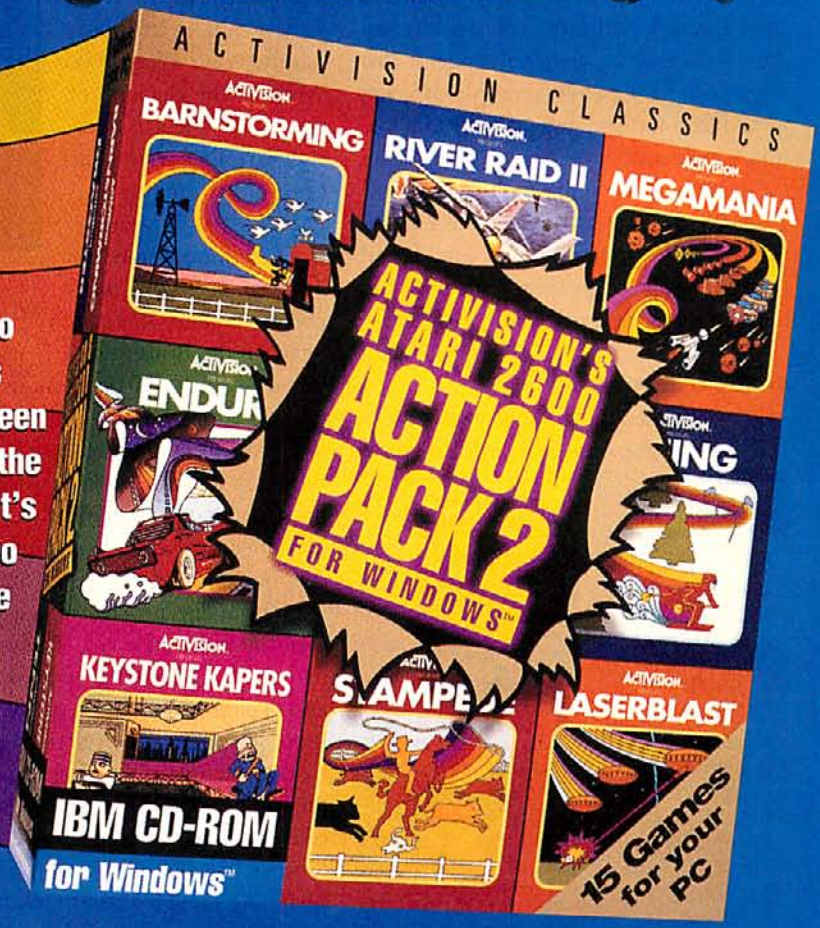

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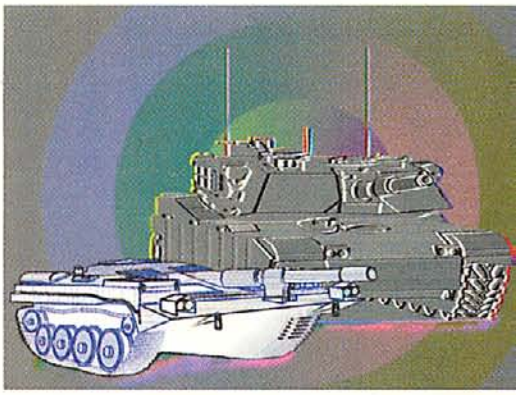


Domark's TANK COMMANDER Comes Out With Guns A'Blazing, But Can't Find Its Target

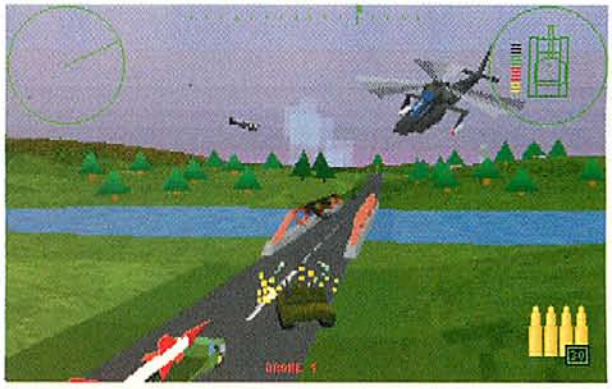
by Martin E. Cirulis

The most difficult thing about a big creative project, be it computer game, novel or painting, is maintaining a clear vision of what you are trying to achieve. Sometimes it's good for a book to end up someplace a little different than the author intended, but it is usually not good for a computer game. A case in point is TANK COMMANDER from **Domark Software**. While the recent ads and marketing materials suggest that it is a light, shoot-em-up romp that is not to be taken too seriously, the documentation contains such quotes as "...surpasses the realism of any other tank simulation." It seems this project didn't quite end up where the designers hoped it would, and the result is a rough beast with a paw in both the action and simulation worlds.

TANK DREAMS

For years now, there has been an unspoken quest in the tank-sim world to create the game that would surpass the benchmark set so long ago by **MicroProse**'s M-1 TANK PLATOON. While various titles have come and gone, some with faster play or better graphics, the balance of realism vs. playability struck in M-1 TANK PLATOON eludes designers to this day. TANK COMMANDER, unfortunately, is no exception. While all the elements of the old classic are here, they aren't carried far enough to make this game a real contender.

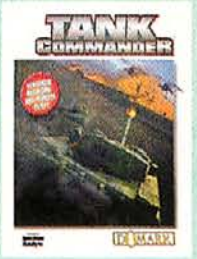
The game seems to have started out with good intentions. It is centered on the British *Challenger II* Main Battle Tank, a pleasant change from the M-1-centric world we seem to live in, and it also seems solidly rooted in the platoon-level world of standard armor tactics. The player can give movement orders via waypoints to any of the four tanks under his command, and jump from direct control of one to another with the touch of a key. The other standards of tank-simming, such as air-strikes and satellite update maps, are here as well; there are even some refreshing touches, such as the use of a roving camera above the battlefield in the guise of helicopter recon. Movement mechanics also have nice touches like sliding on steep grades and becoming pinned against tank traps. The tanks can be controlled through multiple viewpoints, some within the vehicle and a couple outside, although lighting effectively from the external views would require a far better judge of angle than I.



BRIDGING THE GAP Although TANK COMMANDER occasionally hints at serious simulation, it is, at its core, an action game.

Players can choose from a number of campaigns that use linked scenarios to conduct them from inception to success, and there is very little in the way of permanent death here; you simply restart the scenario if you should fail. While the initial scenario of most campaigns is a fairly simple affair, missions rise in difficulty so quickly that by the third mission most players will be scrambling just to stay alive. Threats range from individual soldiers, who are great fun to run over, to machine-gun carrying jeeps and trucks to deadly MBT's and Apache gunships. While these units sometimes are more annoyance than threat, they are fairly intelligent, and most are mobile enough to make tagging them with a shell a tricky task. Luckily, the play-

TANK COMMANDER



Price: $59.95
System Requirements: IBM compatible 386DX or better, 4MB RAM, 30 MB hard drive space, SVGA graphics, CD-ROM, mouse; supports Sound Blaster or compatible sound cards.
Players: 1-4 (2 by modem), (4 by network)
Protection: None
Publisher: Domark Software
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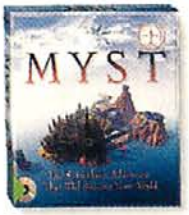

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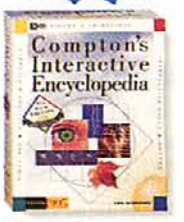

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er has more than the main gun, and pesky targets can be riddled with the coaxial machine gun, blasted with guided missiles, or incinerated by flame-throwers.

GETTING TANKED...

Now, this list of weapons may sound a little odd to the grognards out there, who thought they were pretty clear on the armaments of the more popular MBT's on the market. They are correct in their suspicions, and the armaments aboard these tanks are your first clue that the "realism" was ditched at some point in the game's development. Unfortunately this may turn out to be a huge tactical error. A serious sim-jockey might gladly exchange crude polygons for good modeling and detailed weapons, but if the plan is to hawk this game as an easy-to-learn blast fest then it is seriously devoid of the eye-candy that action gamers are accustomed to.

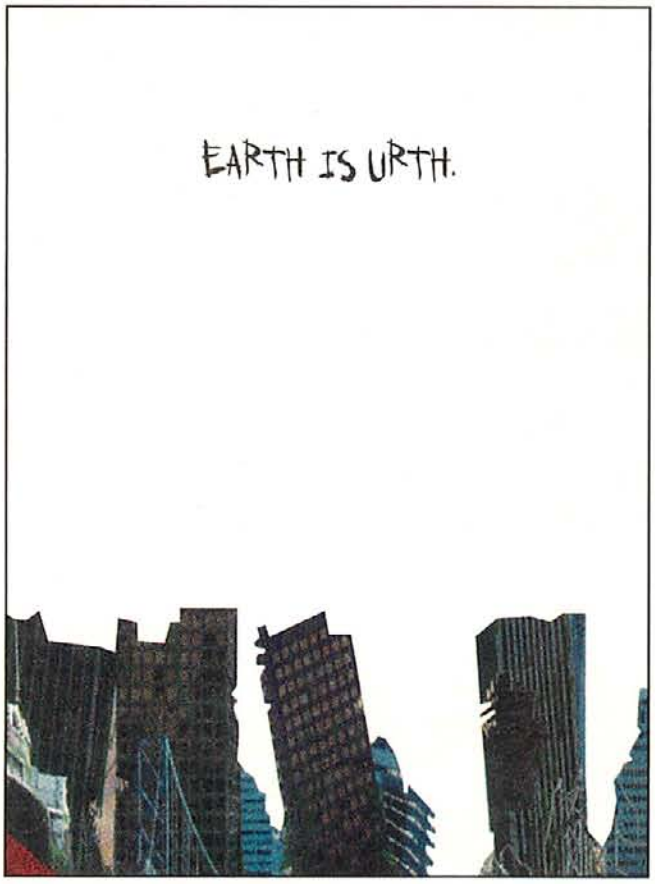
Right from the get-go, this product screams "Quick and Dirty." From the sparse documentation—printed on only one side of every page—to the characterless crew position screens, the game seems drawn from the "Freddy Laker Business School" philosophy. While the action is definitely here, production values are not. The graphics are from a couple of years ago and the sound, while marginally useful, is not up to the standards of today's top-notch sims.

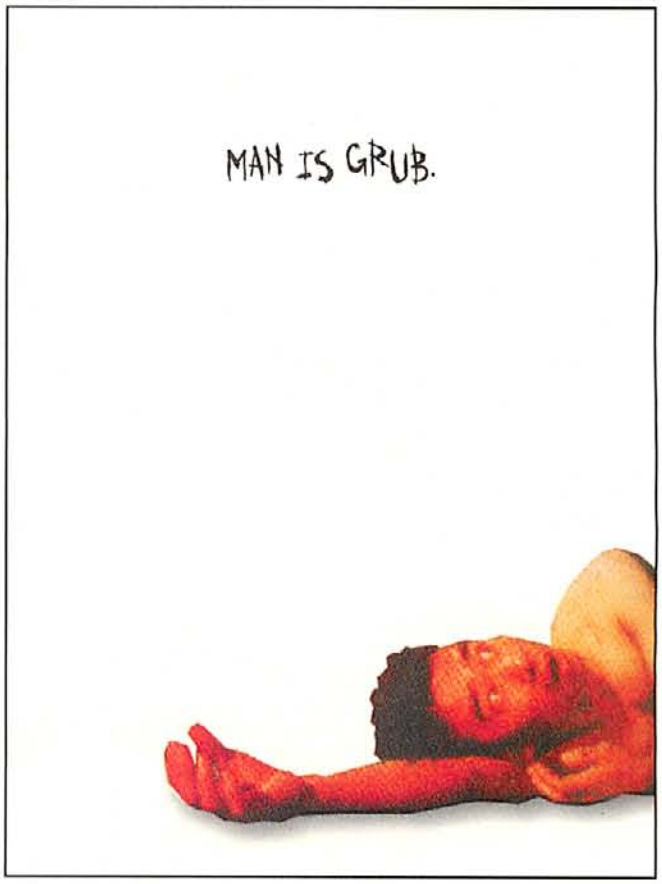
ROAD KILL Infantry men may look intimidating, but their soft pink flesh is no match for your tank treads.

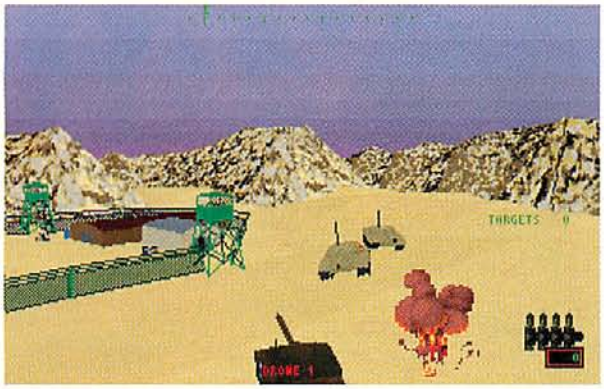
Even though TANK COMMANDER is a dumbed down attempt at a tank sim, I was hoping for just a few features that model a real tank's capabilities. I didn't find them. While not an expert on British armor, I do know enough to expect little things like laser range-finding/target acquisition equipment and smoke dispensers. Also, last time I checked, tanks didn't have a damage bar that is eroded by enemy shells and bullets until you finally explode. There are no subtleties of combat like thrown tracks, damaged equipment or wounded crew to bother the player in this reality. If the damage bar isn't enough to convince you that you're in an arcade universe, the presence of "power-ups" that can augment weapons or armor is a dead giveaway.

THE FIRST LAW...

The war is not completely lost for TANK COMMANDER. Some things it does fairly well, such as the large variety of target vehicles, and innovation isn't a complete stranger. The pre-game interface is very well done, giving the player complete set-







TANKS A LOT Things get difficult quickly in TANK COMMANDER; before you know it you'll find yourself outnumbered and outgunned.

up and control choices at the beginning of every session, and this is very useful considering how much the game stresses its one strength—connectivity. TANK COMMANDER benefits handily from Martin's First Law of Networking, restated here for those who haven't been studying, which says that "The Lameness co-efficient of any computer game varies inversely with the number of people capable of networking to it."

TANK COMMANDER has been designed to allow for multiple players to fight it out across a handful of terrain types in a version of capture the flag, with as little muss and fuss setting things up as possible. For two players there are the two old reliables of the modem and serial connection, both of which are easily set up with the opening interface and the fairly extensive text-file support on the CD. And, for those lucky enough to be on a network, four players can link up over any IPX-capable net. While the experience isn't anything like a real battlefield, it is a fun, adrenal game of cat-and-mouse struggle on a par with SPECTRE.

RETREADS AND RECALLS

When all is said, though, I'm afraid I cannot recommend TANK COMMANDER to the solo gamer. It just doesn't have enough to offer—everything it does has been done better elsewhere. Its dated look and its simplistic design won't even permit the average sim player to overlook its shortcomings in realism and execution.

On the other hand, if you do have access to modem or network technology, then the game becomes significantly more attractive, although you have to convince each of your friends to buy the game.

TANK COMMANDER is a decent try, but it looks like the crowns for King of the Armor-Sims and King of the Network Action Game are in no danger of changing heads.

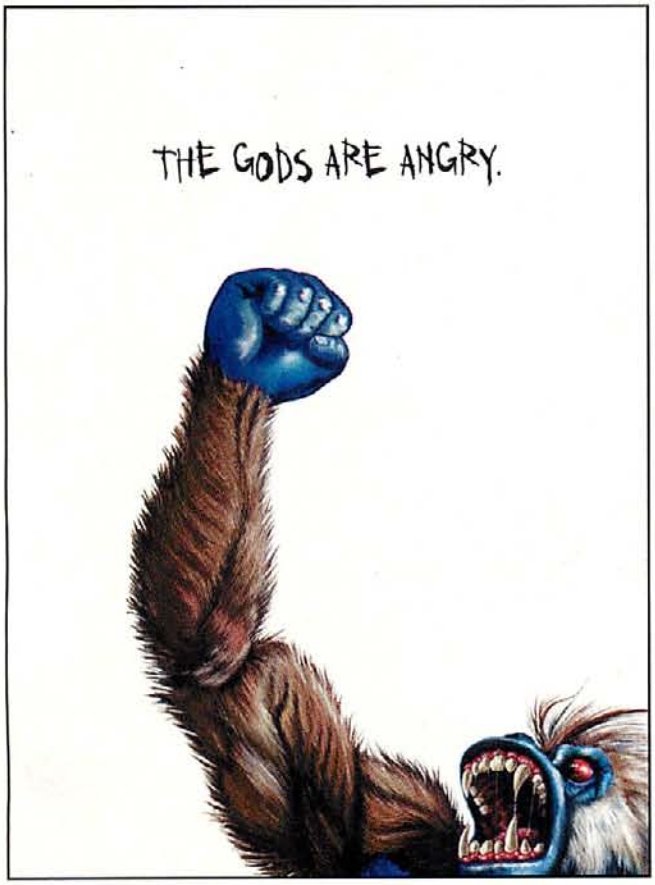
THE EDITORS SPEAK

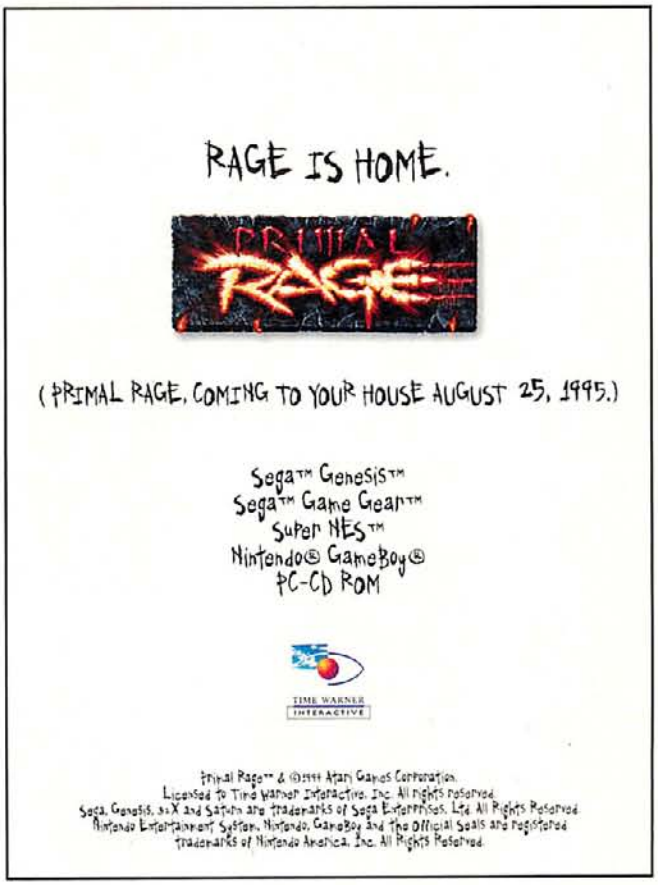
TANK COMMANDER

RATING 3

PROS Network and modem play can be fun if you don't mind the arcade flavor, and there are some innovative view and control features.

CONS As a solo game, it sits in the lukewarm waters between a simulation and an action game, with little to recommend it.





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Should Auld Acquaintance Be Forgot?

An Old Geezer Of Gaming Trips Down Atari's Memory Lane

by Charles Ardai

STEP UP TO THE ROCKER, BOY, AND SPEAK INTO YOUR PAPPY'S GOOD EAR. WHAT'S THAT? NO, WE didn't have Nintendo in the old days, at least not the way you mean it. We had Colecovision, and before that Intellivision, and before that, right at the start of it all, we had the Atari 2600. Now, there was a game system a boy could call his own! Brown and square and ugly as sin, came complete with two joysticks, a pair of paddles, a free—

Don't interrupt me when I'm talking to you, boy. "Paddles" were like joysticks, if you've gotta ask, only they had a knob on them that you'd turn clockwise or counterclockwise, instead of a stick that you'd push left, right, up or down.

"Why?" What kind of question is that, son? You needed paddles if you wanted to play games like KABOOM! and PONG, that's reason enough right there.

Lord almighty, child, you mean to tell me you never heard of KABOOM!? Hell, there's even a version for your ever-lovin' Nintendo—I saw it in a catalog coupla months back. And PITFALL!? Please don't tell me you never heard of PITFALL!.

Okay. I can see there's a bit of learnin' you seem to have skipped at that fancy school of yours. Sit on your pappy's knee and we'll rectify that right now.

ACTIVE VISION

Used to be, the only company that made games for a cartridge game system was the company that made the system in the first place. So, **Atari** made all the cartridges for the Atari 2600, **Mattel** made all the cartridges for the Intellivision, and so forth, right down the line. Then, along comes this bunch of upstarts calling themselves "**Activision**," fulla' big notions about how games ought to be designed and how game designers ought to be treated.

ATARI 2600 ACTION PACK

Price: $29.95
System Requirements: IBM compatible 486/33 or better, 4 MB RAM, 10 MB hard drive space, SVGA graphics, Windows 3.1, CD-ROM; supports Sound Blaster compatible sound cards.
Protection: None
Designers: Various
Publisher: Activision
Los Angeles, CA
(310) 473-9200

What's that? Like artists, is how. The same as folks who write novels or screenplays, with their names in the credits and everything.

Oh, you meant how the games ought to be designed. That's simple. The boys at Activision figured their games ought to push the limits of the technology—which was none too hard to do, since there was hardly any technology to speak of, and plenty of limits. Your average game—you listening to this, boy?—took up all of 2K. A monster game for the Atari 2600 was 4K. That's as compared to some of your new computer games, which take up ten thousand times that much memory, or some of your CD-ROM games which take up a hundred times more even than that.

So, those designers had awfully little to work with. And even so, they managed to put together some games that were snazzy to look at and loads of fun to play. While Atari was churning out crap by the bucketload, such as their versions of E.T., PAC-MAN and RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK, Activision came out with games that were consistently clever, addictive, and better than anything else on the market.

Like KABOOM!, yes, and also like RIVER RAID and PITFALL! and H.E.R.O, which I must say I never liked, but other people must have since it sold a lot of copies. And FREEWAY, which was sort of like FROGGER, only it was a chicken you were moving across a busy highway, not a frog. And CHOPPER COMMAND, which was sort of like DEFENDER, only you were flying a helicopter, not a spaceship. And BOXING and FISHING DERBY—you can probably figure out what those two were about on your own.

Oh, so you have heard of them, have you? Why didn't you say so? What's that you've got there?

Oh, my. Oh, my. A CD with all those games I just mentioned on it, and another seven besides. Is that for me? For my birthday? What can I say, son? You've just made an old man very happy.

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Movable perspective	No	Yes
Interacts w/background	No	Yes
Replay mode	No	Yes
3D Bio Motion	No	Yes

MINDSCAPE

3D BIO MOTION

SAVAGE WARRIORS™

Circle Reader Service #103

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YOU CAN'T GO HOME AGAIN

Well, don't just sit there, let's boot the thing up!

Funny they put it on a CD. Fifteen games, even at 4K apiece, you should be able to fit that on a floppy disk with room left over for the Encyclopedia Brittanica.

Here we go. How do you like that, the way they did the Windows icons to look like the original game boxes in miniature? Okay, Mr. Bigshot: you're not impressed. I think it's pretty. Which one you want to try first? CRACKPOTS? Fine.

Now, hold on! It's one thing to show the game boxes in miniature, but the whole game screen? What's going on? Am I supposed to play these games on a screen that's smaller than a playing card?

What's that you said? Click where? Oh. Well, that's better. But now I see why they start 'em off so small. When you blow them up to full-screen size, the graphics start looking mighty chunky. Were they that bad in the old days? I remembered Activision's games being the best-looking ones around...but maybe this was as good as it got.

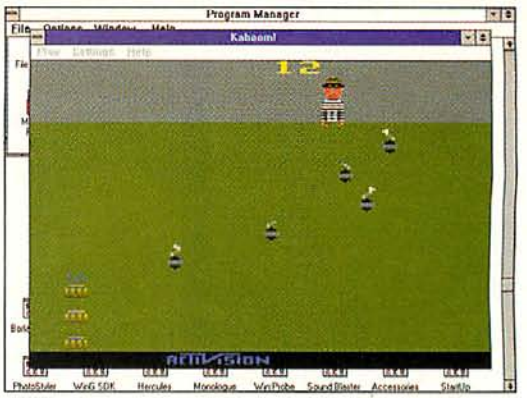
Nice how they've added bits of commentary from the original designers that you can read before you play the game. They could have bothered to spell "COBOL" correctly, but it's not my place to be too picky.

Let's start this thing.

Well. That wasn't so much fun. Kinda simplistic, you just going back and forth, dropping flowerpots on bugs as they come crawling up the screen. They keep coming and you keep dropping until too many have scooted past you, and then the game's over.

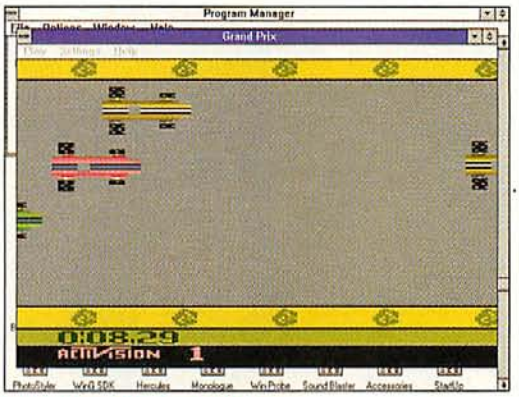
And the keyboard controls—that's no way to play this game, with a keyboard instead of a joystick. I could hardly get my guy positioned over the windows properly. Let's try another.

That's funny; I remembered FREEWAY being more fun, too. All you do is move your chicken up, up, up, up, until he's safely across or a truck's creamed him. That's the whole game. How about KABOOM!?



U DROP THE BOMB ON ME KABOOM! was the king of eye-hand coordination games in its day. But can it be the same without those goofy Atari paddles?

Oh, man. It's still addictive, if you ask me, but all there is to it is moving a tray back and forth along the bottom of the screen, catching bombs as they fall. Yes, I did know that beforehand, son; but somehow I remembered there being more...



THE GRANDDADDY OF THEM ALL GRAND PRIX set the pace for hundreds of racing games to come.

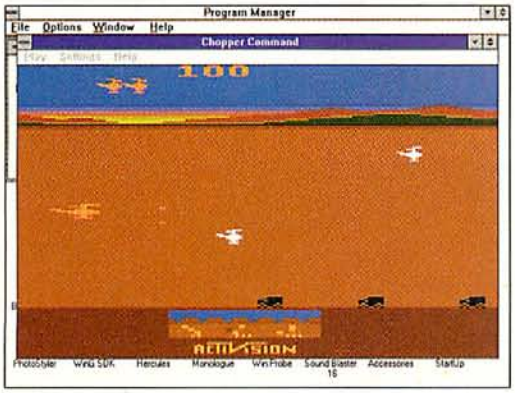
Fine. Forget about boxing and fishing: those games were old even when they were new. And forget about COSMIC COMMUTER and SEAQUEST, which were half-baked ideas to begin with. If any of them will have held up over time, it'll be the complex ones. RIVER RAID and PITFALL.

That's better! Okay, not much, as you say. When you're right, you're right, boy. Still mighty simplistic, still kinda' ugly. But compare them to the others! Flying a whole mission over a multi-screen network of sea lanes, shooting down 'copters, blowing up bridges, and refueling in the nick of time? Running through a jungle, swinging from vines, leaping across ponds on the backs of alligators' heads? Think how revolutionary this was back in the '80s, when the nearest competitor was a game in which you were dropping flowerpots on bugs or catching bombs in a tray!

Oh, I daresay you're right—there's no reason to play games this primitive today, when everything else out there is so much better—but these aren't games you play, son. They're a history lesson. They're nostalgia. It's not like THE LOST TREASURES OF INFOCOM, which you got me last year; those games are as good now as they were ten years ago. These are...relics. But so's a piece of the true cross or the finger bone of a saint. I knelt before 'em for hours as a boy, hands clasped before me passionately.... Just seeing 'em again makes me choke up.

Thank you, son. That was a great birthday present.

Now how about a game of DOOM, champ?



CHOPPER SUEY CHOPPER COMMAND, a DEFENDER-like, side-scrolling flight game, became a big hit on 8-bit computers as CHOPLIFTER.

THE EDITORS SPEAK

ATARI 2600 ACTION PACK

RATING: NOT RATED

PROS These are the games we grew up playing.

CONS These titles are to modern computer games what sequential cave drawings are to the movies. Of historical interest only.

Stop:

Yeah you. Takin' 15 items into the 10 items or less lane. Doin' 75, passin' everybody on the right. Gettin' ready to zip past the next few pages without even realizing you could be missing the best PC games you've ever laid eyes on. And that would be bad. Worse than a cashier in training. Worse than a blue-haired motorcade at rush hour.

So, do yourself a favor. Slow down. Take a nice long look at our games. Then, if you see something you like, take off like a windsock in an off-shore tropical storm and pick it up. (So we're hypocrites. It could be worse.)

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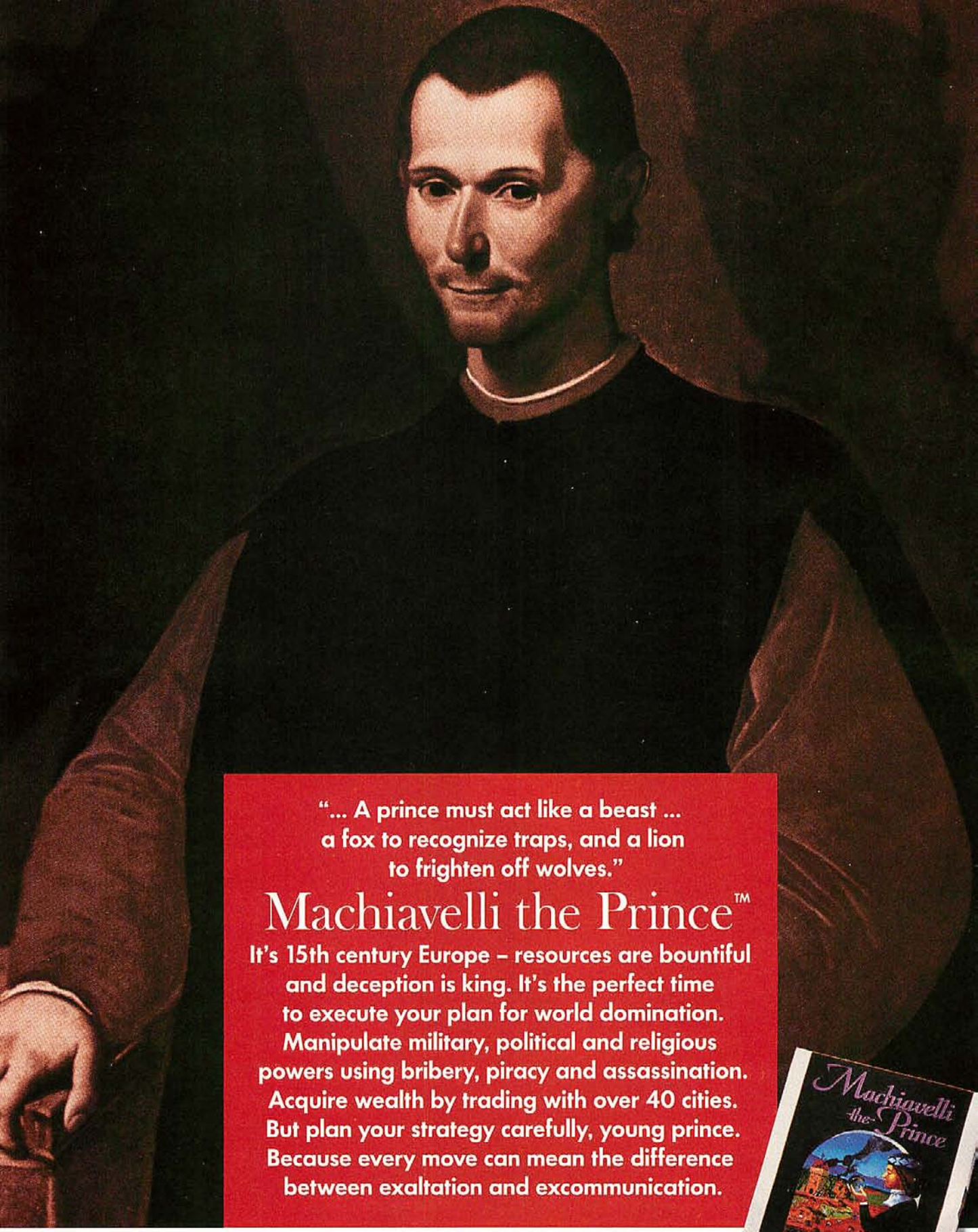

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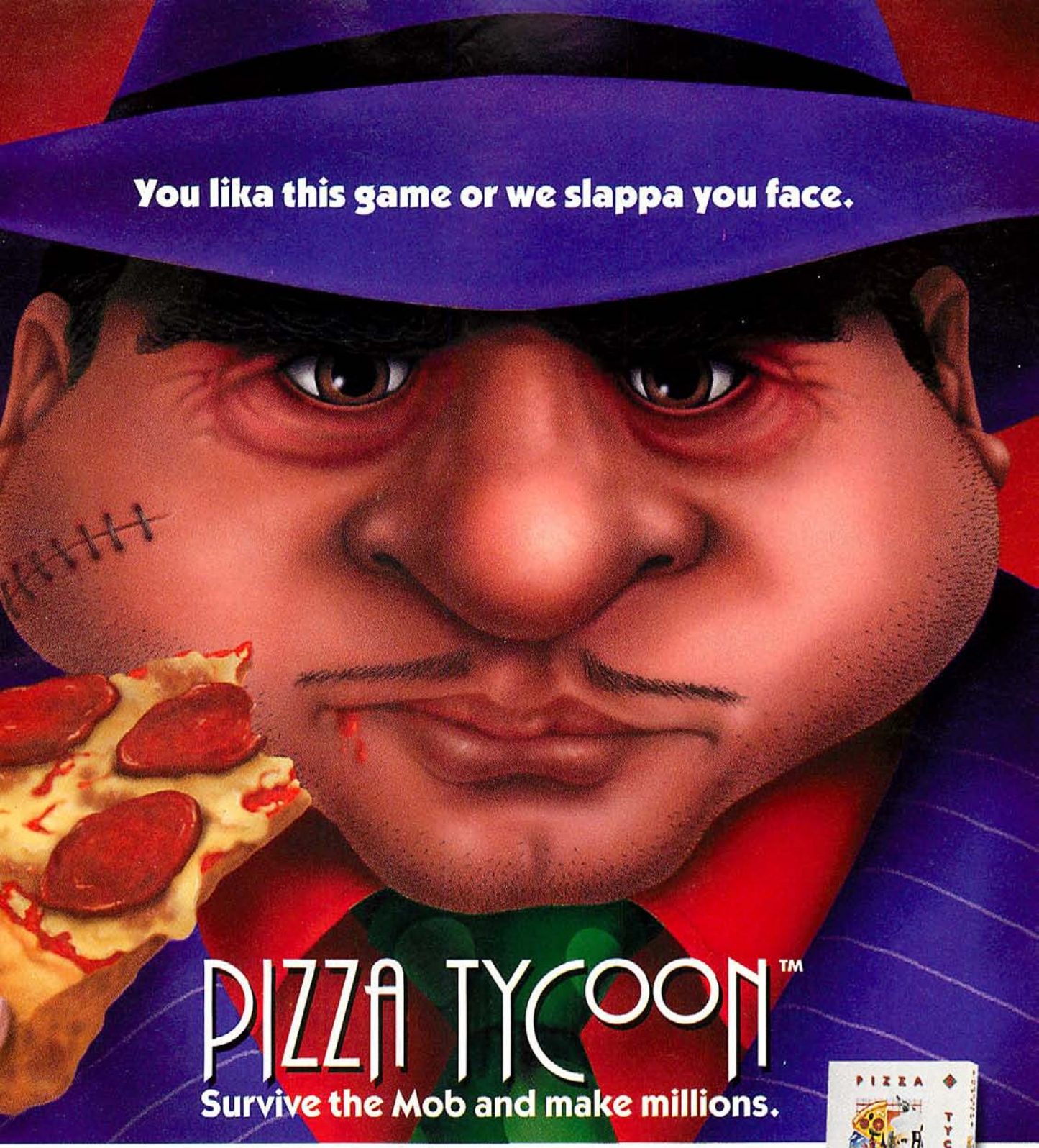

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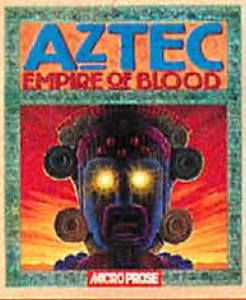

the gods. (Please them with human sacrifices and you're in for a real treat.) Or, witness the end of the world as your empire falls victim to drought and famine. No matter what happens, you can be sure that with the Aztecs, you'll have a lot on your plate.

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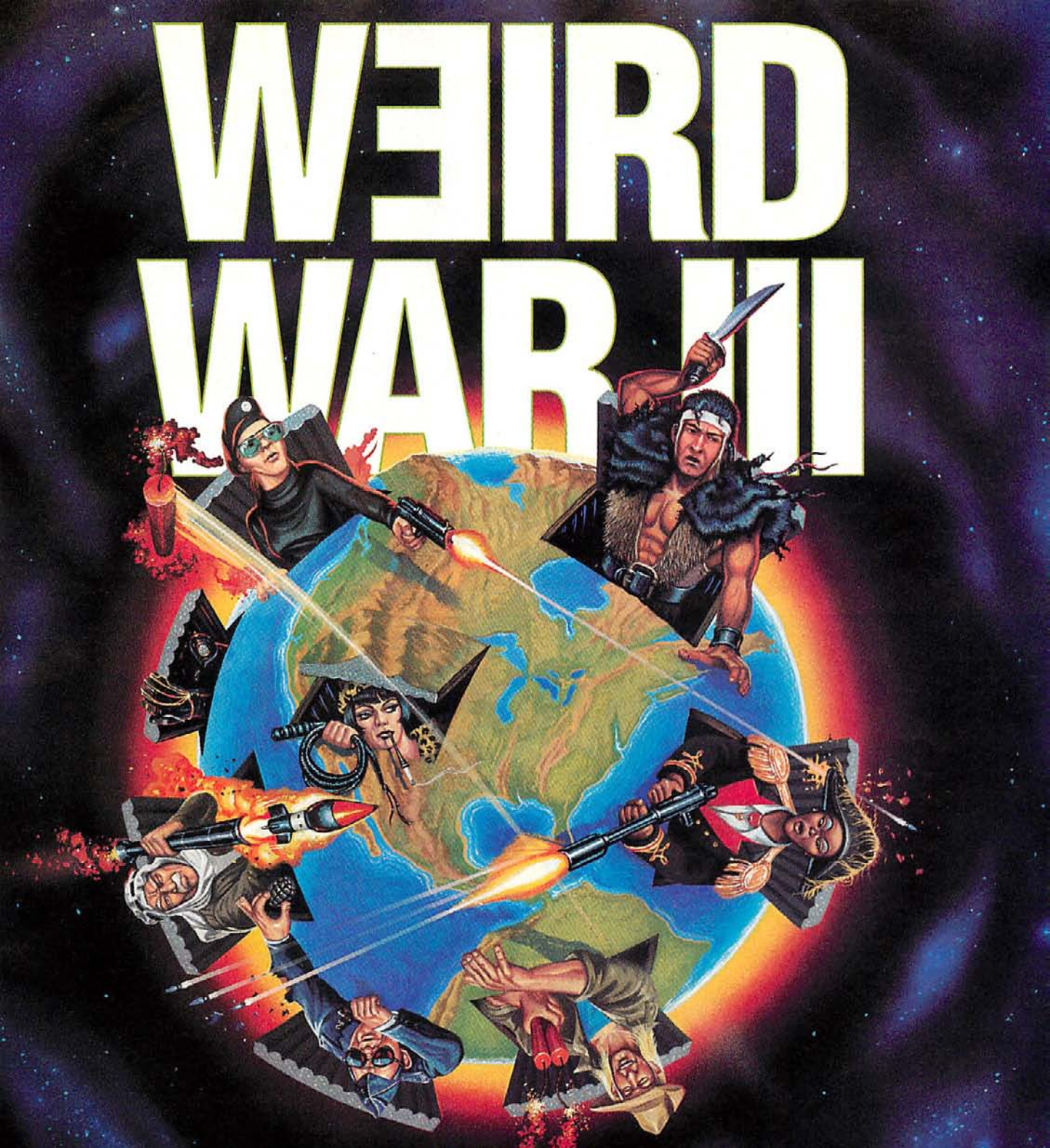
WEIRD WAR III



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Miami 5:47 p.m.

Mark draws power from his mana pool and summons a Mesa Pegasus.

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Angela taps her mountains for one point of red mana. She casts Earthbind.

Mark's Pegasus flies straight to the graveyard.

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Wizards OF THE COAST

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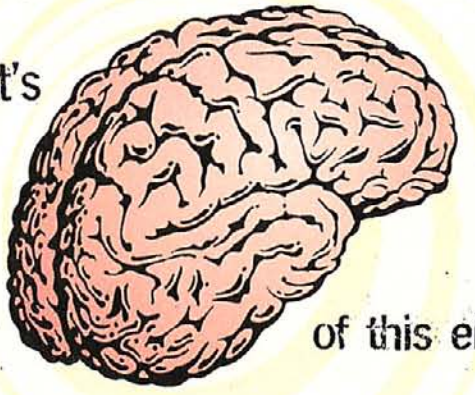
So I'm traveling through this dead guy's brain...

No, not stompin' on mushy gray matter. That'd be sick. I'm cruising this mad scientist's  neuro net as a *pulse* probe. Poking around for information that could unlock the secrets of this electrolytic underworld. And I'm right on the verge of solving a highly *intense* puzzle – when my *wife* asks me to take out the garbage. **Bummer.**

Necrobius™
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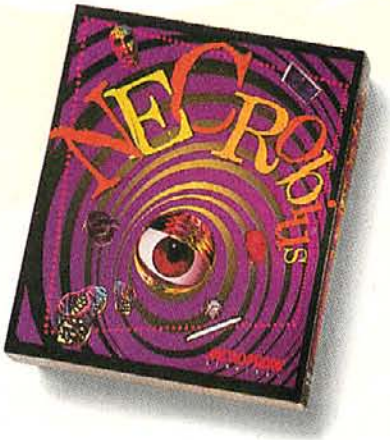

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Virtual War College

SIGN UP FOR MULTIMEDIA GROUND SCHOOL TO INCREASE YOUR SKILLS AND KILLS

by Denny Atkin

BOGEY'S BAR & GRILL

When you boot up your favorite flight sim and jump into the virtual cockpit, you may just want to take off and blow things up. That's fun for a while, especially if you've had "one of those days." But to really make the most of the experience, you've got to dive into the part of the fighter pilot. The real fun isn't in piloting a simulated aircraft, but in putting yourself in the place of the pilot you're simulating, imagining yourself in a life-and-death situation. Flying around and shooting things can be a blast, but building real fighter pilot skills can leave you with a lasting sense of accomplishment.

You wouldn't expect the Air Force to hand a new recruit the keys to an F-15 and say "have fun." Real pilots undergo rigorous training, learning all they can about both their aircraft and about combat tactics. Of course, the Air Force and Naval Academies aren't likely to start offering extension courses for sim pilots any time soon, so novices will have to find training somewhere else.

MULTIMEDIA MATRICULATION

If you have a CD-ROM drive, you can get that training right on your PC. Between multimedia-enhanced flight simulators and aviation-related reference titles, the novice PC pilot can learn lots from those shiny silver discs.

1942: The Pacific Air War Gold is a good primer for the wannabe piston-engine pilot. The enhanced CD release of **MicroProse**'s World War II naval air combat simulation adds more than just a few gratuitous video segments. The Flight School section explains basic flight principles and procedures, covering takeoff, landing, formation flying, and control and instruments. Advanced flight tutorials for both fighters and bombers cover the tactics that you'll need to learn if you're going to destroy your targets and get home with a plane still wrapped around you. A narrator explains maneuvers such as the Immelman, Split-S, Skid, and Scissors, while diagrams and video clips illustrate the techniques. Bomber pilots will learn how to set up their runs and deliver ordnance on-target. Some tips are included which seem obvious but are worth mentioning, such as avoiding flak and not concentrating so hard on your strafing target that you fly directly into it.

1942: Gold also includes a reference section with development histories and basic information about the planes used in the game. The information isn't as thorough as that in some of the reference

ON THE RADAR

Tired of fixed-wing flight? Then stop griping, boy, throw a rotor on your beanie, and take to the skies. The latest fad in simulations is Apache attack helicopter sims, and we'll see at least three over the next year.

Interactive Magic will be the first to liftoff with their Apache, The Combat Helicopter Simulation, which is hitting the shelves at press time. Developed by Digital Integration and published by "Wild Bill" Stealey's Interactive Magic, Apache is a mission-based combat simulation set in Korea, Yemen and Cyprus. If the mission-planning elements are as interesting as those in DI's Tornado, this could be a sim to fly for.

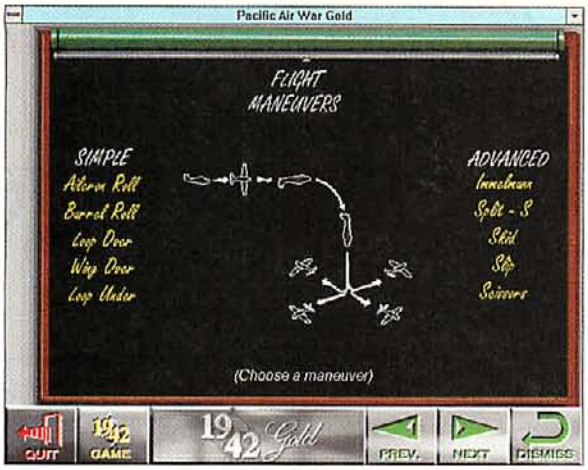
Domark's take on Apache combat is still a year away, but it may be worth the wait. Designed by Bryan Walker, an Apache pilot who flew many missions in Desert Storm, Domark's game should have a flight model and mission structure of the highest fidelity. Set in Colombia, Bosnia, the Middle East, and Russia, the game will offer 2-18 day campaigns and a complete 3-D environment.

(continued on page 124)

titles I looked at, but there's enough information there that beginning pilots will learn not to get into a turning fight against a Zeke. You'll also find some good historical background on the strategies and chain of events of the battles covered in the game.

If jets are more your speed, FLEET DEFENDER GOLD, MicroProse's F-14 simulator, sports similar reference material related to modern carrier combat. Green pilots will appreciate the Flight School section's procedural walkthroughs of arming planes, taking off, searching for the enemy, defensive and offensive maneuvers, and landing. A cockpit tour lets you click on any instrument to get a full explanation of its function and operation. This is especially helpful for learning how to operate the various modes of the F-14's sophisticated radar system. Excerpts from *Aviation Week and Space Technology*'s "Flight Deck" video afford good background on how carrier operations work, and a riveting audio recording of the downing of two Libyan MiG-23s gives you an impression of how intense real air combat can be.

The tutorials and background information provided with these sims are geared toward their own products, but the tactics will translate to any authentic simulation.



CHALK IT UP TO EXPERIENCE The Flight School section in 1942: THE PACIFIC AIR WAR GOLD explains combat maneuvers, while diagrams and video clips illustrate the techniques.

LIGHTNING ON THE WINGS There's a wealth of aircraft, pilot and battle information on The Discovery Channel's WINGS OVER EUROPE CD-ROM, including footage from TDC's popular *Wings* TV show.

HISTORY LESSONS

Just as important as understanding basic combat techniques is knowing the capabilities and limitations of the planes you and your opponents are flying. You can find some great background information on CD-ROMs targeted at aviation aficionados. These multimedia reference works are information-packed, professional-quality presentations from the likes of the folks behind The Discovery Channel's *Wings* and A&E's *Brute Force*.

The best of these titles for the World War II sim pilot is **The Discovery Channel**'s WINGS OVER EUROPE CD-ROM. This reference work is packed with detail on a selection of aircraft used in the European theatre, including the Bf-109, Ju-87 Stuka, Spitfire, Il-2 Stormovik, B-17 Flying Fortress, P-38 Lightning, P-51 Mustang, and the Me-262 jet fighter. You'll learn about the planes, the battles they fought in, and the men who flew them. For each plane you'll find an introductory video (taken from Discovery's popular *Wings* television show), a 3-D model which can be viewed from any angle, a profile of a crew or pilot, and a play-by-play of a major battle or campaign flown by that plane. Click on the P-38 and you can view a film about Operation Overlord, read an interview with General Robin Olds (who made his first five kills in a P-38 during World War II and his final four against MiG jets in Vietnam), and watch a play-by-play of the 79th Fighter Squadron's attack on Salzwedel, Germany in 1944.

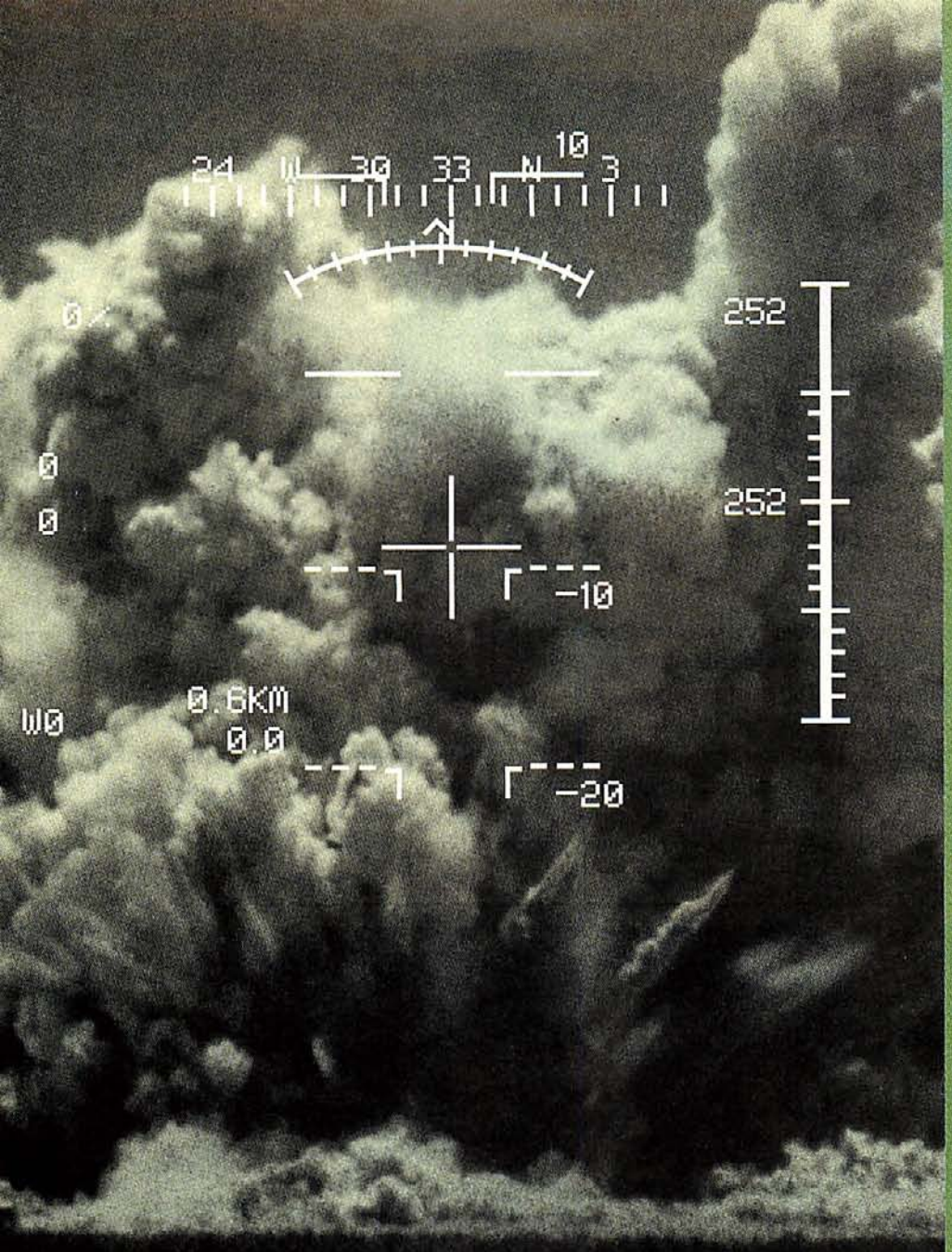
A reference screen lets you compare the size, range, ceiling, gun armament, bomb load, speed, and climb of various planes. You can test your newly-learned knowledge by taking armament and silhouette quizzes, or by flying the bundled version of **Dynamix**' ACES OVER EUROPE. The disc is packed with information that might even be new to seasoned aviation history buffs. When reading about the Ilyushin Il-2 Stormovik, for example, you'll also be able to learn about The Night Witches, a group of female Soviet pilots who bravely flew Poliparkov Po-2 biplanes against the Luftwaffe.

Similar in concept is **Spectrum HoloByte**'s WILD BLUE YONDER series. The "Golden Age" disc chronicles combat aviation from its inception through World War II, while "50 Years of Gs and Jets" picks up with America's first jet, the P-59, and carries through to the F-22. You'll read about the development of each plane while listening to great period music, and then take in the stories of the pilots who flew them while battle sounds rage in the background. You can compare performance statistics such as climb rates and top speed, and view each plane's weapons load and instrument panel (with close-ups of major instru-

RADAR *(continued from page 123)*

When players land their craft, they'll be able to walk around a 3-D base. If the base is attacked, the player had better run for cover or risk being taken out by shrapnel!

Origin Systems will probably fly third in the Apache formation. They've recently hired Andy Hollis, formerly of MicroProse, to put together their sim. The details are still sketchy on this one, but it wouldn't be too presumptuous to guess that there will be a little cinema sprinkled on top of Origin's air combat action.



FASTEN YOUR SEATBELTS,
THE RIDE MAY GET A LITTLE BUMPY.

APACHE

The Combat Helicopter Simulation

From Digital Integration

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War may be hell. But not from where you're sitting. It's 100% pure adrenaline, white knuckle, non-stop, in-your-face action with Apache. From the company committed to providing the

most gut-wrenching CD-ROM games, Interactive Magic. It will hurl you into the middle of unbelievable 3-D graphics. It's equipped with an incredible arsenal of weapons.

And the explosions are so realistic, you'll be thankful it's just a game. So pick up Apache, the ultimate combat helicopter simulation for your PC. And strap yourself in.

INTERACTIVE MAGIC

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Circle Reader Service #14

ments). The audio on these disks—especially the recordings of actual battles—is superb.

Medio's JETS! is more inclusive than the WILD BLUE YONDER discs, with video, statistics, and articles on dozens of military jets from the '40s to the present. It's not quite as carefully put together as the other discs—purists will find such glitches as Phoenix-equipped F-14 missile pylons attached to an F-15's wing in the 3-D section annoying—but it's crammed with information and pilot interviews. Not only will you find video of mainstream aircraft such as the F-15 Eagle, but also lots of coverage of more obscure planes such as the XFY-1 Pogo. If that wasn't enough, the disc also contains the full text of two books dealing with test pilots and the X-planes. With profiles and performance statistics on virtually every fighter, bomber, and attack plane you'll ever encounter in a flight simulation, JETS! is a superb backgrounder for jet sim pilots.

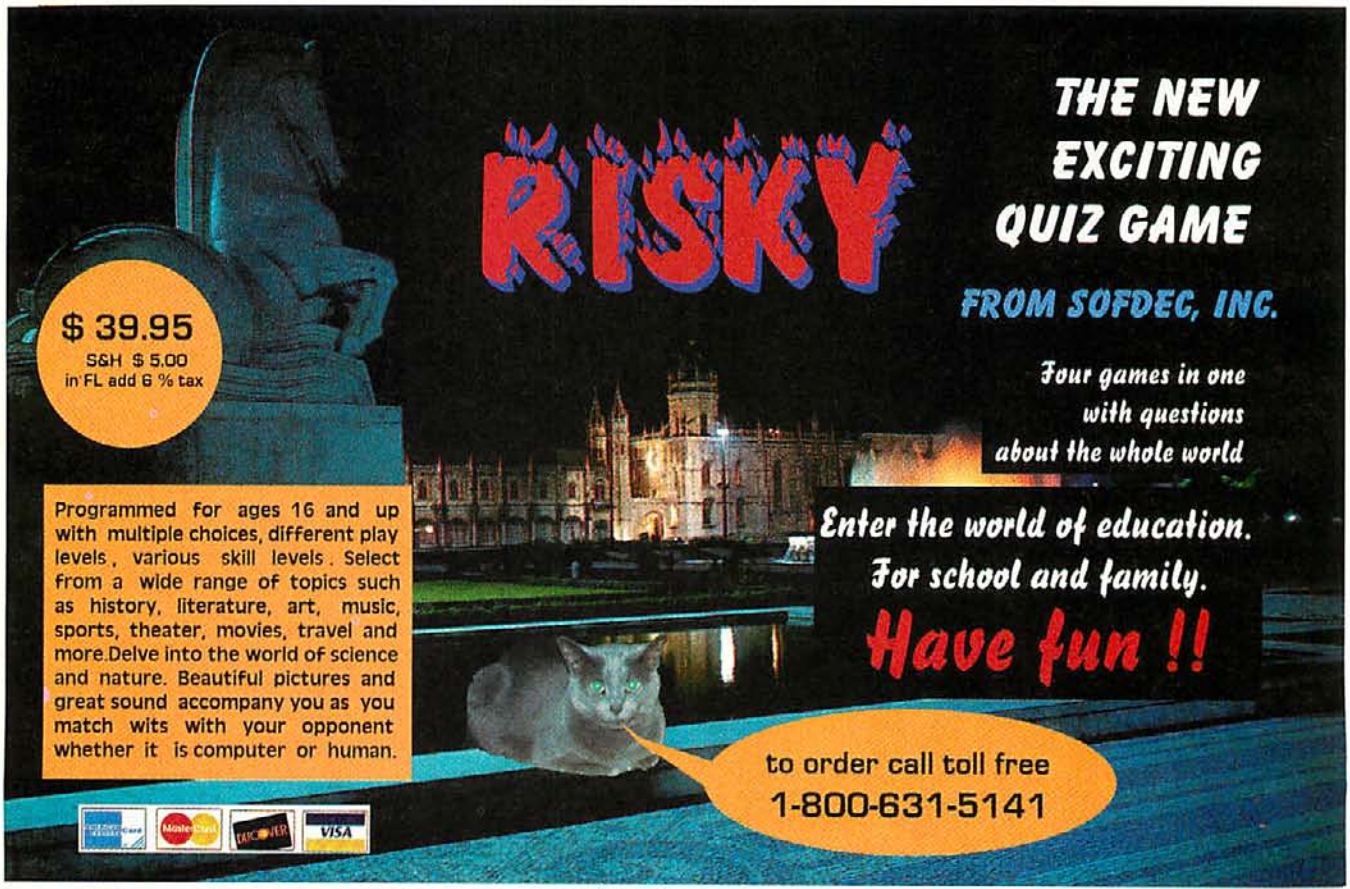
TAKE THIS MESSAGE TO MOAMAR FLEET DEFENDER GOLD's audio recording of the shootdown of two Libyan MiG-23s is a powerful testament to the intensity of real air combat.

WHAT YOU CAN LEARN FROM DEAD TREES

The discs I've mentioned are all great for learning the basics of fighter combat, but if you really want to make sure you can dominate the air instead of flying home in a plane whose wings look like cheese graters, you'll want to check out a product that's a different kind of multimedia. Spectrum HoloByte's ART OF THE KILL is a book and videotape combo created by F-16 pilot Pete Bonanni. This excellent reference covers offensive, defensive, and head-on basic fighter maneuvering in a thorough manner, but without going over the head of novice pilots. Learn the maneuvers in the book and listen carefully to Bonanni's video tips, and you'll be dominating the skies in no time.

No reference work list would be complete without mentioning the bible of simulation pilots, *Fighter Combat: The Art and Science of Air-to-Air Combat*, published by Naval Institute Press in Annapolis, Maryland. This book can be heavy reading at times, but if you study it carefully and really learn the techniques outlined by Shaw you'll end many more missions with a successful landing at home base rather than by riding down the silk elevator.

Study well, men. You never know when the enemy is going to give a pop quiz.



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Suddenly, the MiG falls into the funnel of your HUD. Squeezing the trigger, a lethal hail of cannon fire rips through his ship - sending him down in flames.

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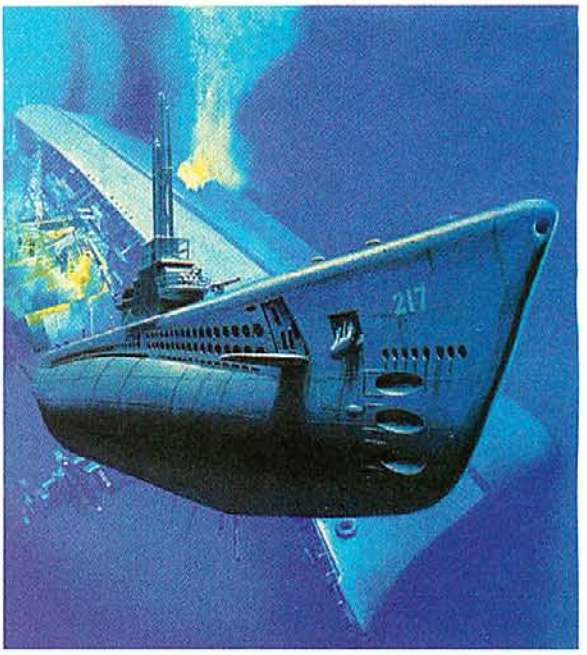
Circle Reader Service #161

America's Answer To The *Uberwaffen*

Set A Bearing For Axis Ships In The Pacific With SSI's SILENT HUNTER



by Kevin Turner

SNEAK PREVIEW
Game Still In Development

IT WASN'T THAT LONG AGO THAT SUBMARINE SIM CAPTAINS HAD TO CONTENT THEMselves with old standbys like SILENT SERVICE II and RED STORM RISING. That was until **Dynamix** released their excellent ACES OF THE DEEP, where players plied the icy waters of the North Atlantic as German U-boat captains and sent allied mega-tonnage twisting down to the ocean floor. But if AOD made you want to see Axis ships ripped into flames by American torps, it's time you looked through the scope of SILENT HUNTER.

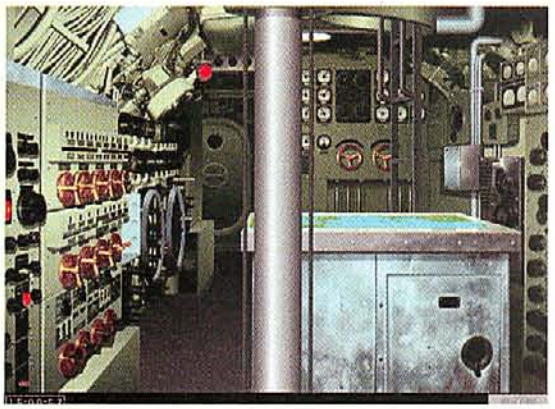
When I first heard about SILENT HUNTER from **SSI**, it was described to me as "ACES OF THE DEEP, only in the Pacific with the US Sub Service, and in high resolution." While that is essentially valid, and comparisons with AOD are inevitable, SILENT HUNTER has a lot going for it in its own right.

In SILENT HUNTER the player commands an American diesel submarine in WWII. Starting with the infamous attack on Pearl Harbor, hunting season for Japanese warships and merchants opens in the South Pacific. The general idea of the simulation is to sink as much tonnage as possible without ending up on the "Still on Patrol" list at the end of the war.

The approach SSI has taken with SILENT HUNTER parallels that taken by Dynamix in ACES OF THE DEEP. Both games are based on historical submarine campaigns of WWII. Both use very similar interfaces, and both strive for that mysterious balance between accuracy and entertainment. The historical faithfulness of AOD is renowned, and SILENT HUNTER is striving for the same faithfulness by employing the services of William "Bud" Gruner, who is the technical advisor for the game.

SSI'S EXPERT XO Former US Naval Officer William "Bud" Gruner commanded the USS Skate in three war patrols, bagging thousands of tons of enemy vessels. His expertise and multimedia anecdotes add a lot to SILENT HUNTER, just as former U-boat captains did in ACES OF THE DEEP.

In January of 1939, Mr. Gruner reported to a fleet submarine and spent the next seven years in the submarine service. He served as Executive Officer of the USS Pike, USS Sunfish, and USS Apogon. In 1944, he took command of the USS Skate for three war patrols which resulted in the sinking of a Japanese cruiser, destroyer, and several merchant ships. As skipper of the USS Skate, he received the Navy Cross and the Silver Star. Mr. Gruner's wartime experiences should provide a wealth of historical data on which to base historical missions and careers. In addition to aiding the designers of SILENT HUNTER, Mr. Gruner will also deliver multimedia presentations of his real-life anecdotes, as well as narration of technical and tactical matters.



MILES OF DIALS The accurate displays in SILENT HUNTER were reconstructed from dozens of photos taken inside a real US WWII sub.

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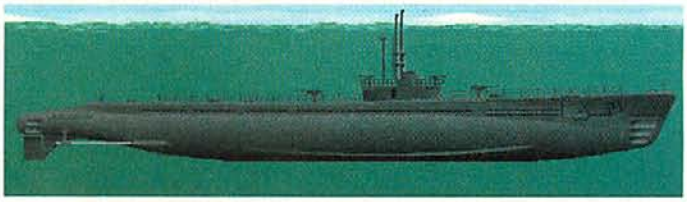
As a veteran submariner, it is rewarding for me to know that SSI has gone to the "horse's mouth" for information on the submarine war in the Pacific. This is a continuing trend in the submarine simulation market, and will hopefully be emulated by more game companies in other products.



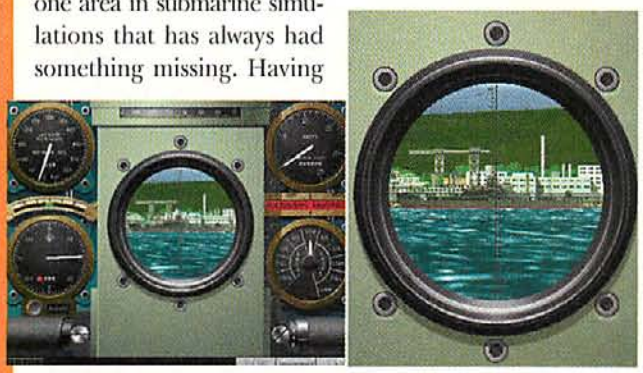
NOUVEAU PROFILE This side view from beneath the waves is similar to RED STORM RISING, but SILENT HUNTER looks far better, even including different color shades for the varying temperature gradients of the water.

CLEAR SKIES, CALM SEAS

SILENT HUNTER uses high-resolution graphics, which really brings SSI's virtual Pacific to life. The fully realized coastlines should allow the player to travel into enemy harbors to observe and engage the enemy. The coastline I saw in the pre-beta version was very well done, as were the Japanese warships.

As is true with SILENT HUNTER's contemporaries past and present, the control room and a mouse provide the means of controlling the boat and most of the boat's functions. Clicking on the periscope brings the periscope up, clicking on the bridge ladder gives access to the bridge, and clicking on the Fire Control System brings up the controls for firing torpedoes.

The Fire Control System, incidentally, is one area in submarine simulations that has always had something missing. Having spent the better part of a decade in the submarine service, I tend towards a purist's approach to simulations. I can remember with fondness our vintage Fire Control System, which was purely analog and looked like it came out of a WWII submarine. Come to think of it, most of our boat looked like it came out of a WWII submarine.



SUBMERGED SPYGLASS Because of the SVGA graphics, periscope views are impressive, even up close (right). This detail makes it easier to identify ships from more realistic ranges.

Submarine simulations usually do all the work of plotting the target, while the player makes target observations and firms up the targeting solution. This is pretty realistic, since it took a tracking party of eight (in my days) on a real boat to accomplish the same thing. But I'd still like to input my own data, set my own angles, and do all the work.

Imagine my surprise when I took to sea in a Gato-class boat. As I prepared to take a torpedo shot, a working model of an honest-to-god Fire Control System appeared before my eyes. I could hardly contain myself! At last, one of my submariner dreams had become reality.

The Fire Control System gives the player the option of either doing all the work or letting the computer do the work. Since the enemy AI hadn't been installed yet, and I didn't have to worry about getting shot, I spent most of an evening shooting at Japanese warships using manually-input observations to generate gyro angles and other such submarine esoterica.

After manually calculating my attack and inputting the data into the weapons, I fired a spread at a nearby target. I was pleasantly surprised to observe a trail as the weapon closed on the target. This accurately mimics the old steam torpedoes, which left a bubble trail as they traveled through the water. It also provided immediate feedback into my weapon's accuracy, as I followed the trail visually, willing it towards the midship area of a warship.

BE ALL THAT YOU CAN BE

The player will have the option of single missions, or taking on a career. The career will progress according to the abilities of the player, providing more and more challenging scenarios as the war progresses.

Submarine development during the war years will be mirrored, allowing the player the opportunity to captain different classes of boat, including the Balao class, the Tambour, and the Salmon class. Command of advanced types will be awarded on merit.

The chart view allows a quick overview of the area in which the boat is operating. The only downside to this approach seems to be that the chart is doubling as both a navigational reference and as a tactical reference. I would much prefer a separate entity for both, as both have their unique needs. A tactical display is essential when confronting a formation of ships, especially while setting up the approach and carrying out the attack. Being able to refer from the periscope to the tactical display on the fly is critical.

The only complaint I have is with a gauge on the Ship's Control Panel. This gauge looks like a depth gauge, but provides depth under keel information on a constant basis. This is physically impossible. In order to have a constant reading of depth under keel, there must either be a very long pipe sticking out the bottom of the boat scraping along the ocean's floor, or the fathometer must be constantly running. The very long pipe would provide sea pressure which can be translated into depth. Running the fathometer is like putting a strobe light on a sniper. The fathometer functions by using active sonar, which is the same as saying "Here I am, come shoot me." It's like that old Sesame Street game, "One of these things is not like the other. One of these things just doesn't belong."

RESURFACING

SILENT HUNTER should prove to be a very entertaining and historically accurate game, and the multimedia elaboration should be fascinating. The submarine war of WWII in the Pacific is a topic that has lain dormant for too long, and SSI has awakened the beast. It's a great time to be a fan of submarine simulations, and I look forward to SILENT HUNTER's imminent release.

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– Computer Gaming World

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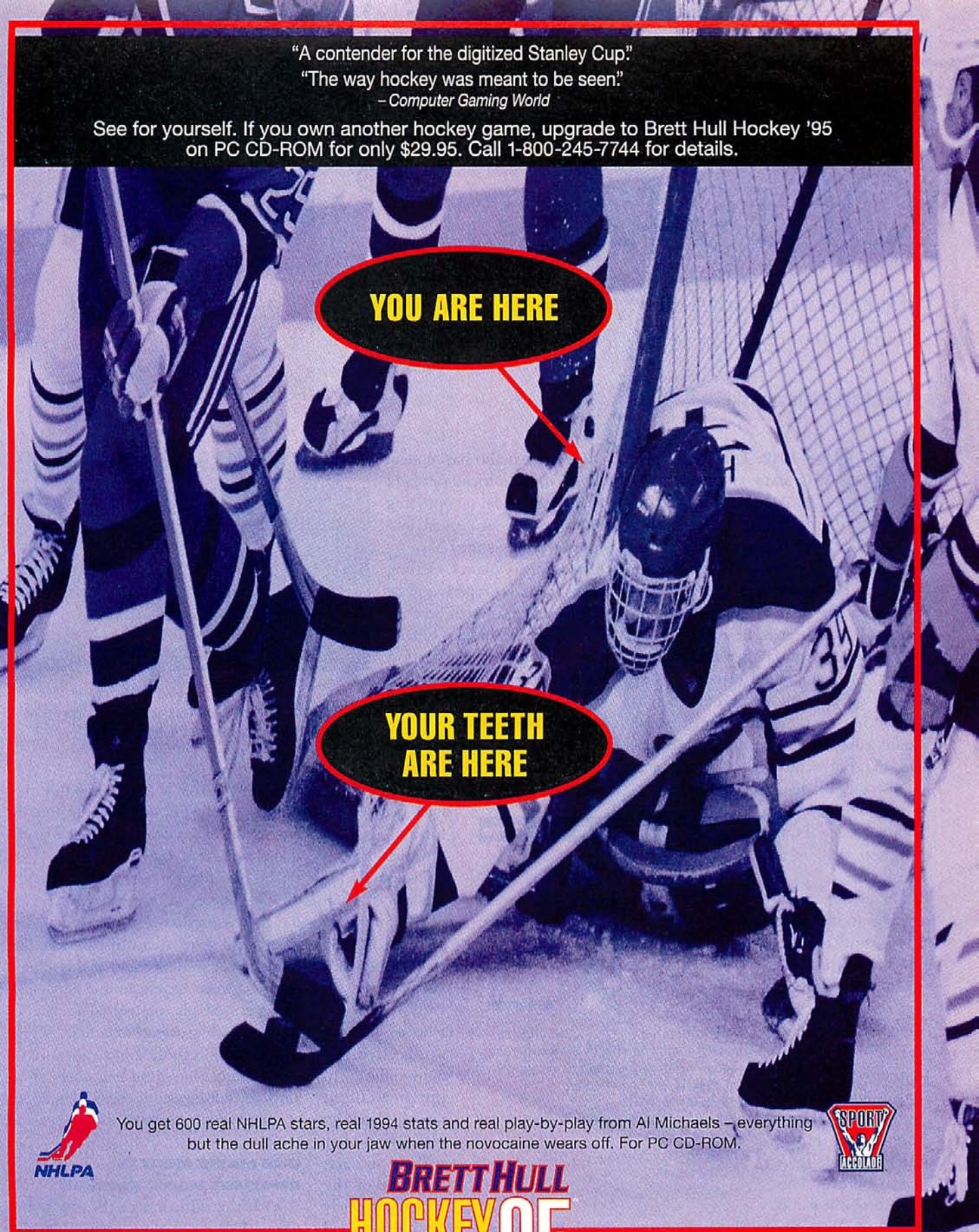

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Circle Reader Service #287

The Golden Age Of 1942

MicroProse's Refurbished 1942 Returns As The Pacific Air War Gold

by Michael Rymaszewski

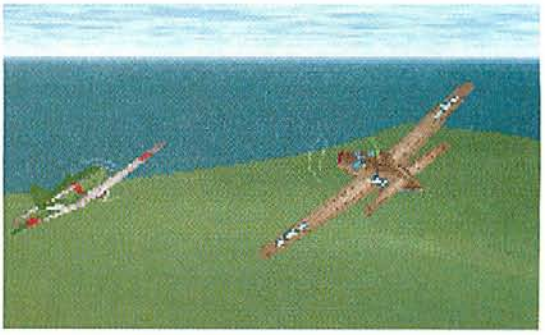
When 1942: The Pacific Air War made its debut last year, it was clear from the start that this was the sim that would separate the true sim pilots from the video shooters. Unfortunately, its cumbersome gameplay and numerous bugs made it no more than a diamond in the rough. Reissued recently on CD-ROM as part of **MicroProse**'s Gold series, 1942 has been renamed. The "Gold" refers to all the chrome the CD format has made possible, an extensive multimedia section that makes a reasonable effort at transcending "mere" game status and broadening it into an educational tool. Of course, it helps if the original title is a great game.

However hot anything connected with the multimedia might be, this *isn't* the big news. The big news is that Pacific Air War has received a major makeover that removes almost all of the old bugs, making the game much more playable than it was before. The new version has also added six American and Japanese Army planes, and features a dramatically improved AI and updated flight model.

1942 The Pacific Air War Gold

Price: $49.95
System Requirements: IBM compatible 386 or better, 4MB RAM, Windows 3.1 or higher, SVGA graphics, 2x CD-ROM drive, 10MB hard drive space, mouse; 486 or higher recommended with 8MB RAM and a joystick; most major sound cards supported
# of Players: 1-2 (via modem)
Protection: None
Designer: Ed Fletcher, John Paquin, Mike Rea
Publisher: MicroProse
Hunt Valley, MD
(800) 879-PLAY

PAW: Gold also has modem play. You and a friend can fight on the same side, on opposing sides, or even design custom missions, as long as they have no more than six planes. Getting things to work properly can be difficult, as I discovered from my own experience, but it is certainly possible given enough effort and patience.



WHERE THE ZEKES AND ZEROES PLAY P-51s, new to 1942 Pacific Air War Gold, stave off Japanese interceptors during a strike on the Madang air base in New Guinea.

FEAR OF FLYING

1942 did for WWII sims what Red Baron did for WWI: it made players realize there is a vast difference between piloting a propeller-driven airplane and a flying saucer. Each of the planes in 1942 felt like the real thing, and each plane in PAW feels even more so. In other words, flying is more difficult. In the new flight model, planes go into a spin after stalling, and getting out of the spin is extremely hard. What's more, joystick jerkers will find they lose control of the plane regardless of its speed. I hasten to add that for a mere 10% of your score you can turn the realistic flight off, and enjoy zooming around the blue yonder with all the abandon of a drunken Pappy Boyington.

The new flight model embraces both the new planes and the ones present in the game's previous version, so don't be surprised if your Wildcat is harder to fly. Another consequence is that the differences between American and Japanese planes are sharply emphasized, leading to a corresponding change in tactics. That is, should you forego the historically correct route and get into a turning duel with a Zero, you'll likely end up being shot down or spinning out of control.

ONE MAN'S MEAT IS ANOTHER MAN'S POISSON

With the addition of the six Army planes, PAW now boasts a total of 14 types of aircraft (counting the two Zero versions as one) that you can actually fly. The

BAO Publishing

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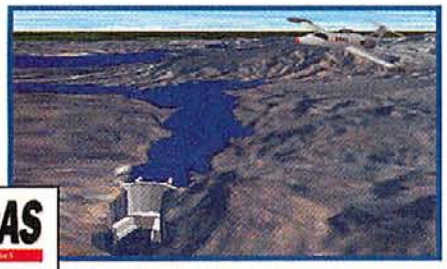
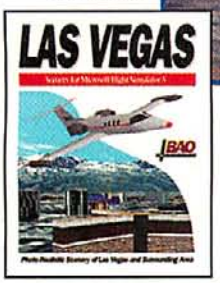
—Greg Harris, Editor of *Full Throttle*





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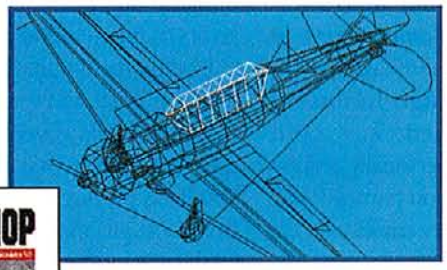

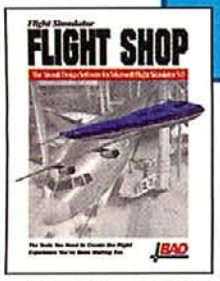

An easy-to-use (windows-based) aircraft factory lets you design your own plane.

Flight Simulator Flight Shop puts the tools in your hands. You build, customize and paint your own planes and a flight dynamics editor allows you to specify the flying characteristics. Share your designs with other flight enthusiasts through BBS's such as *CompuServe®*. Create your own flight plan and send it to the built-in Flight Service Station (FSS) and then hop in your flight simulator airplane for an ATC controlled flight.

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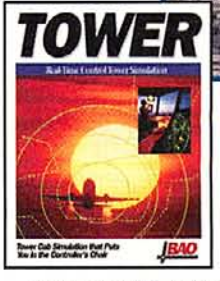

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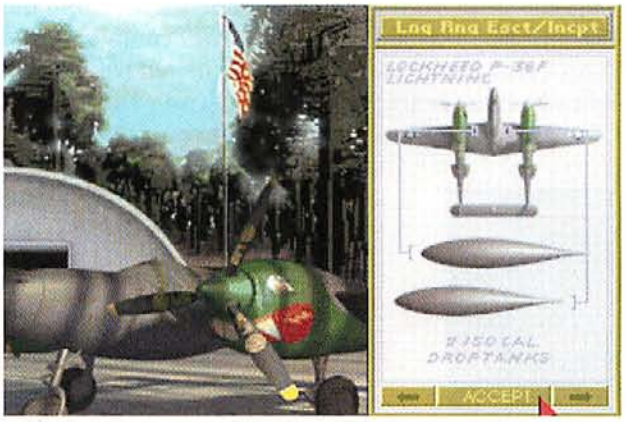
planes represented form a pretty comprehensive collection, though not without gaps. To my regret, the Japanese Army lineup does not feature the Hayabusa/Oscar, which was produced in greater numbers than any of the three Japanese fighters represented in the game (Tony, George and Frank). The Army additions on the American side include the Lightning, Warhawk, and Mustang.

The big thing about PAW's planes is that they are all so very, very different to fly. For example, all aircraft tend to get nose-heavy at low power, but they all get nose-heavy differently. You'll need to spend many hours in the cockpit to master all those planes, and that means terrific replay value and great entertainment for every true sim pilot.

The enemy AI is considerably better than it used to be, and that applies to *both* the flying and the shooting. Unlike in ACES OVER EUROPE, this new shooting accuracy is still within realisitic limits. When you choose skilled enemy pilots, be prepared for some new and pretty aggressive tactics—Zeroes will go head-to-head without hesitation.

The AI overhaul also involved programming new evasive maneuvers. Most often, the enemy pilots will dive to the deck and lead you in a throat-tightening chase right over the treetops—and here we come to a problem. Although PAW allows you to adjust many detail levels, the only way you can tell how far you are from the ground is when you have high land detail. And high land detail will mean some very choppy frames on slower machines, so no matter what the box says, you need at least a high-end 486 to really enjoy things.

Mercifully, almost all of the flaws present in last year's release have been removed. The missing rear machine gun in career-mode Kates has been added, and so has the possibility of switching to the rear gunner in the career pilot mode, as long as you're not actually doing a bombing/torpedo run. In addition, you can now switch on the autopilot even when there are enemies around. The latter should make nearly all 1942 fans with bandaged wrists breathe with relief—fighting the engine torque for many long minutes at a time was simply *too* realistic. Another piece of good news is that you can actually use the autopilot mode without fearing death, although it will still kill your pilot occasionally in the time-compressed mode.



NEW TOYS In addition to the P-40 Warhawk and the P-51 Mustang, Army Air Corps wannabees can also fly the P-38 Lightning. Two engines on those long over-water flights, long range, and killer firepower should blow computer jock's socks off.

As for the AI crashing other planes all over the map—yep, that still tends to happen. It seems the computer pilots have as much difficulty with the realistic flight model as many humans will have. Sometimes, you'll be grateful for it, as I was when I emerged from a desperate dive in a Warhawk to find out that the two pursuing Zeroes lost their wings. In this instance, what happened was both historically accurate and personally gratifying. All in all, the simulation part of PAW: GOLD lives up to the glittery name.

THE "MULTI" IN THE MEDIA

PAW essentially consists of two largely independent parts. The simulation is installed in its entirety on your hard drive, and is played from DOS. The multimedia section on the CD is accessed through WINDOWS. Essentially, this multimedia section contains information both about the game and about its historical background. You find yourself in the interior of an aircraft carrier and proceed to explore by clicking the pointer at the Briefing Room, where you go for info on the historical background, and the Flight School, where you'll find info about the game and how to play it. The tutorials include both the theory and practice of combat flying and are illustrated with numerous sequences from the simulation as well as historical footage. The true value of this section is that it literally opens the door for many newcomers to sim combat flight: everything you need to know about flying a plane is both covered and explained.

The Briefing Room is full of goodies. Click on the film projector and you'll be rewarded with a short documentary movie about the Pacific War; click on the file cabinet and you'll open a short list of biographies of the key players of the watery battlefield; click on the desktop model of a plane and you'll find every aircraft represented in the simulation. It's all nicely done and perhaps a little predictable, with one exception. The map stand contains illustrated narratives describing the three most important battles of the war: Coral Sea, Midway and the Philippine Sea. This is where the power of multimedia becomes apparent: the combination of text, voiceover, and short video clips does an excellent job of telling you how each battle was fought and why. My only slight criticisms here would be that the clips used are from the game rather than from documentary footage, and that the overall quality of the voiceover leaves something to be desired—the narrators sound like young actors trying to sound like war heroes.

In sum, the graphics are great, the flight model is great, the sound is excellent, and the multimedia is very good. Yes, money spent on PAW: GOLD is money well spent. You'll be playing this game several years from now, no matter what else comes out in the meantime. In fact, I've already removed all other historical flight sims from my hard drive.

THE EDITORS SPEAK

1942: PACIFIC AIR WAR GOLD

RATING 4½

PROS Great graphics, improved flight model, superior virtual cockpit view, and a multimedia bonus. After a rough start, this sim has evolved into one of the best on the market.

CONS Not all bugs were squashed.

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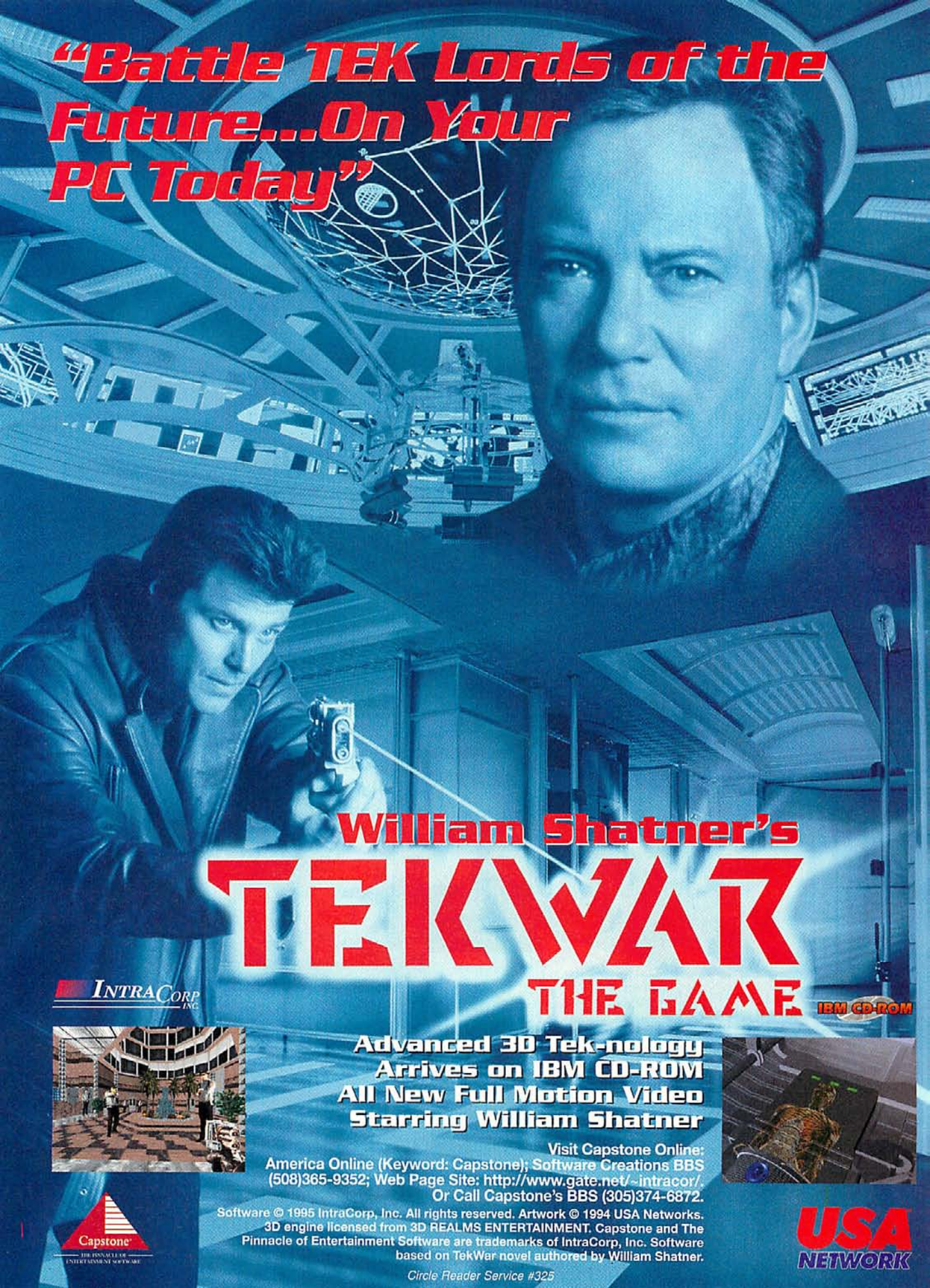
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The Casualties Of On-Line War

WHEN WARGAMES GO ON-LINE, WILL GOOD FEATURES BE LEFT BEHIND?

by Alan Emrich

GAME PUBLISHERS WERE LOOKING TO THE FUTURE AT THIS YEAR'S COMPUTER GAME DEVELOPER'S Conference, and the future, as they see it, is multiplayer and on-line. Modem-to-modem features were a novelty just a few years ago, but now it seems that almost every company has at least one project on the drawing board that features modem and network play. Pioneer modem game guru Danielle Berry (formerly Dan Bunten) smiled when I mentioned this trend to her. No doubt she wonders what took everyone so long to jump on the multiplayer bandwagon; after all, it's been nearly four years since she designed COMMAND HQ and six since MODEMWARS.

With all of this multiplayer interest and activity in the game publishing community, it's reasonable to assume that within a couple of years we'll be playing the latest SimTex or Gary Grigsby game via the Internet or some other computer network service. These games might even have LAN (local area network) and direct modem play features as well. If your ultimate gaming dream is one in which a human opponent is always just a mouse click away, your future looks very bright.

But before we march off toward this brave new multiplayer world, I suggest that we pause and think. As is the case with any shift in focus, there are problems to overcome, and there is the danger that good things will be lost in the shuffle.

NO-BRAINERS

At the top of the endangered feature list is good solitaire play. My fear is that if game companies focus their resources on head-to-head play, it may come at the cost of research and development of good artificial opponents. We've all watched computer opponents make dumb moves and groaned at how often they cheat just to keep pace with their human opponents. Granted, programming a truly challenging artificial opponent for games as rich and detailed as PACIFIC WAR or MASTER OF MAGIC is very difficult and time-consuming, but that doesn't mean designers should stop trying. And I'd hate to see multiplayer options used as an excuse for publishers to cut corners with

G-2

*** The Multi-Player Games Network, not satisfied with bringing boardgames such as GDW's *Market Garden* and Mayfair Games' *Empire Builder* to the connected strategy gamer, is now joining forces with Microsoft. As the software publishing giant prepares to launch its Windows 95 product, complete with an online service, MPG Net is stepping in to help cover its gaming flank.**

*** Atomic Games' proceeds apace with BEYOND SQUAD LEADER. Graphic elements are being added to sharpen the game's appearance, including tank turrets that turn independently of the chassis and even cast their own shadows. D-DAY: AMERICA INVADES, the next installment in the WORLD AT WAR series covering the landings at Omaha and Utah beaches, is shaping up for a late Summer release. In addition to covering some familiar ground, there will be a combined Utah/Omaha campaign game at the 1 km/hex, battalion/company scale.**

*** Avalon Con, the Avalon Hill-sponsored gaming convention, continues**

(continued on page 138)

the AI. Not everyone will want to play humans all the time, so games will still need decent solitaire play if they are going to have any longevity. Let's hope that as designers look toward multiple players they don't lose sight of the individual.

THE WAITING GAME

The other threatened traditional wargame element is deep, turn-based play. Most strategy/wargames are still turn-based, and for a good reason. The beauty of turn-based games is that they allow for thoughtful, considered moves which bring out the depth inherent in the position. But when played by multiple humans, turn-based games can be a real snooze, especially if your opponent is annoyingly slow. When you're playing a turn-based game via modem or on-line network, a snail-like opponent is doubly annoying, especially when the on-line meter is running and every second means a few more pennies.

So what's the solution? Play-by-email features are currently in vogue, but these lack the appeal of online, live, connected gaming. A lot of designers believe that real-time games are the answer. Problem is, it's difficult to have a deep strategy

G-2 *(continued from page 137)*

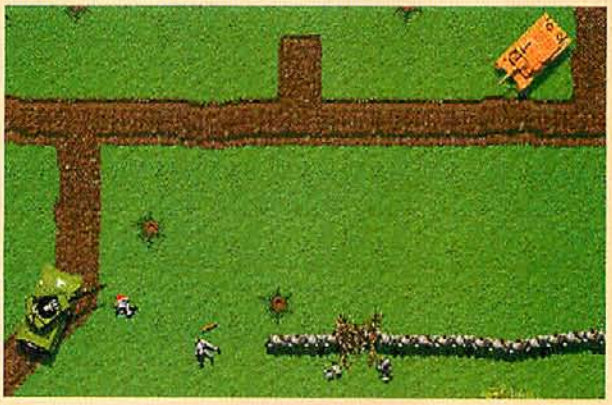
to grow, with over 100 boardgame tournaments scheduled this year. The big news, though, is that the boardgaming bastion is being infiltrated by computer games. Armchair generals may take on both silicon and human generals in STALINGRAD and FLIGHT COMMANDER 2 tournaments. Also, Atomic Games will reportedly be on hand for the debut "screening" of BEYOND SQUAD LEADER. For more information, call Avalon Hill directly at (410) 254-9200.

* Strategic Studies Group has formally announced WARLORDS II DELUXE for a summer release. Look for this enhanced version to include: network, e-mail, modem, and null-modem play, an Undo function for movement, new "underground" (castle, dungeon, and cavern) terrain sets, an improved Scenario Builder, over two dozen brand new scenarios, and better and faster artificial opponents, all on a single CD-ROM. Creating this product required that all of the original code be rewritten, so SSG took this opportunity to make a number of improvements to the WARLORDS II SCENARIO BUILDER, and to redo all scenarios in 256 color SVGA graphics. An upgrade offer will be made to owners of the original WARLORDS II and its SCENARIO BUILDER.

* Speaking of upgrade offers, MicroProse will allow owners of QQP's original MERCHANT PRINCE to get MACHIAVELLI for $23.97, plus shipping and handling, if they send in the original MERCHANT PRINCE disk #1 to MPS Direct. For more information call (800) 879-PLAY.

* CIVNET, the online version of SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION, is scheduled for a Summer release for the Windows version, and a Christmas release for the Mac version. The ambitious plans are to support play on Novell-type networks, direct modem, null-modem and even "hotseat." Only registered owners will be able to upgrade to the network version of CIV, so send in that registration card *now.*

* An equally ambitious undertaking is Norm Koger's RIFLES, the third offering in SSI's WARGAME CONSTRUCTION KIT series, covering the period between 1850 and 1900 at two different scales (regimental: 200 yards per hex/20 minutes per turn, and brigade: 400 yards per hex/40 minutes per turn). Look for about 50 scenarios in the box covering British colonial warfare, the Crimean War (Balaclava is already done), the American Civil War, etc. The Austrians will be included in the database, even if no scenarios are included in the set, so crafty players can create many battles from the German Wars of Unification. RIFLES should be fired out late this Summer, with Novastar contracted to do 25 Civil War scenarios at the double.



TEXTURES, TURRETS & TENSION In Avalon Hill's upcoming BEYOND SQUAD LEADER you can zoom in to get an "up close and personal" view of the detailed tanks, stone walls and wounded bodies littering the battlefield.

* On the ever changing SimTex front, it appears that MECHLORDS will have to take a new name. Boardgame company FASA seems to be flexing their muscle, indicating MECHLORDS is too much like their *BattleTech* universe. FASA claims that the combination of neo-feudal "Houses" in this setting and the word "'Mech" is their intellectual property. SimTex could change their Houses to Corporations, but a lawsuit could force the cancellation of the entire project. Ironically, designer Steve Barcia has long claimed that the paper role-playing game *Spacemaster* was his primary inspiration for MECHLORDS, and not *BattleTech.*

* MicroProse and SimTex still don't seem to have their minds made up about MASTER OF ORION (MOO) GOLD. Some of the multiplayer features are already developed (network and modem player), and will be featured in MASTER OF XENON (MOX) at the very least. MOX, due by Christmas, is rumored to feature such things as interracial planetary populations (complete with slavery, rebellions, etc.), multiple colonies per star, and more.

* If you ask Jim DeGoey (JamesD6201@aol.com) "What's *Ops* with *Windows*?", he'll tell you that the specs for the Windows versions of TACOPS are posted on the Internet (comp.sys.pc.games), America Online, and CompuServe. Arnesal's latest alpha build looks very promising and a Summer release is still on track. They are still hard at work on a *TacOps* Battlebook, and Ed Rains has begun preliminary work on the *Panzers East* Battlebook. Meanwhile, work continues on their other projects: *Gettysburg, Weapons Free!,* and *Imperial Crisis.* On a final note, Arsenal is said to be doing fine with their marketing policy of direct sales only. They're expanding their toll-free order-taking and fulfillment flow-through in time to accept orders for both *TacOps for Windows* and both the Mac and Windows versions of *Panzers East.*

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game in real time, because there is little time to strategize deeply. With real-time games there's also the threat that more and more of the thoughtful elements of wargames will be replaced by action-oriented elements, that the quickness of one's mouse hand will become more important than the quickness of one's wit.

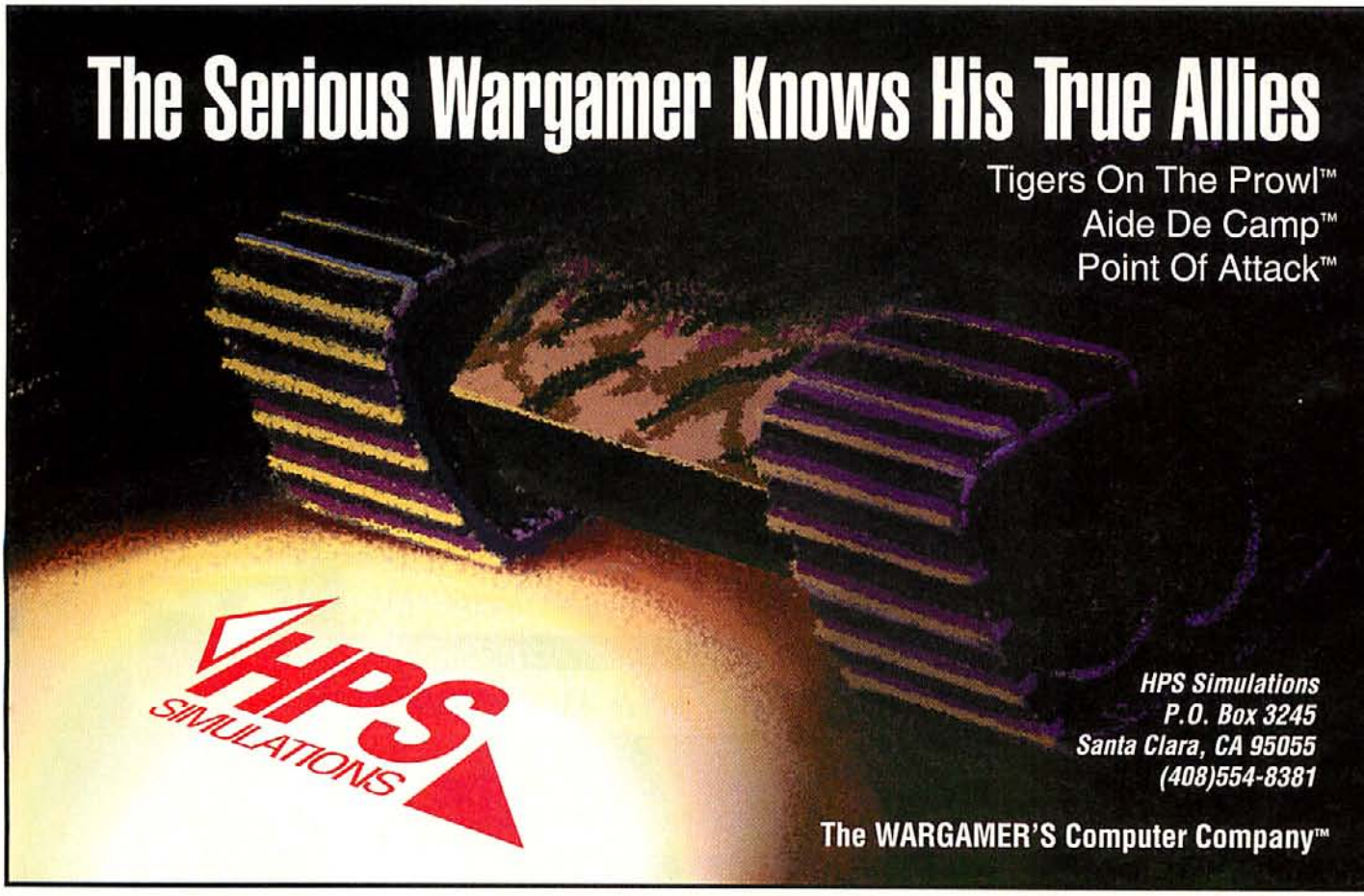
Are thoughtful, turn-based wargames DOOMed, so to speak, in the multiplayer future? I don't necessarily think so. Instead, I see the turn-based, online game evolving to use more integrated sequence of play features. In THE PERFECT GENERAL, for instance, most of the player-only, non-interactive phases (like artillery fire plotting) are fairly short. The longer movement and combat phases are more interactive because you must pay attention to your opponent's fire and movement, particularly when a nice opportunity fire shot presents itself.

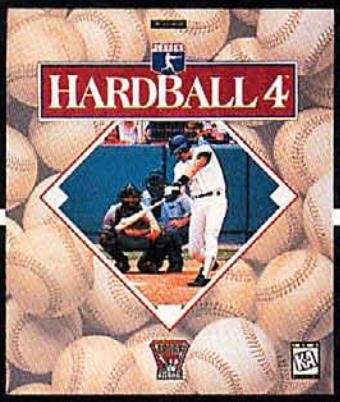
Similarly, as **SSI** develops online versions of both PANZER GENERAL and its sequel, ALLIED GENERAL, they are dealing with the problem of modifying the sequence of play without destroying the turn-based structure of the game. So, an "alternating" sequence of play is being considered for the online version of the game. Under this structure, each player takes a turn moving and fighting with only a few pieces at a time. They then alternate, back and forth, until every piece has either moved, passed, reinforced, taken supply, etc., that turn. Then a new game turn begins and all units are once more free to move and fight.

For example, let's say we're looking at the familiar *France 1940* scenario of PANZER GENERAL. For an online version of the game, players would alternately take "action pulses" with 3 to 5 units at a time. Thus, battles around key geographic points would develop on a per-pulse basis: First might come air strikes, followed by artillery and shore bombardment, with ground units coming on yet another pulse to subdue the last of the city's defenders. In the interim, the defending player could study the attack and attempt to counter the enemy's impending assault.

Under this alternating sequence of play, there would be more opportunity for action and reaction, and a greater need to maintain some reserves to meet a sudden crisis or opportunity. In scenarios where one side has more units or the burden of attack, its opportunity to activate more units per pulse could simply be increased.

This alternating "action pulse" approach has been around for ages in the boardgame market. It was developed to avoid the monotony of waiting for another player's move, long a factor in complex board wargames. That it has not become standard in the paper game market should serve as a warning to computer game designers that no game system is a panacea for all ills. Still, computer game designers should be praised for trying a variety of approaches to avoid the dull side of turn-based gaming, while keeping the depth and subtleties of planning which keeps wargamers coming back for more.





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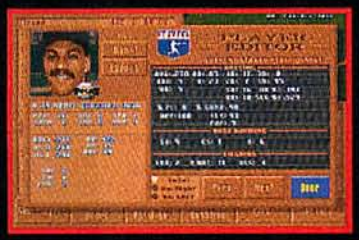

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Terror Times Two

MicroProse's Puts The "Sea" In Sequel With X-Com: Terror from the Deep

by Martin E. Cirulis

A couple of months back I had the dubious pleasure of sitting through the most recent installment of the Highlander movie saga. While this was not something one would ordinarily brag about, I did achieve some insight into the nature of the sequel, and decided that the real title of the film should have been *Highlander 3: Cool Places To Have Sword Fights*. I have much the same feeling as I slog my way through MicroProse's sequel to the stunningly successful and all-around great game X-Com: UFO Defense. While a much more enjoyable experience than watching immortals trying to chop each other's heads off, Terror from the Deep has just a slight case of sequel-itis—enough to smack of "Same movie, cooler sets."

X-Com: Terror from the Deep

Price: $59.95, 3.5" floppy or CD-ROM
System Requirements: IBM-compatible 386/20Mhz or better processor, 4MB RAM, SVGA graphics, 3MB hard drive space for CD (16MB space for floppy), CD-ROM, mouse; supports AdLib, Sound Blaster, Covox and General MIDI sound cards.
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Designer: Stephen Goss
Original Game Design: Julian & Nick Gollop
Publisher: MicroProse Software
Hunt Valley, MD
(410) 771-0440

DEJA VU, ALL OVER AGAIN...

No matter how hard you try, the good days never seem to last. Though humanity trounced those kidnapping, gene-splicing, base-buildin', cattle-mutilatin', city-terrorizin', big-eyed Alien Creeps during the course of the original X-Com, the peace that comes lasts a mere 40 years before alien evil rears its deformed head again in Terror. Unfortunately, instead of menacing you from the skies, this time the body-snatchers come from below.

In a serious surprise for you dino-enthusiasts out there, it seems that the giant rock that wiped out the tiny-brained saurian lords of the earth was, in reality, a massive alien starship with braking problems. The result of this fender-bender, other than giving a small breed of simians a shot at world domination, was to lock the alien Invasion ship into a long sleep. Deep under the ocean, damaged extra-terrestrial computers slowly repaired themselves, subtly subverting portions of the natural world in preparation for the emergence of the sleeping evil under the ocean floor.

Oddly enough, it's the alien defeat at the end of the first X-Com that forms the wake-up call for the Wet-Ones from Beyond. While your troops were planting the flag on the sands of Mars, a secret signal shot from the smoking remains of Alien HQ and awoke the alien vessel from its slumber, setting the wheels in motion for a whole new guerrilla war. The aquatic-alien plans for world-domination progress slowly, but gather speed with time, exchanging subtlety for brutality as their power grows until, some four decades later, the complacent X-Com organization must undergo its own awakening.

Once again, the Alien plan isn't at all clear at the beginning; all you know for sure is that it probably involves the utter domination of humanity. Only your Scientists can provide the much-needed answers, and they need your brave soldiers, or in this case, "Aquanauts," to go out there and return some clues for study. Provided, of course, that they aren't too busy dodging sonic blasts and rescuing terrified survivors, all the while hunting down the slimiest horrors to ever climb out of a test-tube. While newbie X-Com

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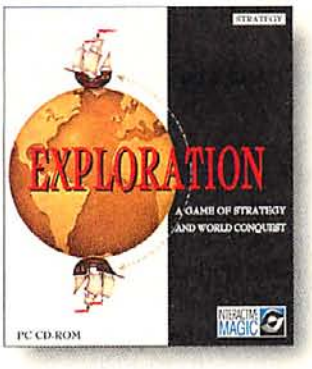

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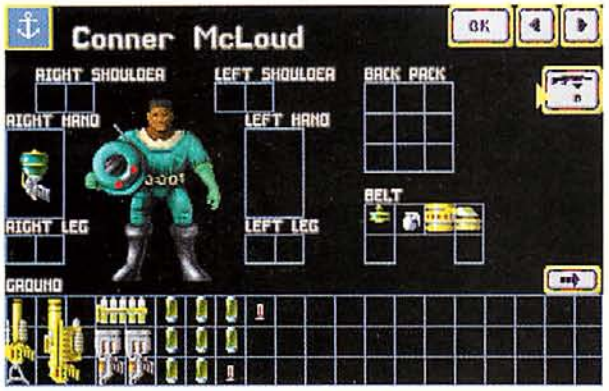
commanders should be fascinated by this process, veterans have definitely seen this movie before.

ATTACK, ADMINISTRATE AND ACCESSORIZE...

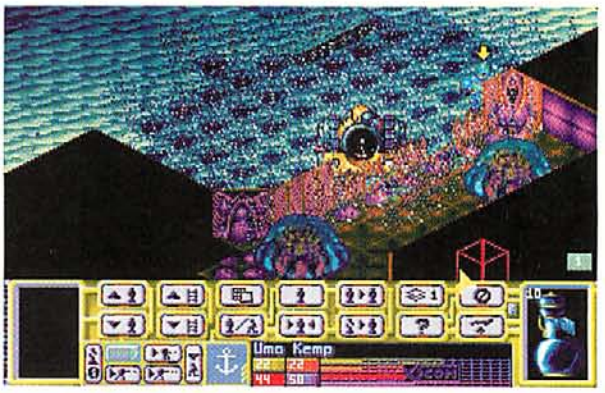
The mechanics of TERROR are identical to those of its predecessor, and form a game of three equally important components: one part tactical, man-to-alien combat, one part strategic management of resources and research, and one part SIM-CITY-esque base-building. A minor fourth aspect involves the sending out of interceptor craft to bring down alien subs in order to disrupt alien plans as well as capture technology and personnel for study. The system for this is very basic, and other than telling your flying subs when and where to go and what attack posture to take, ship-to-ship combat precedes automatically. One merely watches units do or die, though a commander quick on the mouse can order a sub to retreat before the death blow can arrive, thus saving several hundred thousand dollars of equipment.



I'M AN AQUANAUT & I'M OK Despite their cumbersome (and flimsy) wetsuits, X-COM soldiers can carry a lot of ordnance. If you want more protection, you'll have to research alien technology.

If you have to choose a priority amongst these three aspects, then I suspect the tactical system is the most vital to your success. Here you are presented with a skewed 3-D viewpoint where the terrain is laid down over an invisible grid, each square acting as a unit of distance; the terrain in the square acts as a movement modifier and may possibly obstruct line-of-sight. It's a combat system that recalls miniatures gaming on tabletop terrain. Each human, alien or tank has a certain number of action-points with which to carry out movement and combat during a turn, modified by characteristics such as strength and dexterity. For instance, a high-dexterity soldier could fire a cumbersome weapon for a lower point cost than an incompetent newbie.

While the basic concept is very easy to get the hang of and everything is controlled by simple point-and-click mouse commands, the depth of detail is quite deep, so to speak, and players with a good understanding of squad-level tactics will have a definite advantage here. Line-of-sight is strictly controlled, and only those portions of the terrain visible to any of your troops are revealed, with unexplored portions being blank screen. Even after you have explored an area and it becomes a permanent part of your display, opponents can still move through unseen unless they cross into the viewing-cone of one of your troops. More than once I have lost an Aquanaut to a sneaky alien that has slipped up from behind. Also very well done is the blast radius of area-effect weapons, and the use of covering terrain for reducing and even negating damage from these kinds of devastating devices—which the computer opponent generally uses at least as well as you do.



JACQUES TALL AND CARRY A SPEARGUN Our intrepid extra-terrestrial pest exterminator makes a house call at a colorful alien base.

The board on which all this mayhem takes place has attained the same level of excellence as the actual combat system. The map is large enough to invoke the feel of dangerous exploration, but small enough that you don't spend too much time wandering aimlessly about the pretty landscape. The terrain itself is well done, and there are many beautifully rendered terrain types, both on the ocean bottom and on the surface. One battle might be fought on a clear ocean bottom and the next amidst the twisted stone ruins of an ancient city. Also, much of what you see can be destroyed or mangled by stray weapons fire. Near machinery or other seeming "props," the danger of secondary explosions is very real.

The tactical board also has multiple levels; hills, buildings and alien structures rise up to three or four levels above the main level, with all viewing advantages of height conferred. The controls make it fairly easy to jump between levels without getting lost or confused, though sometimes line-of-sight between levels can be a little mysterious, given the player's viewing angle. Even more intricate are the battlefields set entirely inside large structures such as ocean-going vessels or alien bases. Things here are so well done and claustrophobic that you will have perfect sympathy for any veteran of Stalingrad.

While most of your gameplay time will be spent in the tactical combat engine, to master this portion but neglect the other two areas is a sure path to defeat; no matter how good you get at figuring out alien tactics on the battlefield, if your troops aren't supplied with the latest technology and supported by a complex enough infrastructure, you cannot win.

Everything in TERROR costs money, and lots of it: bases must be built and maintained; soldiers, scientists and technicians must be hired and salaries paid at the end of every month; and everything, except for the goodies you pry out of dead alien manipulators, must be paid for—down to the last round fired. The financial realities

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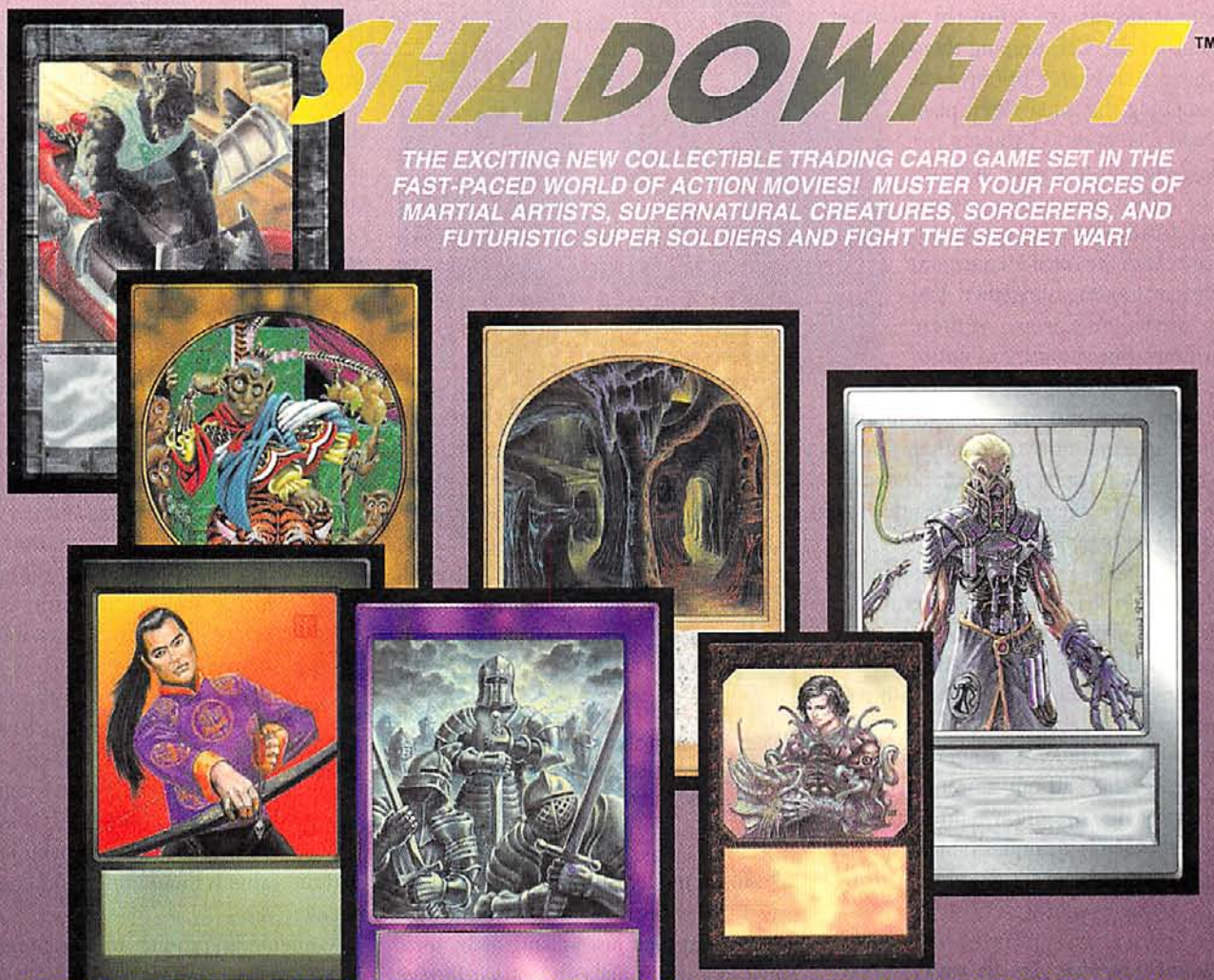

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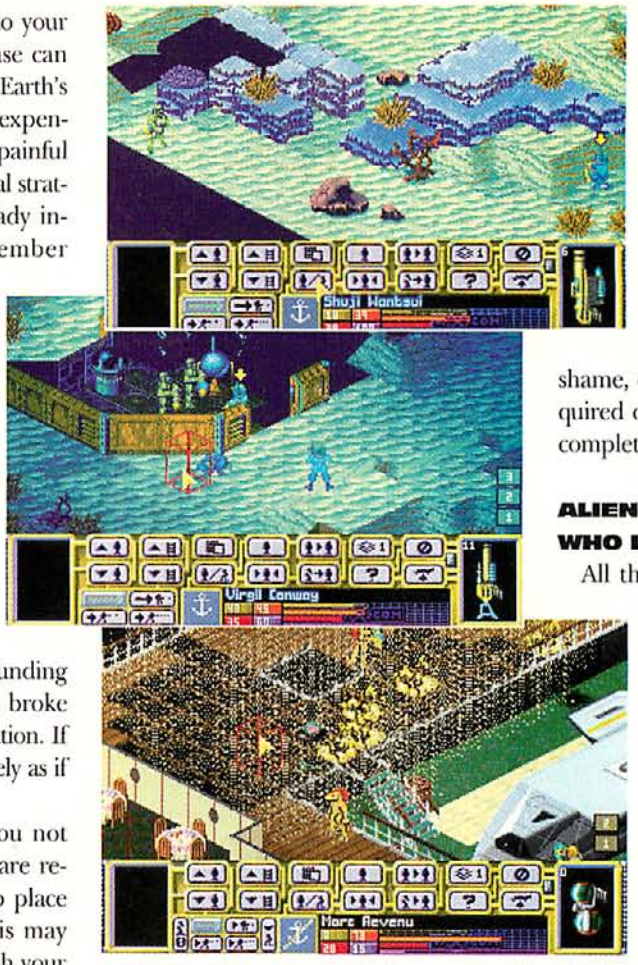
of this game are tied very closely to your tactical considerations. As each base can only "cover" a certain portion of the Earth's oceans and each new base is very expensive, you must sometimes make a painful choice between economy and optimal strategy. Since your only source of steady income is donations from the member nations of the UN, keeping them happy is your biggest priority next to stopping the actual Alien plan. Should a country feel you are not doing enough to reduce alien activity in their waters, they may reduce funding or even sign an alliance with the Alien Menace and withdraw funding altogether. You can survive one or two of these quislings, but should you fail to measure up to your task of exterminator, more and more of your funding will disappear until you finally go broke and cease to function as an organization. If this occurs, the aliens win just as surely as if they had destroyed your last base.

And speaking of your bases, you not only have to decide what facilities are required for each base, but where to place them on the base map. While this may seem trivial, the first time aliens rush your homestead under the sea, you will wish you had paid a little more attention to the way things are laid out. Careful base design, with due attention paid to the entrances available to undesirables, can pay huge tactical dividends when the inevitable attack occurs.



SWIM FOR COVER, LADS Whether combing the undersea depths, capturing alien vessels, or protecting port cities from alien incursions, you'll find the terrain just as varied as in the first X-Com.

FRUSTRATION AT 40 FATHOMS

But of course, for those of you familiar with the first X-Com, none of what I've told you so far is anything new—and therein lies most of the problem I have with this game. Terror is virtually identical in structure and execution to its predecessor. This is good for people who were in love with the design to begin with, and it definitely means we now have a fairly bug-free product, with a tried and true interface. But the flip-side is that if there was anything that annoyed you about the first installment, you can safely assume the annoyance still exists.

The difficulty level of this game has been cranked way up. Even at intermediate skill levels, the aliens rarely allow a mistake to be made. And while they still do odd little things, like walking up to a trooper and then just walking away, their long-range ability makes it look like they've been reading the strategy guide to the first X-Com very carefully. While a challenge is never a bad thing, newcomers to the series may feel unfairly bludgeoned by aliens that can shrug off one or two hits from all but the most powerful weapons in the game, and combats that last half an evening.

The feelings of sequel-itis that surround this product are further increased by the uninspired initial conditions of the game. You are just as bad off at the beginning of this second alien attack as you were at the first—and that is just plain stupid. While I can sympathize with the need to research a whole new set of underwater technologies, I really have a problem with having to use spearguns on the surface when forty years earlier I had already perfected the Laser Cannon—never mind the total absence of any of the mastered alien technologies that allowed me to trounce the bug-eyed little farts in the first place. Coupled with the fact that this new tableau lacks the amusing anchor in modern mythology that the first did, this title felt a little flat at times, which is a shame, considering that it would have required only a little more innovation to be completely satisfying.

ALIENS AND THE HUMANS WHO LOVE TO HATE THEM...

All this being said, Terror From The Deep is still superior to most strategy games out there. The play is solid, the graphics amusing, and it will return more than enough bang for the buck. It may be a little tough for newbies, but on the other hand, the strategy guide for X-Com will serve just as well for this title as the original; almost all the important lessons are still true. And perhaps best of all, in this world of Pentium-hungry games with no regard to the hardware budgets of gamers, Terror delivers all this on a lowly 386. It would be nice if more companies realized the game is more important than the muscle.

As an interim product, to keep the world of X-Com near and dear to the hearts of gamers while the system is evolved into something even better, Terror is a good return trip to the game that a lot of people fell in love with. I just hope the next installment takes a few more risks. Perhaps it's time we infiltrated *their* world!

THE EDITORS SPEAK

X-COM: TERROR FROM THE DEEP

RATING 4½

PROS Uses the same great game engine that won Game of the Year.
CONS The only significant difference between this game and its predecessor is that it's much more difficult. And "more" does not always mean "better."

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A Jolt Of Jungle Juice

Parched Gamers Can Get Their Fill With Sir-Tech's Addictive JAGGED ALLIANCE

by Jeff James

SET IN A SWELTERING JUNGLE TABLEAU, **SIR-TECH SOFTWARE'S** JAGGED ALLIANCE ATTEMPTS TO marry an addictive small-unit combat engine with a heady dose of role-playing adventure. **Madlab Software**'s brainchild is yet another ambitious attempt by a software developer to turn the *Computer Gaming World* genre-classifying system on its ear. Is it a strategy game? Is it role-playing? Adventure? A floor wax? A dessert topping? Answering these questions may be difficult, but one thing is for certain: JAGGED ALLIANCE is a winner regardless of how it's categorized.

Jagged Alliance

Price: $59.95 CD-ROM and 3.5" floppy
System Requirements: IBM compatible 486-33 MHz or better, 4 MB RAM, VGA graphics, 15 MB hard drive space, CD-ROM drive, mouse. Supports AbLib, General MIDI, Gravis UltraSound, Pro Audio Spectrum, and Sound Blaster (including Pro, SB16, AWE32 and 100% compatibles) sound cards.
Protection: None
RSAC Rating: Violence 2 (Humans killed), Nudity/Sex 2 (Clothed sexual touching), Language 3 (Obscene gestures)
Designer: Madlab Software
Publisher: Sir-Tech Software
Ogdensburg, NY
(315) 393-6633

JUNGLE FEVER

The story revolves around Metavira, a fictional South American isle whose sole claim to fame is the extraordinary fallow tree. The sap of this tree (identified by its golden-hued foliage) is a medical mother-lode that promises to cure even the most virulent of the world's diseases. Not surprisingly, pharmaceutical companies are paying top dollar for this amazing substance, which leads to greed and, of course, bad guys galore.

Jack and Brenda Richards, the father-daughter research team who discovered the fallow tree and its amazing sap, have fallen victim to avatars of avarice. Their former partner, Dr. Lucas Santino, has betrayed them in an effort to harvest and sell all the sap himself. To solidify his hold over the island's most valuable resource, Santino has hired a band of thugs and placed most of the island under his iron grip. Holding out in one small corner of the island, Jack and Brenda contact you and hope that you and your band of mercenaries can rescue them from their plight and boot the money-grubbing Santino off the island.

Your first task is to hire a team from A.I.M., the Association of International Mercenaries, who will arrive the following day ready for action. You then journey to the base camp, where you begin and end each day of play. It is here you equip your squad, hire "tappers" to extract the tree sap, and place guards on sentry (who'll automatically defend a sector from incursions by Santino's men). Once you've kitted out your grunts, checked your finances and hired enough guards and tappers, you're ready to hit the combat zone.

The island of Metavira is divided into 60 sectors of equal size, arranged in a grid six sectors high by ten sectors long. At the start of the game, you control only one sector in the lower right corner of the map; the rest are under the control of Santino and his band of goose-stepping sap stealers. As the game progresses, you must move your team of mercs into enemy sectors, clearing them of Santino's men. Once all opposition is eliminated in a sector, it reverts to your control, allowing you to assign tappers and guards to each of the new sectors. Your goal is to eventually sweep the island of Santino and his henchmen, culminating in a climactic battle in sector one, located in the upper left corner of the map.

LOCK N' LOAD AND ROCK N' ROLL

The heart of the game is the tactical combat portion in which your mercenaries will engage in direct combat with Santino's forces. You view the battlefield from an isometric overhead view, not unlike that of ULTIMA VI or VII. Using the mouse, you can select each of your mercenaries individually and tell them to move, fire at an enemy, pick up an item, etc. The interface is mostly mouse driven, relying on a system of mouse-button combinations to perform certain actions.

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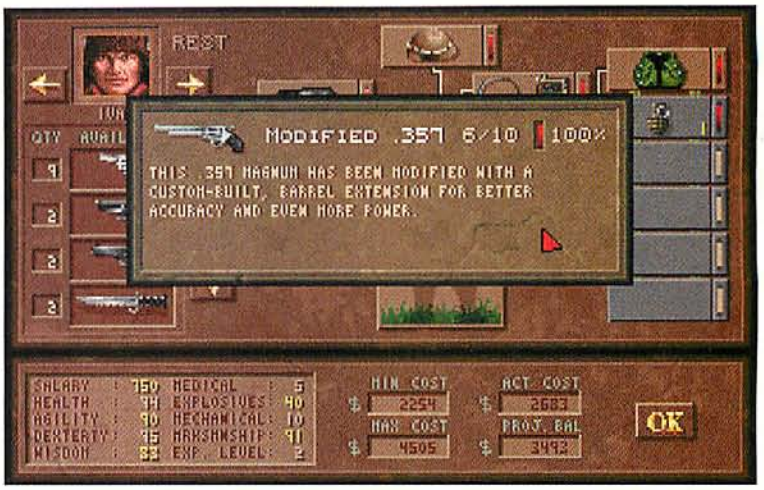
Each person that walks onto the battlefield wears a specific color. You mercs are identified by their green shirts, Santino's men are in red, your guards are in blue, and tree-tappers are in yellow. Although limited to .38 caliber handguns and grenades at the outset, you'll come across more sophisticated weapons as the game unfolds, such as shotguns, M-16s and other implements of destruction. Since you can't buy or sell any weapons, equipment or ammunition, your only source of supplies will be those scavenged from the battlefield.

At the end of each day, your squad travels back to home base for rest and recuperation. As you arrive, Jack will give you his no-holds-barred opinion of your efforts that day. Kill lots of Santino's men and aggressively grab territory, and Jack will congratulate you. Otherwise, expect a tongue-lashing.

The highlight of the game is unarguably the 60 mercenaries you can recruit to your cause. They come in all experience levels and specialties, ranging from the psychotic "Unusually Ruthless" Rueben (an unstable psychopath) to the enigmatic "Mike," a world-class assassin rumored to be in Dallas in November, 1963. Each mercenary has his or her own unique voice and personality. Ivan Dolvich—an ex-Red Army officer—speaks entirely in Russian, and all his text messages are displayed in Cyrillic script. The voice acting behind each of these characters is superlative, making each seem that much more real. Your mercs will speak on a variety of occasions, alerting you when they spot an enemy, exclaiming when they've found something, sounding relieved when the area is clear, and adding greatly to other events.

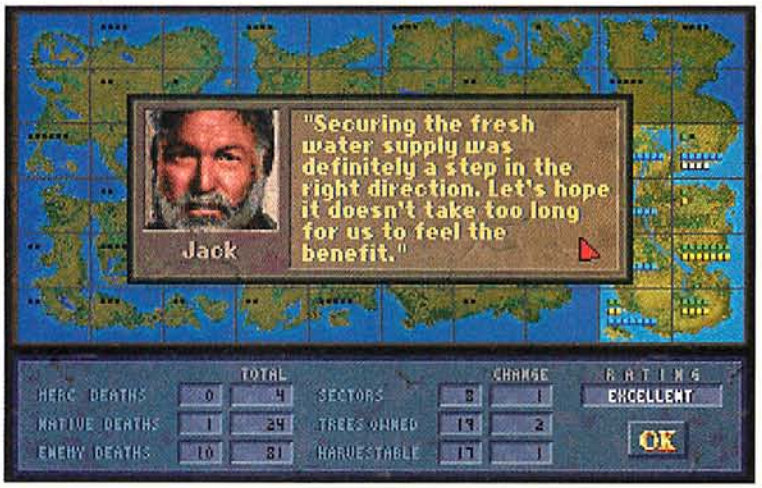
In addition to the personalities of individual Mercs, there is a complex inter-relationship between individual mercs and your behavior. Some mercs won't work with other mercs, while some will demand more money if you make them do so. Finally, all of your mercs have differing moral standards. Some will guard any money they find with their lives, while others will rob you blind and vanish the next morning.

Madlab obviously spent a great deal of time thinking through the many game features, resulting in several simple but extremely useful design elements. For example, the intuitive inventory management system allows you to easily drag and drop items from one merc to another within a certain range. Hired guns will reload their weapons automatically, letting you concentrate on winning the battle instead of chasing down ammo clips. The artificial intelligence is especially good when you send your mercs off to a location on the map. Even if the location is hidden within a building and shrouded in foliage, they'll usually find their way to the location without much trouble.



BARRELS OF FUN Although you can't buy firearms, the adventure-game aspects of the game allow you to modify existing weapons.

There are plenty of other details, too, covering even the most frivolous behavior. For example, with one mercenary active, holding down the CTRL key and left-clicking on another mercenary will cause the former to goose the latter, evoking an always humorous response. If you slip up during combat and accidentally have one merc target and shoot another, you might see them trade a few choice invectives then begin blasting away at one another, heedless of the raging fire fight around them. Some mercs excel at repairing damaged equipment, allowing you to repair defective firearms and perform custom modifications.



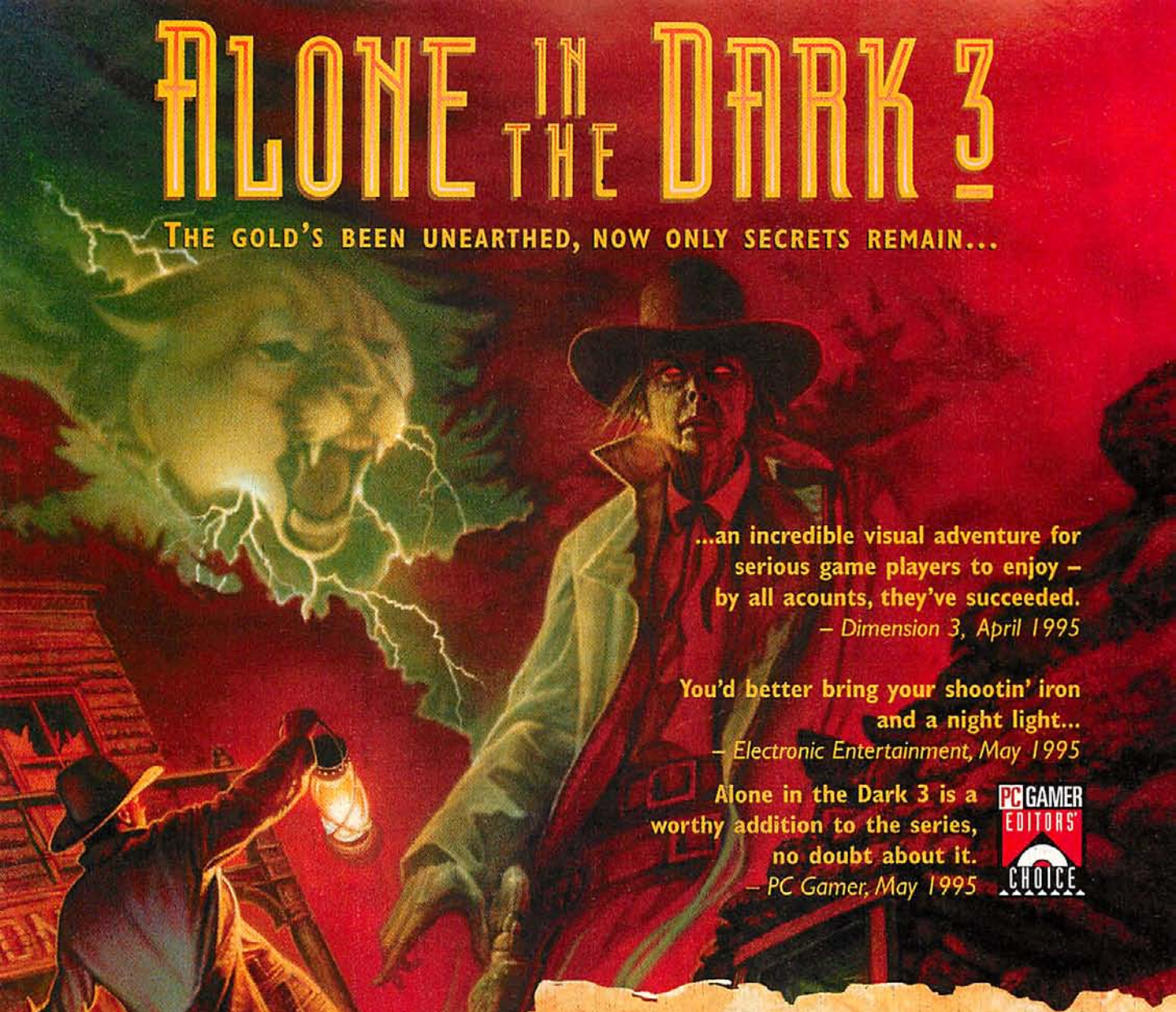
PAPPA JACK Jack is a grumpy character, but he does compliment you when warranted, such as when you secure the fresh water supply.

GRAPHIC VIOLENCE

The graphics are crisp and detailed, although I'd hesitate to call them state of the art. Most of the mercs are only differentiated by their hair color, often making it essential to click on a merc to find out who he or she is. The isometric viewpoint is extremely usable, but the angled top-down perspective means that it's hard to spot soldiers hiding under clumps of brush and trees. The sound effects are very impressive, with a different sound effect for each firearm. Bullets impact

ALONE IN THE DARK 3

THE GOLD'S BEEN UNEARTHED, NOW ONLY SECRETS REMAIN...



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– Dimension 3, April 1995

You'd better bring your shootin' iron and a night light...
– Electronic Entertainment, May 1995

Alone in the Dark 3 is a worthy addition to the series, no doubt about it.
– PC Gamer, May 1995

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TUFF TWALK The personalities of the mercs are drawn from crude stereotypes, but the dialogue and voice-acting add a human element to the game.

targets with sickening thuds, usually followed by a sharp grunt of pain from the damaged individual.

As impressive a product as JAGGED ALLIANCE is, there are a few minor gripes. Although you can locate, hire and transport some of the world's deadliest mercenaries to a remote island, you are absolutely unable to buy even the most basic equipment. Granted, letting gamers purchase machine guns, shotguns and grenades *en masse* would seriously knock game balance out of kilter, but giving gamers the opportunity to purchase the most basic, mundane supplies—such as first aid kits, crowbars, canteens and other staples—would go a long way towards making this game more accessible to novices. This supply problem is especially annoying when your entire squad is heavily injured and you find yourself without a first aid kit. If you're low on funds (making it impossible to hire fresh mercenaries), you're locked into a week of continuous rest and recuperation for your injured grunts.

The 53-page manual is entertaining and informative, written in a lively, informal style. The manual is liberally sprinkled with short jokes, puns and other delightful diversions, making a trip to find information within its pages an entertaining diversion in itself.

Aside from a few minor interface and design issues, JAGGED ALLIANCE is a superlative product. The complexity and detail exhibited in all aspects of the game break new ground and the effective use of individual, computer-driven "personalities." Although it is truly a genre-busting product, it does fit into one category: Must-buy.

THE EDITORS SPEAK

JAGGED ALLIANCE

RATING 4.5

PROS Multifaceted and deep. It's got detailed tactical combat, strategy and adventure game aspects, and loads of personality—all of which gel into an engrossing game.

CONS Minor glitches, and the interface has its idiosyncrasies.

"I don't want to read the manual!"

As seen on PBS's "Computer Chronicles"

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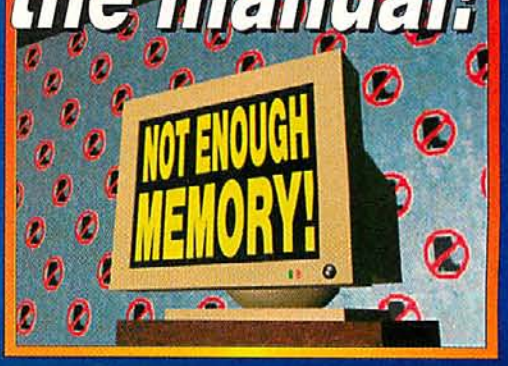

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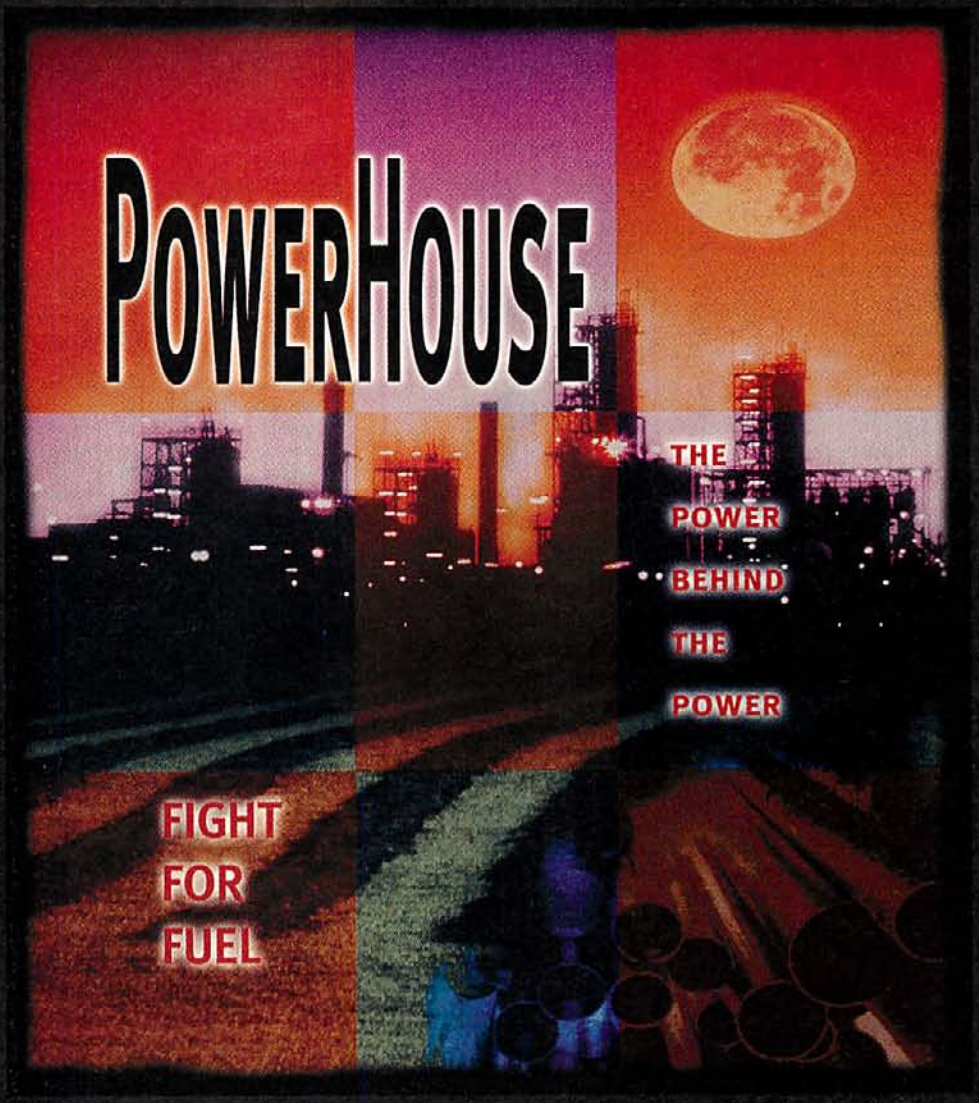

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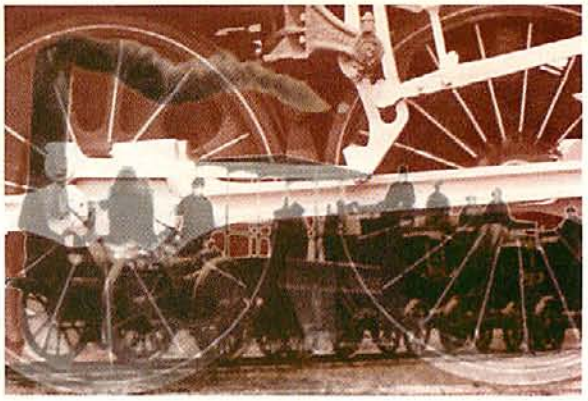


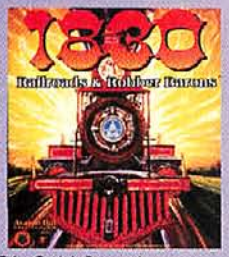
Avalon Hill's 1830: One Sleek, Powerful Locomotive

by Bob Proctor

THERE EXISTS A BREED OF GAMERS WHO PREFER CONTESTS WITH NO ELEMENT OF CHANCE, WHERE THE outcome is based on pure skill. Some devote their lives to a single game like Chess or Go. Others search for new challenges that haven't been analyzed for several hundred years, games that lack the symmetry of classical board games while retaining good play balance.

This latter group will benefit most from 1830, the computer adaptation of the **Avalon Hill** board game first published in 1986. Very faithful to the original, 1830 may be played by up to six human railroad magnates, or with as many as four computer opponents. The computer plays well—so well, in fact, that devoted 1830 board gamers will want this program just to sharpen their skills!

1830: RAILROADS AND ROBBER BARONS



Price: $49.95
System Requirements: IBM compatible 386 SX or better, 4MB RAM, VGA graphics, 2 MB hard drive space, mouse. Supports AdLib, General MIDI, Gold Sound Standard, PAS16, Roland and Sound Blaster sound cards.
# of Players: 1-6 (single computer only)
Protection: Manual look-up
Designers: Steve Barcia and Russ Williams
Original Boardgame Designer: Bruce Shelley
Publisher: The Avalon Hill Game Company
Baltimore, MD
(800) 254-9200

TIES THAT BIND The president of the B&O considers playing another track tile in order to forge a more lucrative route.

THE AGE OF STEAM

1830 was the year that the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad began commercial service using trains pulled by steam locomotives (as opposed to "hay-burners"), a catalyst which initiated a period of railroad construction in the populated Northeastern U.S. At first, these were small private railroads, owned by a single individual and typically only 20 to 40 miles long. It was quickly discovered that building larger railroads to connect major cities was beyond the resources of even the richest individuals. Something new was needed for such large projects and the Corporation was born, allowing one man to control the wealth of many stockholders.

The men of vision, the Empire Builders, thus gained the power they needed to connect centers of manufacturing with resources and markets. Of course, the power and wealth also attracted men of greed, the Robber Barons—Vanderbilt, Gould, Fisk, etc.—who are represented in the game. In fact, 1830 does such a good job of recreating this tumultuous era that one of the major facets of the game is choosing your own ethical position. Playing against the computer version makes this choice somewhat simpler, since it doesn't remember your backstabbing methods quite so well as your gaming buddies.

BUILDING RAIL EMPIRES

Winning a game of 1830 is a matter of acquiring the greatest Net Worth. This seemingly simple goal requires a careful blend of strategies in several areas. You must invest wisely in the stocks of the corporations. If you acquire enough to become the President, you can operate the railroad to make a profit, finding the best paying routes and planning for advances in technology. There is never a best strategy as everything depends on which railroads are active and which choices the other players are making. Nor can you focus on a single area and do well: I have had, at different times, the best stock portfolio, the highest paying route, and the most cash on hand and still lost to a player with better balance.

The basic mechanism for getting money is to buy the majority share in a corporation, run it to produce revenue, and then, pay dividends each turn. Paying dividends also raises the price of the stock, so not only are you pocketing the cash, but the value of your stock portfolio is rising. One good strategy is to try to drive the price of your stock as high as possible. But you cannot own more than 60% of the stock of any corporation under normal conditions, so other players will also benefit from your well-managed corporation. They also have

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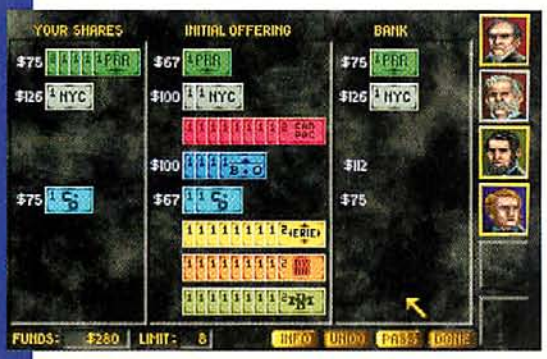
the power to sell your stock at any time, driving the price down. Of course, you can do the same to them.

Operating a railroad means building routes. The 1830 map shows the Northeastern United States and Southern Canada, bounded by Montreal, Richmond, Boston and Cleveland, divided into large hexagons. Each corporation is allowed to lay one "tile" of track into a hex per turn. This costs nothing unless you are the first to place a tile on a mountain ($120) or river ($80) hex. Each railroad starts at its home city and generally builds toward the nearest town. Once two or more towns are connected by track, the railroad can buy a train that can run between them collecting revenue. Towns and cities both grow in value as new tiles replace old.

At first, trains can only connect two adjacent towns, so runs are short and revenues low. Once all of these "Two-Trains" are purchased, Three-Trains become available. Although more expensive, these are capable of connecting many of the big cities (with one intervening station). After Three-Trains come Fours, Fives, and Sixes, each increasingly more expensive. After Sixes come Diesels, which can make runs of unlimited length. These can be big earners, but you have to plan carefully as the long runs can be blocked by your rivals.

Blocking can be done in two ways, with tiles or with stations. Not all combinations of routes are represented on the tiles, so you try to place them to ensure the connections you need and prevent those your competitors want. As in the board game, there are limited numbers of each tile, so you can block a rival by using, possibly even wasting, the last tile of a certain type.



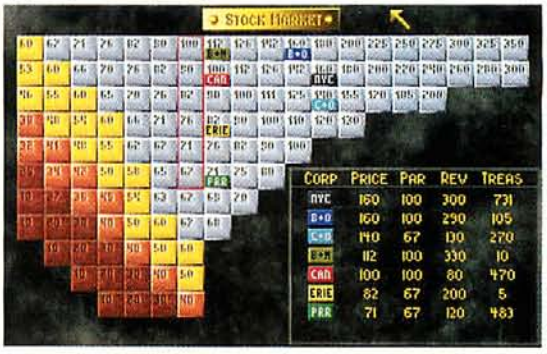
SURPRISE AND DEMAND The stock market can be a great place to invest, but watch out for rivals dumping stock.

If you find it difficult to keep track of what's left, you can play with unlimited tiles as an option. Stations are placed only in large cities and once a city is filled with stations from rivals, a railroad can trace a route into it but the route must end there.

An additional complication comes from obsolescence. When the first Four-Train is purchased, all Two-Trains are retired and when the first Six is purchased, all Threes disappear. So, if you choose to invest heavily in Twos and Threes, you can increase your early revenue but pretty soon the corporation will be low on cash when the Twos and Threes go away.

Once your corporation is on its feet and paying dividends, you must find something profitable to do with your money. Generally, this will mean investing in stock of the other active corporations or possibly floating a new one. It is when you become President of two or more corporations that the possibilities for the really dirty tricks arise. How about using all of the money from one corporation to buy a Diesel, then selling it for $1 to another railroad you control? This is especially sweet if you can then dump the stock of the first, forcing the Presidency on another player and leaving that unfortunate soul with the problem of buying a train.

One of the nicest features of the game is the ability to customize it. There are 12 options to modify the basic game, most of which are popular "house rules" already developed for the board game. Giving the Bank more or less money allows you to adjust the game's length, and along with the options for randomized maps and revenues, will keep 1830 fresh for a long, long time.



TRACKING STOCK PRICES The familiar boardgame perspective of the stock market can be selected to assist you in your next "robber baron" move.

BIG STEEL RAIL GONNA CARRY ME HOME

The production values of this game are excellent. The manual is colorful, clear and informative, with numerous illustrative screens and examples of play to go along with the biographical information on the Robber Barons represented in the game. The programming is solid, and the only bug I know of is a rare one that allows a computer player to buy too many private companies and end up with a negative cash amount. It's infrequent, but if this happens you can either restart or continue—the AI will eventually work back to a positive figure.

As mentioned at the beginning, the computer plays very, very well. There are four levels of difficulty: Easy, Average, Hard, and Hardest. On the Easy setting, the computer plays the stock market aggressively but doesn't manage trains well. It will often be possible to put a computer player in a position where he has one train for two railroads and continually sells it back and forth never collecting any revenue. About the most "cheating" the computer players ever do is that they all buy stock in each others' railroads but never in yours—an accusation we could often levy against human opponents as well. Also, on rare occasions as you near the endgame and things become more complex, the computer may not calculate the most optimal revenue producing route.

1830 has made the transition from table to computer very well. If you like pure strategy games, this game will give you hundreds of hours of pleasure.

THE EDITORS SPEAK

1830: RAILROADS & ROBBER BARONS

RATING 4.5

PROS A fanatically faithful rendition of an elegantly-designed boardgame. The computer opponent can eat the best gamers for lunch.

CONS There are a few AI flaws that can unduly help or hinder an expert player.

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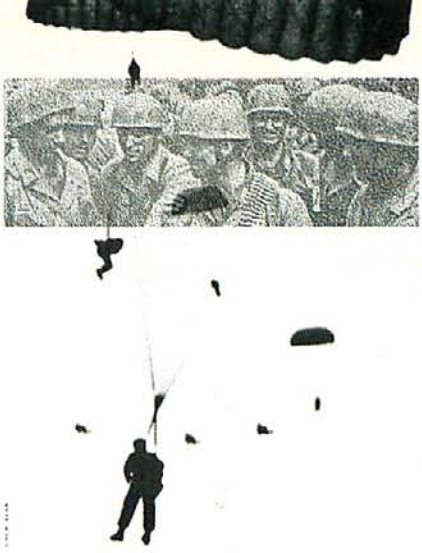

QQP Parachutes Into Wargaming's Past With THE PURE WARGAME

by Tim Carter

AS WITH MOST AFICIONADOS OF HISTORICAL WARGAMES, I APPRECIATE RELICS OF THE PAST IN MANY forms: books, maps, buildings, battlegrounds, and artifacts of all shapes and sizes. I draw the line, however, at computer games. While modern graphics, sound and animation often strike me as frivolous in a strategy game, advances in artificial intelligence, interface and documentation tend to make today's games a cut above their ancient predecessors. This is why, upon reviewing **QQP**'s THE PURE WARGAME: DEATH FROM ABOVE, VOLUME 1, I feel a bit like a cavalryman riding alongside a tank division: My horse may stride majestically and charge bravely, but it stands little success against the technological superiority of an armor-plated enemy.

This *is* your father's wargame. DEATH FROM ABOVE, the first installment of QQP's THE PURE WARGAME series, plays like a computer game from the late 1980s. Many of the faults of earlier designs, corrected in more recent games, reappear here. DEATH FROM ABOVE recreates airborne operations from the Second World War. From well-known battles like Crete and Arnhem to lesser-known engagements like Kanev—the Soviet attempt to take a series of bridges over the Dnieper River in 1944—DEATH FROM ABOVE provides a cross-section of some historically interesting, but usually one-sided encounters. As subject matter goes, this collection of battles provides ample opportunity for tense and thoroughly enjoyable gaming. Unfortunately, DEATH FROM ABOVE just doesn't deliver.

The Pure Wargame: Death From Above, Volume 1

Price: $59.95 CD-ROM
System Requirements: IBM compatible 386 or better, 1MB RAM, VGA graphics, 5MB hard drive space, CD-ROM drive, mouse; supports AdLib, Advanced Gravis, Pro Audio Spectrum, Roland, SoundBlaster, and 100% compatible sound cards.
Protection: None
Designer: Steve Magestro
Publisher: QQP, Inc.
Flemington, NJ
(908) 788-2799

BUILDING THE PERFECT EDSEL

The designers of DEATH FROM ABOVE have clearly attempted to make a simple, clean and enjoyable game. The graphics are somewhat rough by current standards, and while the sound support is better than most strategy games out there—some 48 different scores are included—it really adds little to the game.

Simplicity can be a virtue. As the success of games like EMPIRE DELUXE and PANZER GENERAL have shown, simple, honest wargames are tremendously popular. Why? Well, probably because their simplicity allows the game players to quickly and easily get to the meat of the game. The central problems to be solved are easily recognizable and, while strategies for achieving one's goals may be complex, organizing and moving units or resources is not.

Of course, a simple design requires that the game have at its core a challenge or set of challenges that will keep players coming back. In DEATH FROM ABOVE, the designers have achieved, for the most part, the goal of making a simple, accessible wargame. It is easy to move units, and most of the commands are simple and intuitive. However, flaws in the design unnecessarily complicate gameplay.

For example, a key element to winning is organizational integrity. If your units are in radio contact with their HQ, they receive supplies and recover fatigue and morale more quickly. They are also able to launch joint attacks with other friendly units, an important element to winning battles. All in all, a reasonable concept around which to build a game system.

Unfortunately, the documentation doesn't explain very well how radio contact is actually to be established and maintained (even though this manual has a table of contents and more indexing than I've ever seen in any QQP product). Frequently, units that are side-by-side will fall in or out of contact for no apparent reason. It is impossible to identify a unit by looking at the map, adding to the frustration.

Determining the parent HQ requires calling up the individual unit data. Since this can only be done for one unit at a time, it is difficult to conceptualize larger organizational structures. Even if you are able to figure out the right battalion to which a company belongs, there is no easy way of finding the battalion HQ. HQ identities aren't displayed on the map, either. You must access every HQ on the board until you find the right one. This is

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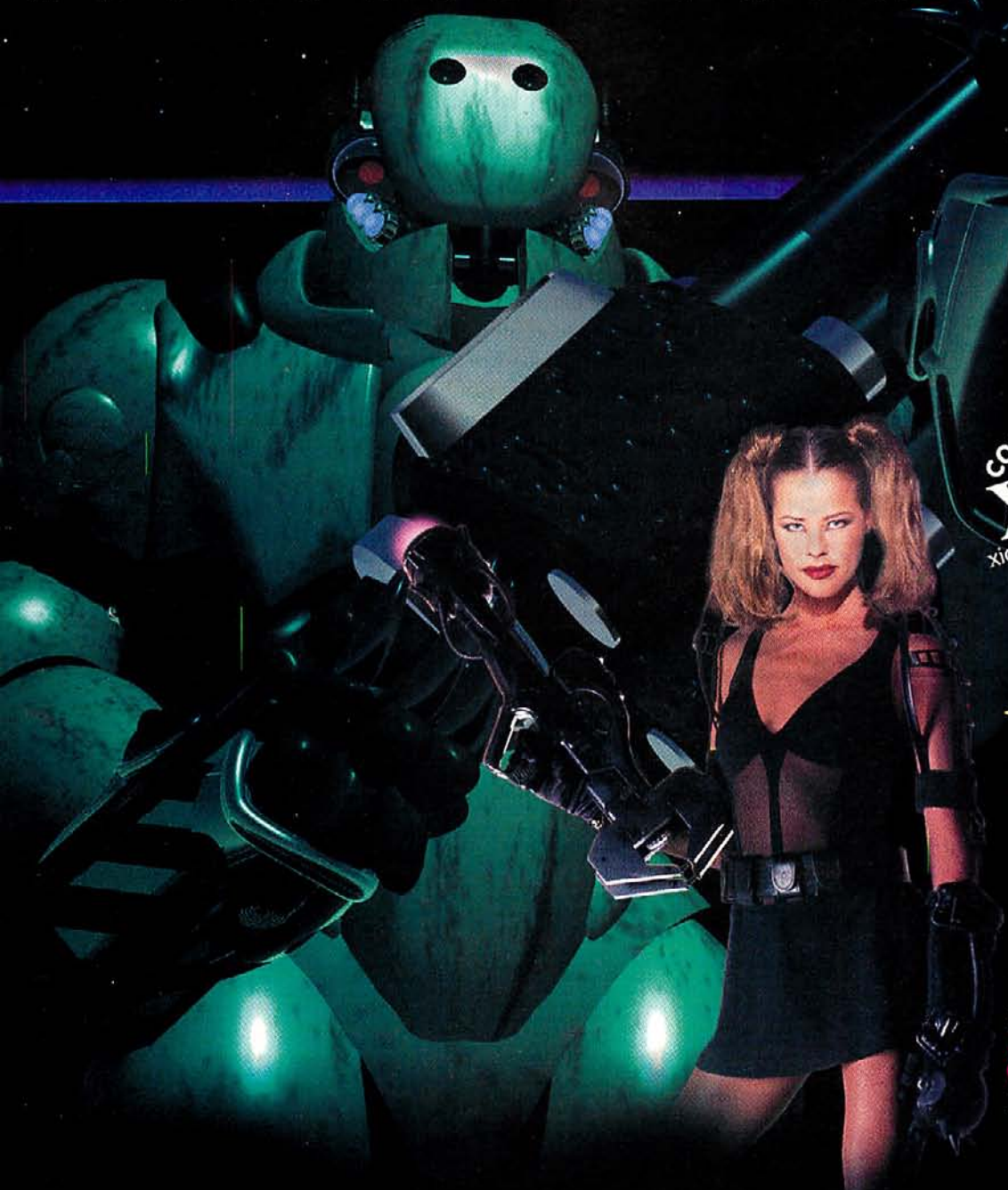

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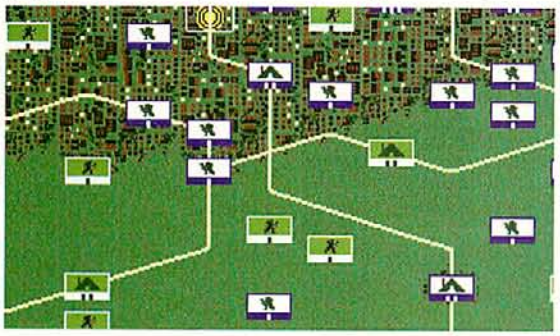
MISSION CONTROL

just plain silly.

Of course, this is particularly problematic since most airborne operations begin with units scattered and intermingled. A simple numbering system on the unit icons would have greatly increased the playability and enjoyability of the game.



FALL OF THE FALLSCHIRMJAGER The Reich's finest paratroops resemble their historical counterparts in little more than name, due to the lame computer opponent.

By making the job of sorting out the units unnecessarily difficult, the designers have undermined one of the fundamental principles on which this type of game is based: ease of play.

A further problem arises out of the lack of information presented to the player as the game unfolds. Most scenarios have a few crucial objectives which must be either captured or defended in order to win. Neither side, however, is told exactly where these objectives are. At the beginning of each new scenario players must spend 10 or 15 minutes scrolling across the map identifying the key cities or bridges before they can even begin to plan strategy. Again, failing to provide this information is a totally unnecessary omission. Would scenario maps have been that difficult or expensive?

While all of the units on both sides are visible at all times, players are never told when and where reinforcements can be expected. This is downright ridiculous. A simple chart at the back of the rule book could have solved the problem long after the computer interface had been designed.

HUNG IN THE BALANCE

The scenarios are, in most cases, horrendously unbalanced and seem to lack foresight and extensive testing. While a play-balance mechanism is built in to the game, all it does is alter the strengths of units on one side. While one can play a scenario several times in order to find the proper balance, this unnecessarily wastes further time just to reach the point from which one should be starting the game.

There is no real justification for the unbalanced scenarios. Certainly, many of the battles in question were one-sided, but as victory is determined by arbitrarily attributed points, it would have been quite easy to skew the points system to make up for historical imbalances. For instance, the Arnhem scenario could have victory conditions which required the Germans to totally annihilate the British in order to claim victory, thereby making the game challenging without messing with history. We have a right to expect better from QQP; even the weak AI of THE PERFECT GENERAL was forgivable to a degree, because the scenarios were pretty well bal-

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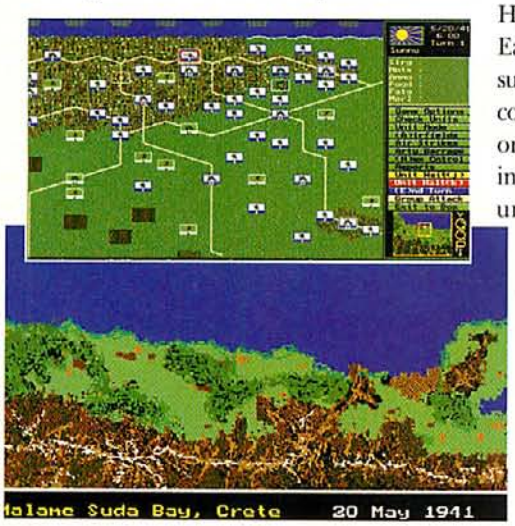
anced for two-player contests.

Aside from changing the strength of a side in each scenario, there are no other ways of altering the computer player's ability. This is not surprising, since it seems like very little effort went in to building the AI in the first place. The computer opponent is absolutely fixated by the victory objectives. It is unable to do much more than charge headlong at them, regardless of the odds or the situation.



MY CRETAN VACATION Malame Suda Bay is evocative when viewed from the strategic perspective, but the harsh light of the tactical map exposes the outdated graphics.

The combat model in DEATH FROM ABOVE makes clear distinctions between HQ units, armor, infantry and artillery. Each type has a specific mission, and success depends on using the types in combination. Very nice, except that no one remembered to tell the artificial intelligence. Instead, it tends to send units, in the order it selects them, straight for the objectives. A *panzer* division advancing towards the enemy led by its HQ and artillery, with the tank battalions kept safely to the rear, is not an unusual sight. Not surprisingly, unless the opposing forces are hopelessly outnumbered, the computer stands little chance.

All in all, THE PURE WARGAME: DEATH FROM ABOVE looks, feels and plays like a below-average '80s era computer wargame. While the game is simple, most of the game's faults seem to arise out of bad planning or an incomplete understanding of good game balance, rather than technical or programming difficulties. It's a shame that all the research that went into this game is wasted, because the genre needs more games with focus, and the paratroop angle is a good one. Somehow, though, the focus got lost along with the playability which is normally QQP's trademark, resulting in a game which will satisfy neither the veteran nor the newcomer. Let's hope that QQP's PERFECT GENERAL II is a return to their solid strategy game roots, rather than this tepid and uninspired fare.

THE EDITORS SPEAK

THE PURE WARGAME

RATING

PROS: Interesting subject matter and unit mix; runs well on a 386.

CONS: Weak computer opponent, poor documentation, and grossly unbalanced scenarios leave this game bailing without a parachute.

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Cheesy And Half-Baked

MicroProse Searches For The Right Strategy Game Recipe With PIZZA TYCOON

by Randall Black

The plot begins with the owner of a small pizza shop, desperate to save his struggling business, contacting the underworld. From a simple beginning of seemingly benign courier jobs, our protagonist is drawn ever deeper into a life of crime. By day, his knack for concocting bizarre combinations of pizza ingredients brings him a measure of financial success. By night, his increasing status in the underworld earns him respect and ever more lucrative assignments from the gangsters. Using the profits from the now booming pizza shop, he buys expensive weapons—flame throwers, chemical sprays, bazookas and bombs—delivering them to pre-arranged drop sites for profit and greater status among the denizen of the underworld. After a few of these weapons deals, he is entrusted with the lucrative, white-collar crime of laundering money.

Now inured to a life of crime, it is a small step to begin using the weapons of his nighttime trade to make "hits" on rival pizza makers, trashing their shops and forcing them out. When he has taken over ten percent of the market in ten cities, our amoral hero wins the game and truly earns the title of "Pizza Tycoon."

PRESENTATION IS EVERYTHING Whether or not you believe that customers "eat with their eyes," you can have some fun designing pizzas. Just make sure you follow the basic recipe!

WHAT'S AMATTA YOU?!

You begin by selecting a character from a roster of mug shots, each associated with a starting sum of money and a set of traits such as energy, health or dexterity. The vast majority of the characters seem to be there only to be the object of fun. In Quick Start mode, you are given a furnished, rented restaurant but still need to buy supplies and an oven, and hire a chef and a waiter. You also select pizzas from a prepared recipe list to put on your menu. In Free Mode, you are given nothing but your bank roll. That means you need to locate a restaurant to rent, call the real estate office via a "telenet" screen, pay the first month's rent, buy and install furniture, and then set about making your own pizzas from scratch *before* they can go on the menu.

The art of pizza making involves selecting ingredients and arranging them on pizza dough. To get you started, the game comes with a recipe booklet that tells you the ingredients and amounts for a list of standard pizzas. Occasionally using a chopper to reduce the weight of ingredient items, you duplicate the amounts listed in the booklet. Then your finished pizza goes before a panel of cartoon judges who flash Olympic-style scorecards, with the results determining the sales potential of your pizza. The process of copying pizzas from a recipe book is mind-numbingly tedious—a lot like picking lint off your carpet with a pair of tweezers.

Buying and arranging furniture is much the same, as the only real challenge comes when your restaurant reaches capacity and you need to cram more seats into your restaurant. Improper placement of furniture actually can prevent customers from entering the restaurant and waiters from leaving the kitchen, although this isn't readily apparent. A misplaced chair or telephone can cause your restaurant to fail and you won't notice it unless you repeat-

Pizza Tycoon

Price: $44.95
System Requirements: IBM compatible 386 or better, 4MB RAM, VGA graphics, 7MB hard drive space, CD-ROM, mouse. Supports Sound Blaster and 100% compatible sound cards.
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edly look in to see customers attempting to enter and failing.

The "fun" doesn't stop here. You must also keep track of food stocks, although the chore can be mercifully, if temporarily, taken over by hiring a manager. However, once you have enough business to require a warehouse, you must personally keep it well-stocked by holding the mouse button down on scores of individual items. Don't forget to visit every few days to repeat the process.

RESERVED SEATING Being a floor manager takes on a whole new meaning in PIZZA TYCOON.

A SMALL PEPPERONI WITH A LARGE SIDE OF CRIME

The restaurant is now open, which would seem to be where the game action should take off. It is, but not in the manner you might expect. After the first week of business, you have to pay your staff. Fair enough, except that there's a good chance you'll already be bankrupt and out of the game. It's apparent that the designers intended this set of hopeless financial conditions as an incentive to undertake criminal activity. Perhaps crime would be more exciting? Well, unfortunately, it isn't.

Your first crimes are pick-up and delivery jobs. By telenet, you receive detailed instructions from a local gang, which gives you time/space coordinates to pick up items that have nothing to do with the game. Impossible to memorize, the instructions must be written down. Only then are you told the fee you will receive (which ranges widely), and your odds of success. Often, after writing all the instructions down, you find that the mission simply isn't worth the bother.

CAN'T GET GOOD HELP ANYMORE Making an honest living in PIZZA TYCOON is impossible, since you quickly run out of money and employees.

Considering all the real life activities gamers seek to escape, setting and obeying an alarm clock seems the least likely to find its way into a computer game; yet PIZZA TYCOON seems obsessed with time. No matter how early you set your alarm clock, you will be summoned at some ridiculous hour (even 0:00 AM), whereupon you travel to the rendezvous point and wait until the clock is at the exact increment of ten minutes specified in the gang's instructions. This means that you have to sit and wait through increments of ten seconds in real time, with typical waiting times of a minute or more. Try this: Check your watch, turn to the nearest wall and keep checking your watch until exactly 30 seconds have passed. Are you back? You have just experienced a completely accurate simulation of the charm of petty crime in PIZZA TYCOON.

After scribbling down instructions and completing, say, 10 or 15 missions, you move up to weapons deals. These are an improvement on pick-ups because you only have to make one rendezvous. With both types of missions, there is a probability that you will be caught by the police. Eventually, the successful criminal will be offered the job of laundering money. Here's how it works: the gang gives you a large sum of money and a list of four long numbers. Your mission is to call banks and deposit the money evenly into those four accounts. When you perform this challenging feat of note-taking and division, you are rewarded with an absolutely huge amount of money, equivalent to several months take from a successful restaurant. The business aspect of the game thus becomes meaningless: Imagine playing CIVILIZATION for many hours and then being given ten full-grown cities for buying a frigate—it's that stupid.

If you ignore the economic aspects of the game, about all that's left is making custom pizzas based on the tastes and trends of your customers. Bizarre combinations of, say, anchovies, squid, radishes and lemon work just fine, as long as they conform to taste preferences of customer classes and the "in" ingredients. If there is anything akin to excitement in this fun-forsaken game, it's seeing one of your creations pack your restaurant and make it onto the "most popular pizza" list. But the monthly pizza-making contests and challenges to competitors revolve around more copying: watching an animation of a pizza being made and then copying the ingredients and placement as exactly as possible. While there must be some age during child development when this sort of activity is considered interesting, I think most adults would be happier watching a good pizza commercial on TV.

A PIE IN YOUR EYE

Lacking game-play information, the manual is simply awful, reminiscent of a self-indulgent stand-up comic who thinks he's funnier than the audience does. The interface is balky and unnecessarily convoluted. The gangland "hit" action sequence is primitive and mostly involves running away.

Overall, the game seems to select the most tedious details of an otherwise interesting plot: something like designing a game of high finance to revolve around balancing a check book. Perhaps the hidden message is that a life of crime is boring as hell, in which case every impressionable child should own a copy. But if you've passed the age of six and think a strategy game should be more challenging than arranging furniture, PIZZA TYCOON is an offer you *can* refuse.

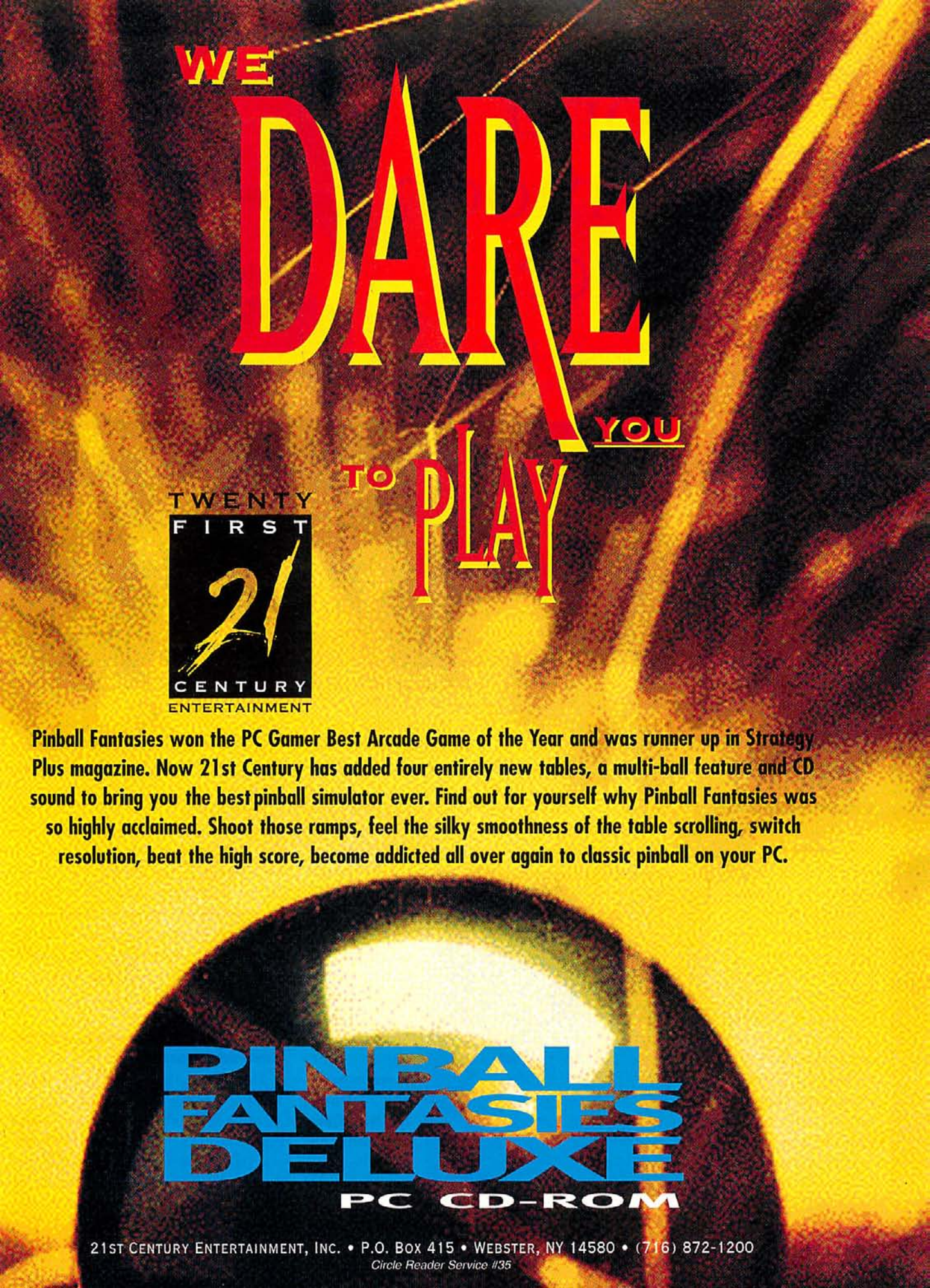
THE EDITORS SPEAK

PIZZA TYCOON

RATING 1

PROS The subject matter is fresh...

CONS ...but the implementation is "cheesy and half-baked," which is to say that there are many repetitious and uninteresting elements, and major design imbalances.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A Second Honeymoon In Venice

MERCHANT PRINCE Is Reborn On The MicroProse Gondola As MACHIAVELLI: THE PRINCE

by Arinn Dembo

RENAISSANCE PORTRAITS From the Pope's sudden illness (did someone say poison?) to the hanging of traitors and the inexorable march of The Black Death, the many events, both random and player-induced, add a devious flavor even old Niccolo himself would love.

IT WAS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE: TWO TITLES DEALING WITH THE ITALIAN Renaissance in less than three years? Two separate games, each chock full of that unbeatable combination of brutality and wackiness that made the 15th century so much fun? Bribery, murder, mercenaries and The Plague, traveling to exotic lands, killing equally exotic people, developing exotic skin diseases—twice? I thought it too good to be true, and it is...almost.

HEREDITARY PRINCIPALITIES

I was looking forward to the release of **MicroProse**'s new title, MACHIAVELLI: THE PRINCE. I wanted to see what a big company could do with the Italian Renaissance—having assumed, of course, that MicroProse had developed a new product. Also, given the name on the box, I thought it was obvious that this game would focus exclusively on war and politics, with the object being to unify and rule all of Italy—a dream dear to old Niccolo's heart, the furtherance of which was the main reason for writing his classic work, *The Prince*.

For the past two years, I had been playing another good Italian Renaissance game called MERCHANT PRINCE from **QQP**, which focused on the life of the average Venetian merchant-aristocrat. I was looking forward to a game that would take the Florentine's more militant point of view.

Silly me. MACHIAVELLI is really MERCHANT PRINCE GOLD in disguise, an enhancement of the original MERCHANT PRINCE designed by **Several Dudes Holistic Gaming** and published by QQP. For those who have never played MERCHANT PRINCE, I can heartily recommend MACHIAVELLI; it's a superior version of a good game. This is a deliciously cynical romp through the 15th century, full of good, clean, vicious fun, where you assume the role of a powerful Venetian family in the year 1301. A basic game lasts for 100 years, at one turn per year. You begin with a note from your Uncle Niccolo urging you to improve the family's fortunes, a stipend of 150 florins a turn, a map of the known world (which gets more and more inaccurate the further you venture from Venice), a little capital with which to buy cargo, and a couple of ships—one slow cog and one fast galley.

Machiavelli: The Prince

Price: $47.95
System Requirements: IBM compatible 386 or better, 4MB RAM, SVGA graphics, 10.5 MB hard drive space, CD-ROM, mouse; supports General MIDI, Sound Blaster and compatibles.
# of Players: 1-4 by hotseat or e-mail, 2 by modem
Protection: None
Designer: HDI
Publisher: MicroProse Software
Hunt Valley, MD
(410) 771-0440

HOW THE PRINCE MUST ACT TO ACHIEVE HONOR

The game reflects perfectly the tunnel vision of the typical 15th-century Venetian. All life is centered on Venice; your family's popularity in Venice is an important factor, one you will have to keep track of during the game. You can increase popularity by spending money on parties, commission-

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Critical Acclaim for U.S. Navy Fighters

Computer Gaming World: ★★★★½ / ★★★★★

PC Gamer: 91% Rating

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ing works of art, or building yourself a fancy villa; you can lose popularity for attacking fellow Venetians, or by getting caught in some particularly nasty bit of skullduggery—assassinating the Pope, say. Only the Venetian Senate and the Vatican have meaning within the context of the game, and the world outside of Venice exists only as a means of making money. To win you will need to explore, but you are seeking new markets and new products, not a new world. There is no political power to be seized abroad, making it somewhat ridiculous that MicroProse chose to name this product after Machiavelli.

You must build trade routes and outstrip your opponents in the fine art of profiteering. Coincidentally, you will find yourself scrabbling for power in the Senate and longing to seize the Papacy; high office can be translated directly into money, if you plan carefully and seize your advantage. You can bribe senators and buy seats in the Papal college for your family, and you will find yourself doing it, if only to increase your regular yearly income. Power in the Senate can be parlayed into a lucrative cabinet position, like General of the Venetian Army (1,000 florins a year), and your cardinals pay off 1/10th of the indulgence rate directly into the family coffers.

MACHIAVELLI includes mercenaries, assassins, arsonists, slanderers and the scramble for holy relics. It's a dangerous world; pirates and storms can send your cargo to the bottom, and your land caravans can suffer from brigands, sandstorms and avalanches on land. And all this without even mentioning the kind of random events that can really rock the civilized world—major outbreaks of the Black Plague, Mongol hordes, and the Reformation, to name but a few.

HOW THE PRINCE MAY RETAIN HONOR

If you like a little scheming, swindling and backstabbing to spice up your trade routes and empire-building, this is a game for you. Of course, if you already own MERCHANT PRINCE, then the decision becomes somewhat tougher. I'm such a big enough fan of the original that I genuinely enjoyed this upgrade. The game has been passed under the CD chrome-ifying ray, polishing every pixel of the graphics, and adding the new noises inevitable with any enhanced version.

In addition to the bells and whistles, some improvements in gameplay have been made as well. Refinements in the trade process now allow you to build warehouses in any city and stockpile trade goods. You need no longer suffer the annoying loss of profits from being unable to transfer cargo from caravan to shipboard, and vice versa. To balance the powerful warehouse feature, there is now a limited demand for all goods, especially the higher-end items. In any given city, you will rarely be able to sell a whole cargo-hold full of diamonds or holy relics in any one year—a concession to realism which I appreciated.

NEW GUILD, SAME OLD PRODUCT The graphics have changed, but the game remains much the same as MERCHANT PRINCE—albeit with a better AI.

To the great relief of old MERCHANT PRINCE fans, MACHIAVELLI will give you more control over the random map. You can determine some of the more useful settings, like the percentage of water on the map of the known world, and the degree of scatter on the land masses. Also, prices now fluctuate slightly within the towns, rather than being invariable during normal conditions; but they still skyrocket when a city has been under excommunication or siege, or when there is Plague, never fear.

Maneuvering in the Senate is now a bit more expensive, since the senators are now sharp enough to raise their prices when they can give you the deciding vote. Also, the artificial opponents are brighter, and can actually serve to make a game with two or three human players much more interesting—especially if the humans are clever enough to stay at each other's throats, rather than ganging up on the machine. Playing alone against three computer opponents is still a bit of a drag, but the computer does serve as something of a tutorial, demonstrating interesting game options which you can use later against human opponents.

Overall, there's only one problem with MACHIAVELLI: THE PRINCE, and it's that we've seen it before. At least MicroProse is offering an upgrade for owners of MERCHANT PRINCE—a nice gesture, given that QQP, and not MPS, published the original. (Send in the disk # 1 from MERCHANT PRINCE and $23.97, plus shipping and handling to MPS Direct. But call (800) 879-PLAY first.) And hey! There's a brand new, shiny copy of Machiavelli's *The Prince* in the box! Yes, one of the world's most infamous, oft-misinterpreted and seldom-read books, straight from Penguin Classics. It's true, the ideas and advice set forth in *The Prince* have very little to do with this game (other than the fact that you have to be ruthless), and the inclusion of the book is probably just a guilty gesture on the part of the marketing crew at MicroProse...but it's tempting, isn't it? In any case, I can heartily recommend MACHIAVELLI for newcomers to Venice, but old-timers may need more of a reason to return to the Renaissance.

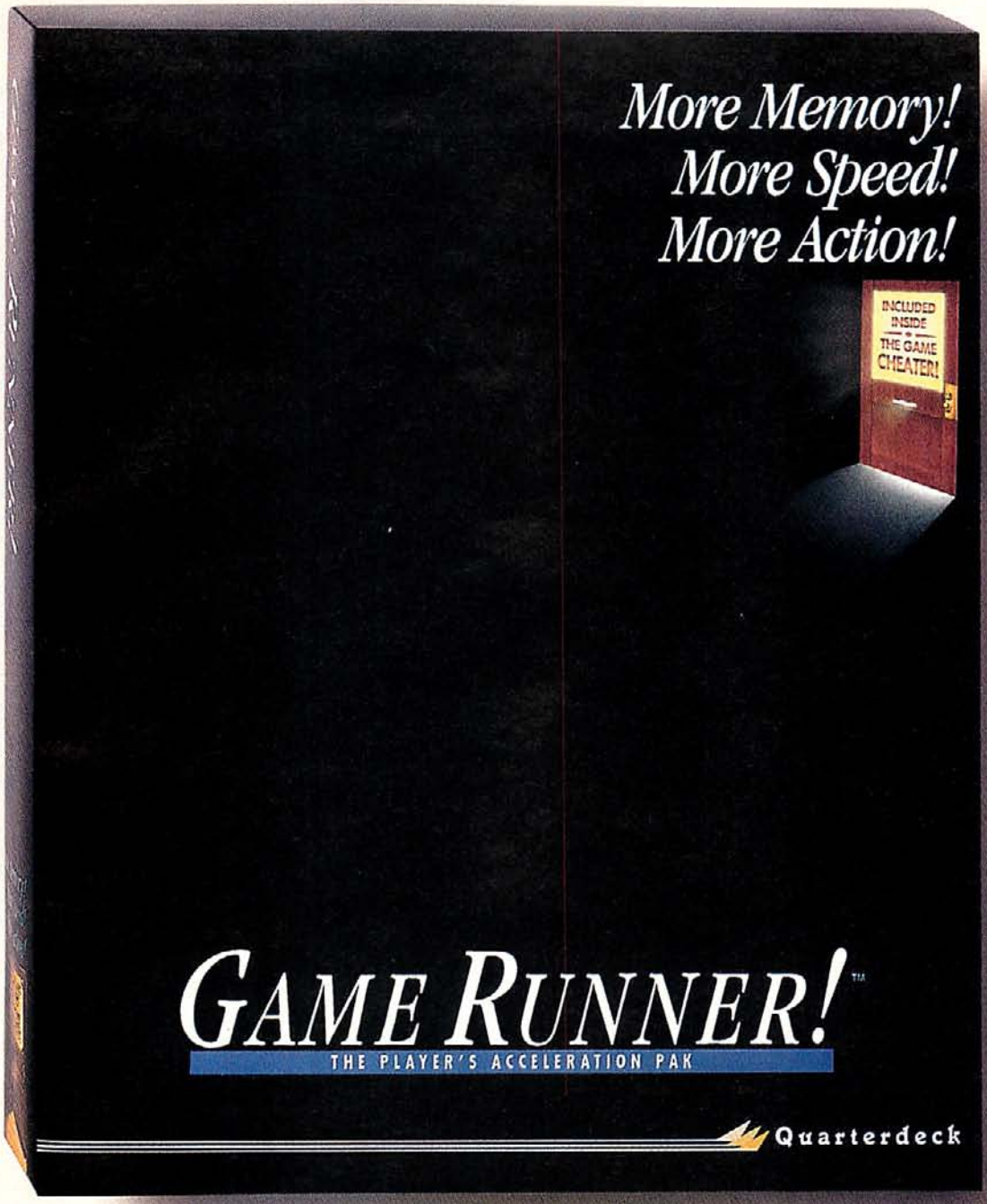
THE EDITORS SPEAK

MACHIAVELLI: THE PRINCE

RATING

PROS A significant revision of a strong, playable, and re-playable game.

CONS The revision may not go far enough to justify another purchase by those who have played the original.



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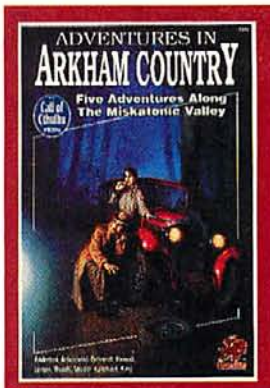

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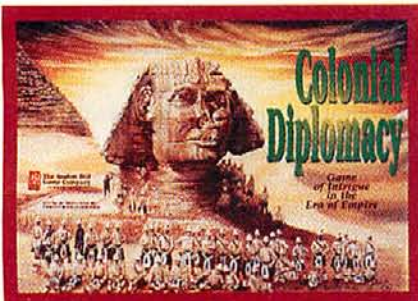

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CGW 7/95 BG2

Cheat Like A Pro

Hack Your Way To Victory With Four Commercial Cheat Utilities

by Jeff James

Over the past few years, computer games have become increasingly more complex and detailed. From FALCON 3.0 to X-COM: TERROR FROM THE DEEP, games have evolved into richly-textured products with multiple layers of complexity and difficulty. For gamers frustrated with overly difficult games and obtuse gameplay, a number of game cheating utilities have appeared. Usually running in the background as a terminate and stay-resident (TSR) program, these utilities allow you to make yourself invulnerable, fiddle with game settings, and provide information you weren't meant to see—often while in the middle of a game.

By the nature of their design, most of these products will appeal to a relatively small section of the gaming market. Novice gamers, frustrated by overly difficult games and Byzantine instruction manuals, have the strongest need for these utilities. Unfortunately, most of the products featured here overlook the needs of the new gamer: good technical support, clearly written manuals, and consistent operation. Conversely, more advanced gamers who are experienced with hex editors and other programming utilities can usually hack their way through to their own cheat codes without too much trouble. However, most of these utilities do provide a useful set of game tools for intermediate and advanced game players.

AXIS: THE GAME CHEATER V1.0

AXIS: THE GAME CHEATER is unique among the programs listed here because it is simultaneously the easiest utility to use and also the least effective. AXIS concentrates on providing games with "cheat codes" that can be accessed during play. For example, once AXIS is installed on your computer you can load your favorite game normally. In PRINCE OF PERSIA, for example, pressing F9 will restore your character to full strength. On the downside, AXIS must have a "game enhancement module," or GEM, written specifically for the game you wish to use AXIS with. Most of the GEM modules supplied with the program diskette are for older titles; you may find a GEM for X-WING and SIMCITY, but you won't find anything for WING COMMANDER 3 or MASTER OF MAGIC. Additional GEMs routinely become available, often months after the release of a new game. Most of the GEM modules work as advertised, although I did run across a few modules that behaved erratically or refused to work at all. Using AXIS with the latest version of SECRET WEAPONS OF THE LUFTWAFFE, for example, I could get none of the codes to work. The 8-page instruction manual is next to useless, with nearly half its length devoted to acknowledgments, credits, and self-congratulation. Mediocre documentation and modest capabilities aside, AXIS is probably the best game utility for new game players. It might not work as well as some of the other utilities discussed here, but it is by far the easiest to install and use.

AXIS: THE GAME CHEATER. Price: $39.95. Baseline Publishing, 1760 Moriah Woods Blvd., Ste.5, Memphis, TN 38117. Tel: (901) 527-2501, Fax: (901) 682-9691.

CHEAT OF THE MONTHCLUB

Descent Cheat Codes

Having trouble with that boss robot on level 7 of Interplay's DESCENT? Don't take any more crap! Dish out the pain with these handy cheat codes.

GABBAGABBAHEY	Activates the cheat mode.
RACERX	Renders your ship invulnerable to attack.
SCOURGE	Provides all weapons.
MITZI	Gives you all keys for the level.
GUILE	Cloak mode.
TWILIGHT	Restores ship to full power.
FARMERJOE	Warp to another level.

GAME WIZARD PRO V2.0F

The GAME WIZARD PRO is the commercial version of the GAME WIZARD shareware cheating utility, and it boasts a wide range of game-hacking features and capabilities. Game parameters can be frozen, game speed can be adjusted, and you can use the memory address search feature to search for game variables hidden in RAM. Like most of the other game utilities mentioned here, the GAME WIZARD PRO is a TSR program which runs in the background while you're playing your favorite game. Unlike the others, this program only occupies a frugal 10K of memory when loaded, making it more likely to work with memory-hungry programs. There are a few other niceties as well, such as a "boss" screen, a DOS shell, and compatibility with the DOS 4GW DOS extender used in games like DOOM and X-COM. The manual is passable, but the real hallmark of ESD's technical support is their 24-hour dedicated BBS system. Using their BBS, game hackers can exchange tips and tricks on cheat codes for nearly all of the most popular games. Other game utilities and new program updates are also readily available. As it stands, the GAME WIZARD PRO narrowly emerges as the most comprehensive product in a somewhat lackluster field of contenders. The extensive feature list, dedicated BBS support, and solid operation make the GAME WIZARD PRO the best software-based game utility program currently available.

GAME WIZARD PRO. Price: $39.95, Enhanced Software Design, Inc., P.O. Box

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INFINITY MACHINE V2.0

I found the INFINITY MACHINE from **REM Software** to be a solid, workable game cheating utility. Like the other programs reviewed here, the INFINITY MACHINE runs as a TSR in the background. When loaded in this fashion, it occupies 25K of RAM in the high memory area, which is more than twice the amount of the GAME WIZARD PRO. Using basic and advanced search utilities, you can freeze game variables (such as giving yourself a permanent 100% health in DOOM) and tinker with other game settings. After you've discovered a few useful cheat codes, you can assign each code to a "cheat table" which is then attached to the game in question. This allows you to create a custom list of cheats (up to 99) for specific games which can be loaded at any time. The INFINITY MACHINE is compatible with the DOS 4GW DOS extender and is also fully network compatible, allowing you to tinker with game network variables during multi-player game matches. The manual is easily the most well-written of all the game utilities reviewed here, featuring several useful tutorials and examples, making the INFINITY MACHINE a better choice for novice game hackers. In the end, however, the INFINITY MACHINE just can't quite equal the level of features and functionality present in the GAME WIZARD PRO.

INFINITY MACHINE. Price: $69.95. Titansoft and REM Software, 1 W Seminary Street, Brandon, VT 05733. Tel: (802) 247-4326, FAX: (802) 247-4327.

ACTION REPLAY V2.2

ACTION REPLAY is unique in two ways: It's expensive ($89.95) and is the only hardware device of the bunch. Installation is a snap: simply install the 8-bit expansion card in an open slot and run the included software installation program. Key to the successful operation of ACTION REPLAY is the "freezer controller," a small plastic device with a single red button which connects to a port on the back of the ACTION REPLAY expansion card. Unlike software-based utilities which can occasionally be prevented from operation by a program which "locks out" the keyboard, a single press of the control button will activate the ACTION REPLAY TSR and pause the currently loaded game. In addition to searching for hidden game values and other features, it offers a number of unique features. It can easily grab and save screenshots, search for viruses, monitor byte values, and even boasts a simple program that can unassemble 8086 program code. On the downside, ACTION REPLAY is expensive, technical support is negligible, and some of the included features have limited spheres of operation. For example, the screengrabber won't grab SVGA high resolution screens, and it can only save graphic images in .PCX format.

ACTION REPLAY. Price: $89.95. Datel Electronics Ltd., Givan Road, Fenton Ind. Est., Stoke-On-Kent, Staffs, England, Tel: 44-782-744707 (England), FAX: 44-782-744292 (England). U.S. technical support provided by Advanced Console Technologies, Tel: (708) 706-6720, FAX: (708) 706-6721.

So which utility program do you choose? The best all-around software utility is the GAME WIZARD PRO, but by a small margin. All of these programs could use better documentation, better technical support and more printed examples. The ACTION REPLAY may be too pricey for most gamers, but some of its unique features are worth the price of admission. Admittedly, an expert game programmer or hacker with a hex editor and a willingness to do some exploring can perform a lot of the same functions as these utilities can. Gamers familiar with hexadecimal numbering and basic memory structures may find these utilities—especially the GAME WIZARD PRO—to be invaluable game accessories. Otherwise, you'd be well advised to stay away from most of these utilities, with the possible exception of AXIS: THE GAME CHEATER.

As with all game cheats and hacking utilities, be aware that use of these programs carries with it the risk of corrupted game files and other problems. Before attempting to use any of these programs you should back up your saved game files to a safe location.

Jeff James, CGW columnist and Associate Editor of InterActive Gaming, is available on CompuServe at 74774,1635 and through the Internet at 74774.1635@compuserve.com.

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INTERACTIVE QUARTERLY

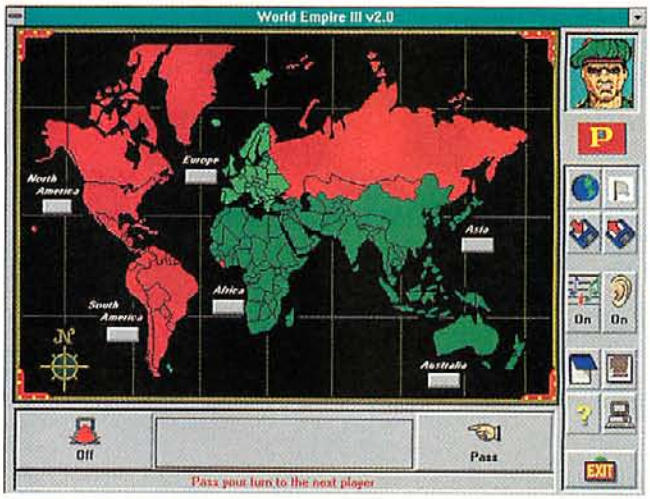
AMERICA'S PREMIERE ADULT CD-ROM MAGAZINE

Share-war A GO-GO

by Chuck Miller

GIVE ME A SOLID, PLAYABLE, IMMERSIVE GAME ANY DAY OVER ONE OF THE NEWLY CRAFTED, multimedia extravaganzas. It seems that no matter how the zeros and ones are stacked up, I always find myself returning to the less visually and audibly stunning titles rather than to games that offer barely-interactive smoke and mirrors. I guess I'm just one of those gamers who cringe and grit his teeth at the mention of "Hollywood" in the same phrase as "computer games."

Thus far, I honestly haven't seen or played an "interactive movie" that I consider even the least bit memorable. Maybe that's why I've spent more time lately playing shareware games than commercial releases. You see, in a very positive way shareware has been spared the intrusion of the film industry into its game designs, if only due to the lack of the necessary bankrolls to pull it off. In this light, let me mention two enjoyable games that don't feature a single digitized actor or frame of video: WORLD EMPIRE III and GOMOKU NARABE.



SHAREWARE GOES TO WAR You can fight up to seven human or computer-controlled opponents in the attractive, RISK-like strategy game WORLD EMPIRE III.

WORLD AT WAR

Hot off the nets and eminently playable is WORLD EMPIRE III from **Viable Software Alternatives**, a traditional game of world conquest for WINDOWS. As events unfold in this test of military acumen, you're thrust into armed struggle against one to seven human or computer generals hell-bent on calling the world their private playground. Best yet, war and strategy gamers can test drive the old "crush foes mercilessly under the jackboots" theme before having to ask the empress or emperor of the household for any cash.

Most closely resembling a computerized version of RISK, WORLD EMPIRE III offers a fast, abstract strategic contest. WORLD EMPIRE III's most interesting advance over its boardgame inspiration may well be the political proclivity appended to each country. Each country has a political leaning randomly assigned to it in the standard game and based upon political alignment in the reality-based game. If you play the Populist leader and your troops conquer a Populist-leaning country, you will only need a token garrison of one army (assuming you don't have enemies at the gate, naturally). If the same Populist leader were to conquer a Militarist country, however, it would require two or three armies to pacify the angry citizens. Without the minimum number of armies to garrison a non-sympathetic country, the country can revolt and invite your opponent in as liberator. This effectively gives your opponent a free country and lets him have a beachhead adjacent to your operations. This political proclivity/garrison/rebellion feature adds to the strategy in that you have to consider whether it is more worthwhile to capture a better fortified country with leanings toward your faction or a less fortified country which will have to be more heavily garrisoned.

The Real World Simulation mode adds a new feature. In this version, armies are determined by population rather than by random determination, so you end up having to "risk" more to get more. Military strength becomes a known quantity, and the outcome of battles is far less random. Further, the political proclivities are based on real life.

Some campaigns can go on for hours, though you could just as easily find your armies hacked to the bone in a matter of minutes, especially when confronting multiple forces. Thus, you'll have to learn good strategies quickly in order to survive and triumph over opposing troops. This is where the game's chief weakness—the inability to adjust the computer opponent's intelligence—rears its head. You can vary the difficulty somewhat by toggling off certain game options, but you can't adjust the "strategic sagacity" of your digital opponents. Hopefully, this will be addressed in the next update.

If RISK was too abstract to be satisfying, but you still like the idea of a quick-playing strategic challenge without being bogged down with economic/production considerations, you'll like WORLD EMPIRE III. It might not be THE PERFECT GENERAL, but it doesn't cost as much as big-name strategy games, either.

WORLD EMPIRE III (WEMPIR.ZIP) is available on most major online services and private BBSs. All you need to start your own armed conflict is a 386 or faster running WINDOWS 3.1 or higher. For the registered version, and some additional

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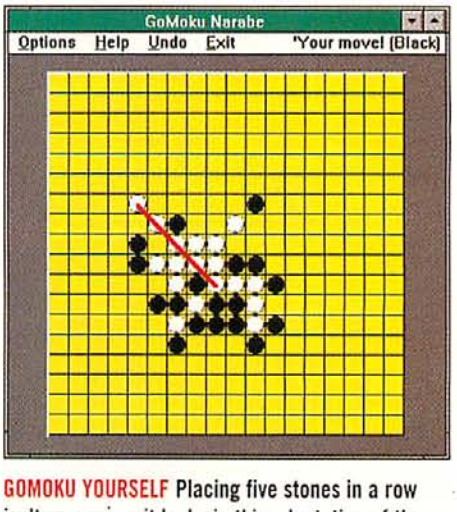
ALL YOUR DOTS IN A ROW

Based on an ancient Japanese game of "five-in-a-row," GOMOKU NARABE for WINDOWS is played on a representation of a GO board using small, smooth convex black and white stones. The idea is simple: get five stones in a row (horizontally, vertically or diagonally) before your opponent does. However, being a continual struggle of blocking moves, GOMOKU NARABE is actually easier to pronounce than it is to play. Unlike tic-tac-toe, there are no set win or draw strategies. While the mathematics whiz may fare better than the numerically challenged, the best playing strategy is practice.

GOMOKU NARABE is a simple game to play, one that children as young as four or five years old can quickly learn. It's also a quick diversion allowing many games to be played in a short period of time (great for those coffee breaks at the office). If there is a weakness in this game, it is probably the unappealing board. Aside from this one criticism, GOMOKU NARABE will entertain for hours, though you'll probably be seeing its bright yellow board in your sleep.



GOMOKU YOURSELF Placing five stones in a row isn't as easy as it looks in this adaptation of the classic Japanese strategy game GO.

The shareware version of GOMOKU NARABE (GOMOKU.ZIP) is fully functional. If you enjoy playing it, you'll be asked to register for a modest fee of $10. Perhaps if enough players take the time to register, author Steve Neeley will update the game with a much needed collection of board variations.

Chuck Miller is the editor of InterActive Gaming and CGW's Shaman of Shareware. He can be reached on CompuServe at 74774,1476 and through the Internet at 74774.1476@compuserve.com.

Ziff NET

To locate these games on-line, tune in to the *CGW* headquarters on ZiffNet. Games featured here can be downloaded from ZiffNet both on CompuServe and on Prodigy. On CompuServe, go to *Computer Gaming World's* own forum (GO GAMEWORLD), Library 7, Shareware Sizzle. On Prodigy, jump ZiffNet and Search by Title for the games listed here. Or, Search by Category to browse the entire Games Library.

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Where, Oh, Where Has My Polygon?

Discover The World Of The Polygon, The Geometric Workhorse That Powers Many of Today's Hottest Games

by Paul C. Schuytema

Imagine that Kilrathi furball you're tailing, the one who has just called you a son-of-an-ape, is piloting not a space fighter but just a primordial soup of numbers. What if that A-Wing you've been dogging for ten minutes wasn't really a rebel ship, but just a mathematical construct. Would the experience seem just as real?

For over a decade, flight simulators and space combat simulators have utilized the trusty polygon to represent the "real" world. Originally, these polygons were only seen by their outlines, in something called "wireframe graphics." One of the earliest and best Mac flight sims, P-51, was rendered entirely in wireframes. The shapes of the planes had no volume—the fuselages were flat silhouettes, just like the wings.

Vector graphics, a type of wireframe rendering using specialized hardware, was used in such arcade classics as ASTEROIDS, TEMPEST and TAIL GUNNER. As computer speeds accelerated, the special vector graphics hardware, which actually aimed the electron gun to paint images on the phosphorous of your CRT screen, was unnecessary for high-speed animations.

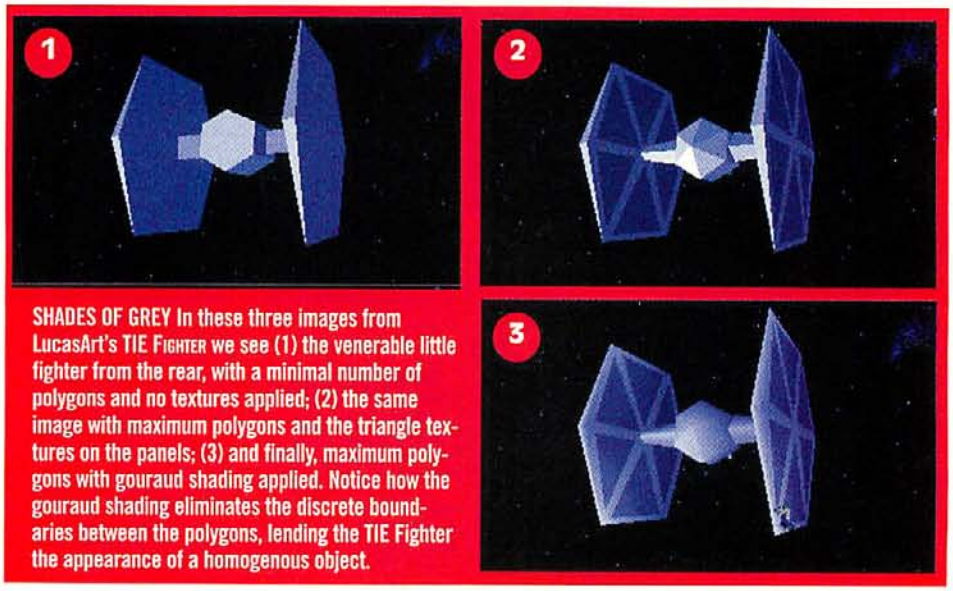
By the early 80's, the kingdom of the "filled polygon" was firmly established.

DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT GEOMETRY

Can you remember back to high-school geometry? Just what is a polygon? The American Heritage Dictionary describes a polygon as a "closed plane figure bounded by three or more line segments." That's accurate but not all that insightful. Essentially, a polygon is a shape, almost any shape. It doesn't posses any magical mathematical properties like a circle, square or triangle (though the last two are definitely polygons). A polygon can have virtually any angular total you can imagine, but it will always be a multiple of 180 degrees (I guess that's slightly "magical"). What is important about a polygon, for our purposes, is that it is a shape made up of straight lines, and it is a flat shape.

Because a polygon is a flat shape made out of absolutely straight line segments, it can be represented very easily by a computer. Remember the old Cartesian coordinate system? Those annoying graphs you always waited until the last minute to draw? Computers actually enjoy working with these equations.

To represent a two-dimensional polygon in a computer, all that's required is just a bunch of number pairs. For a triangle, it's three pairs, each representing one of the vertices in the shape. From here, we can use a series of polygons to create a simple shape. All you really need to make a two-dimensional rocket are four shapes: a tall, pointy triangle (capsule), a tall rectangle (the body of the rocket) and two right triangles (the fins). Presto, instant Saturn V!



SHADES OF GREY In these three images from LucasArt's TIE FIGHTER we see (1) the venerable little fighter from the rear, with a minimal number of polygons and no textures applied; (2) the same image with maximum polygons and the triangle textures on the panels; (3) and finally, maximum polygons with gouraud shading applied. Notice how the gouraud shading eliminates the discrete boundaries between the polygons, lending the TIE Fighter the appearance of a homogenous object.

SMOKE AND MIRRORS

If you consider my rocket example for long, you will notice a gaping flaw in my oversimplification. What if you wanted to animate the rocket? Or, what if you wanted to create a similar, but shorter rocket?

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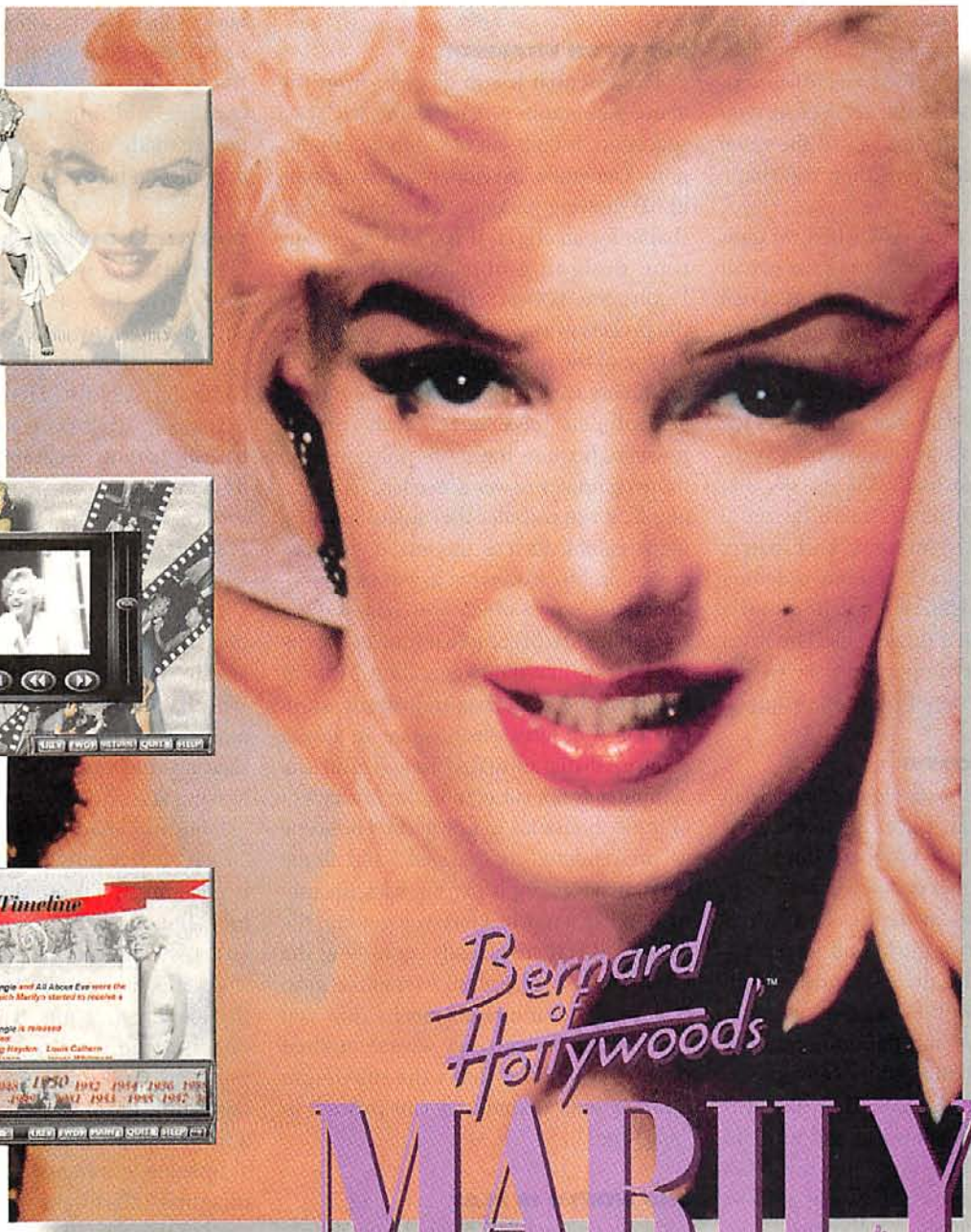

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Would you need another set of numbers?

I've given you a rocket shape in "absolute" geometric terms, not "relativistic" terms. For a computer to move things, it needs to have much more freedom. For a computer, a shape can be more accurately described as an origin point, the number of vertices, and numbered pairs which represent the position of the vertices in relation to the origin. In this way, if the value of the origin is changed, then the shape data is still correct.

Things get rather murky when we want to talk about rotation, changing the size of a shape, and other such movements. Then we are talking about much more than just changing an origin point—we're entering the realm of matrix algebra, which is essentially tables of data that represent such things as points, shapes and vectors. Without going into the math, I'll just say that computers can do matrix math far more efficiently than we humans, and matrix math operations can be combined, letting the computer calculate a rotation and a position change in a single pass. This saves time, which is very important once we get into three-dimensional polygon graphics.

WARP 3-D, SCOTTY!

Polygons can also live quite happily in three-dimensional space. Each vertex is then defined by three numbers: our familiar x-y of high school geometry and a z coordinate to represent depth. This brings us to the concept of world and screen coordinates. Imagine the 3D world of TIE FIGHTER: parsecs upon parsecs of space, and clustered here and there are interesting things like Y-Wings, transports, Imperial Destroyers and the like. They all "live" in a three-dimensional world and move as we expect them to move. Only our VGA monitor is just a two-dimensional area—a sheet of very expensive graph paper.

One of the most crucial programming operations is the moment when a program takes all of the information of the world data and creates an image on your screen. Many, many things are going on, but two of the most important tasks are translating the 3D world coordinates into a series of 2D data which can be displayed on your monitor. Also, the image must be "clipped" so that you only see a portion of the world, and not the whole thing.

In addition, the computer must calculate such things as perspective and hidden surface removal (called "backface culling"), so the computer doesn't waste your time by drawing polygons you won't see.

I'VE BEEN FRAMED!

The essential lesson gleaned from the above paragraphs is that a shape, such as a spaceship, is built out of a bundle of polygons. Generally, developers use some type of 3D drawing package to create the basic shapes for an object. If you have spent any time designing objects in **Domark**'s FLIGHT SIM TOOLKIT, then you know how the process works.

One of the main concerns to game programmers is making sure that these polygon objects have as few polygons as possible, because the more polygons, the more computer power is needed. As an example, if you consider the "splash intro" of many games, such as the introductory sequence in MECHWARRIOR 2, you see a non-interactive movie which was created using something like 3D Studio or one of the Silicon Graphics packages. The Madcat mech in the intro has thousands upon thousands of faces which create an almost photorealistic animated image. But the computer is not calculating the movement of these thousands of polygons. The scene is "pre-rendered" or "canned," and all the computer is doing is playing back the animation like a movie. Once you get into the game and you are actually controlling the mech, the level of realism seen in the intro is gone. The animated mechs that you control have perhaps only several hundred polygons, because that's the maximum number that a computer can process in "real time."

THE WORLD IS FLAT

Okay, so we have created our simple wireframe for the TIE FIGHTER, a very simple ship, really. The key components are only the cockpit and those two odd panels on each side. Not many polygons at all. How do we make it look as real as possible for the player?

In X-WING, the polygons were flat shaded, meaning that a single color was applied to the face of each polygon. These shades could be tweaked to be lighter or darker to give the appearance of true "lightsource" shading, meaning that they reacted to the effects of a central light source.

Flat shading is the technique that most of the earlier flight sims utilized. Look back at such classics as ACES OF THE PACIFIC or RED BARON and you can clearly see how flat shading works. The planes are discernible and unique, but they look like they're made out of cardboard, since all of the polygon borders are clearly visible.

WAITING FOR GOURAUD

Recent sims such as TIE FIGHTER and ACES OVER EUROPE utilize a technique called gouraud shading (pronounced "guh-row" and named after the French computer scientist, Henri Gouraud, who developed this process in 1971). This is a type of shading which fools the viewer into thinking that he or she is viewing a curved surface, not a shape made up of flat faces. Fuselages and engines are a perfect candidate for gouraud shading in a sim.

Imagine a wireframe model of a beer mug. The cylinder of the mug can be created by extruding the shape of an octagon. With flat shading, the mug looks like it's made up of flat polygons. Add gouraud shading, and you would swear that you are looking at a smoothly curved surface.

Gouraud shading is a way to visually "warp" a flat polygon, so it isn't really needed on a polygon which is supposed to look flat, such as the panels on a TIE FIGHTER. The cockpit, though, is another story. It is supposed to look spherical, and that's where gouraud shading comes in. It dissolves the visual boundaries between polygons, and using color blending and highlights, it will create the appearance of a smoothly curved surface.

Imagine a triangular polygon. Shine an imaginary flashlight on the face. If you were to measure the light accurately, there would be subtle differences between the light at each vertex because of different distances to the light and different angles from the light source. These variations smoothly transition from one to another so that you don't notice any difference.

Yet if we were to exaggerate the color differences at each vertex of the triangle, then this blending of colors would create the illusion of a curved surface. Look down on our polygon, and it would look convex;

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look at it from the side and it would still be as flat as an Illinois cornfield.

MIGHTY FINE PIXELS...

When creating your killer spaceship, simple polygons and gouraud shading still might not give you the variation you need. You might want to add some "space grunge," some vent ports for your engine, or an escape hatch. If you created detailed polygons for all of these, you would have a shape that's far too complicated for your computer to manipulate in real time.

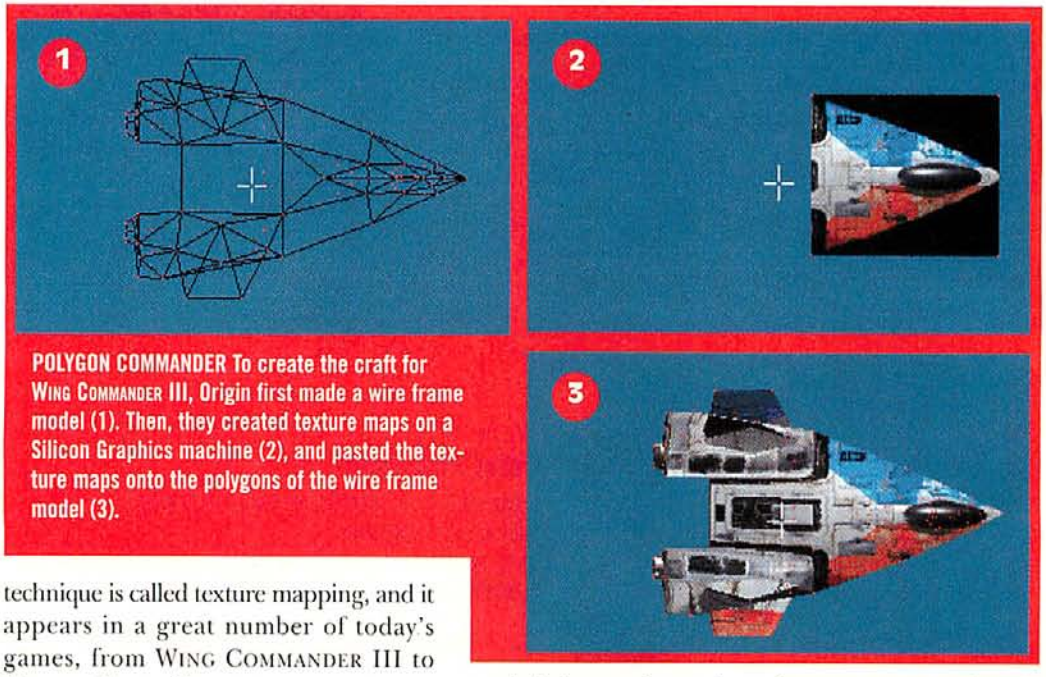
The solution is to cheat, to paint your polygons with complicated images. This technique is called texture mapping, and it appears in a great number of today's games, from WING COMMANDER III to DOOM to FLIGHT UNLIMITED.

Basically, texture mapping is taking an image (a bitmap) and pasting it on top of a polygon. Imagine a rectangle which is part of our long, tall spaceship. You could paste on a texture map which contains grunge of the engine exhaust at the bottom, an emergency blast door and several fins, pipes and conduits.

How does this save us processing power? Easy, since the computer is still only transforming the vertices of our original polygon, and then pasting on the skewed bitmap. We're not calculating the position of the hatch, the rungs of an escape ladder or the exhaust fins; the computer still treats the spacecraft fuselage as a simple rectangle.

Perhaps the most impressive use of texture mapping to date can be seen in the space ships in WING COMMANDER III. Generally, a single screen frame (what you see on your monitor) is composed of between 70-100 polygons, yet the fighter that we're doggedly pursuing has enormous detail belying that simplicity.

In WCIII, the ships were first designed by Origin's artists using Alias (a 3D modeling package) on a Silicon Graphics computer. This high-quality design was made up of tens of thousands of polygons, and every detail imaginable was applied, so that the finished ship would truly look like a real Kilrathi fighter. The artist would then render a top, bottom, back and other needed views and save those images to a file which could be read by a PC. The artists were then charged with creating a simplified wire frame model in Origin's proprietary "EOR" 3D modeling program. This simplified model would be the shape which is actually controlled by the game.



POLYGON COMMANDER To create the craft for WING COMMANDER III, Origin first made a wire frame model (1). Then, they created texture maps on a Silicon Graphics machine (2), and pasted the texture maps onto the polygons of the wire frame model (3).

Taking an image of the top view of the wireframe, as well as the high-quality silicon graphics image of the top view, an artist would then sit down in a standard paint program to tweak the high-quality image so that it fit exactly to the simplified wiremesh. Then, the high-quality image is "glued" on top of the polygons of the ship, creating a stunningly detailed model of a ship with a workable number of polygons.

In WCIII, some of the polygons are drawn using both light-sourced flat shading and semi-transparent texture maps. This helps give the illusion of reality serious visual credibility. In addition, the textures can be swapped as the game is being played, allowing for certain parts of the ship to show the battle damage expected in an up-close-and-tight dogfight.

Textures may even be animated. The afterburner glow in WCIII is essentially a transparent cone coming off the back of an engine. When the afterburners kick in, this cone is then textured with several frames of animated, translucent bitmaps to represent the intense fuel-burning power of high-speed flight.

To animate a complex object such as a Kilrathi fighter, the computer first loads in a list of vertices for a space ship, and then an integer list of faces. WCIII ships use triangle and "quad" polygons exclusively, so this integer list is either a set of three or four numbers, each representing the vertices which make up that particular polygon (remember, in a wireframe model, several polygons can all share a common vertex). Information is also loaded in for each polygon telling the computer just what it is (texture mapped, texture mapped and shaded, etc.), and the needed texture map data is loaded into memory.

Then for each frame (about 24 per second on a screaming Pentium), the computer performs a perspective transformation on the vertices, and the projected coordinates are shuffled off to the primitive draw routines (coded in assembly language for maximum speed), to draw everything you see on the screen.

WHERE WILL THE POLY GO?

While other graphical approaches to creating believable and active 3D worlds have been used, from video technology to sprites to voxels, polygons are truly the workhorse of the sim world. Now that CPU horsepower is up to the task of such mathematical trickery as gouraud shading and texture mapping, the tried-and-true polygon has a whole new lease on life.

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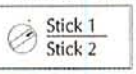

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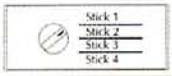

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3D Graphics Acceleration

What Is 3D Graphics Acceleration And What Will It Do For Games?

by Mike Weksler

Very soon you will hear a lot about 3D graphics acceleration cards that promise to speed up complex 3D computer games. Companies such as **Diamond**, **Creative Labs**, and **Matrox** are feverishly developing these plug-in cards and cooperating with game companies so that versions of popular games will be written to take advantage of their acceleration hardware.

These cards have the potential to run processor-intensive 3D games like NASCAR RACING and US NAVY FIGHTERS at amazingly high resolutions and frame rates. Imagine resolutions of 800x600 with 65,000 colors! Combine that with hardware texture-mapping technology that can take into account perspectives, run it all at a *minimum* of 30 frames per second, and you can see that we may have a gaming revolution on our hands. You'll be able to see smoother, richer, more realistic worlds than we ever thought possible on the PC.

What is 3D graphics acceleration and why would you want it? To explain, let me back up a bit. As most of you know, for every new state-of-the-art, hot-rod computer system that's introduced, there's always a game or two that could benefit from even a faster computer. Typically, these games are fast, real-time 3D games like **Papyrus**' NASCAR RACING. Even with a 90 MHz Pentium, when all the features and texture mapping are turned on, NASCAR starts to slow down. The problem is that the burden of processing the complex calculations necessary to move 20 texture-mapped vehicles around a texture-mapped track is placed upon our single, overworked 486 or Pentium processor. What is needed to speed up the process is a division of labor—several processors doing different jobs for the good of the whole. And this is what 3D accelerator cards will do.

How does this new technology work? Well, using technology passed down from the military simulators and CAD workstations, the 3D portion of your games will be accelerated with hardware just as digital video and 2D graphics are in current WINDOWS graphic accelerators. The 3D game graphics process can be better accelerated by offloading some, if not all, of the graphics processing chores to a processor architecture optimized for it. There are graphics accelerator cards in the works that will have chips hard-wired to perform 3D algorithms, perspective-corrected texture mapping, and in some cases, the light-sourcing, transforming, and clipping chores which the CPU presently slugs out with cutting-edge 3D games. This won't leave the CPU laying back in a hammock drinking Piña Coladas, but rather, free its resources to perform other tasks, like running enhanced AI routines, for instance.

One thing to consider is that the quality of graphics, level of enhancement, and the product cost are all going to be based on the differences in these optimized 3D architectures. Some architectures render in four-sided polygons, some in triangles, and others use exotic techniques which don't render in polygons at all (see nVidia's Multimedia Accelerator in READ.ME). Additionally, texture maps can be stored in your system's RAM (less expensive but slower in performance), or in the graphics card's RAM (more expensive but potentially faster performance).

Several 3D accelerator products are pending from chip makers including: **nVidia**, **Yamaha**, **Rendition**, **3D Labs**, **S3**, **ATI**, **Matrox**, **Cirrus**, **Artist Graphics**, and **Video Logic**. Most of these will be incorporated on graphics cards later this year. The only one that you can purchase in stores now is the **Matrox** MILLENNIUM (see this month's READ.ME), which ships with an enhanced version of NASCAR. On the product side, large multimedia companies like Diamond, ATI, and Creative Labs have 3D graphic accelerator products in the works. Sources also indicate that leading-edge 3D game developers like **Looking Glass**, **Papyrus**, **Interplay**, **Domark**, and **Origin** all have games under development that will take advantage of 3D hard-

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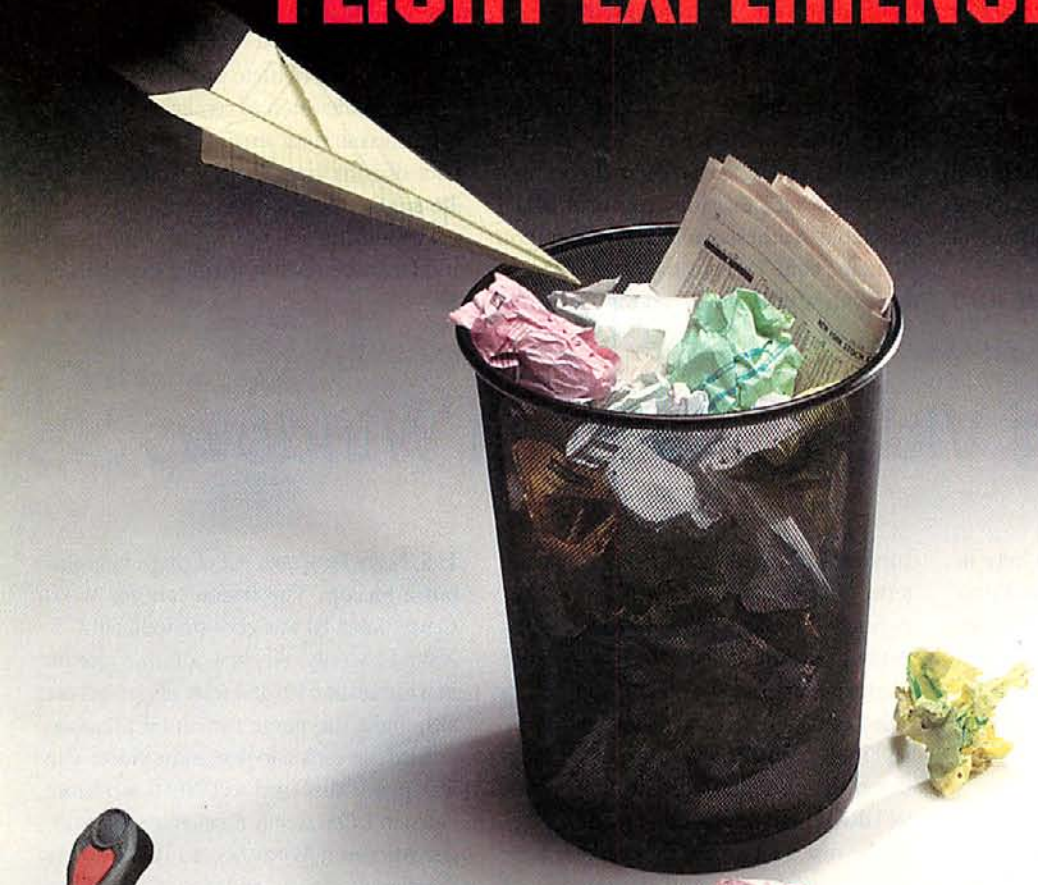

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ware acceleration to some degree.

The compatibility and performance of a given game with a given card is going to be a crucial issue for gamers. The products likely to gain the widest support, though, are those which accelerate the WINDOWS 95 3D-DDI (a low-level 3D interface) and are compatible with emerging real-time 3D graphics tools, like **Microsoft**'s RENDERMORPHICS and **Criterion**'s RENDERWARE. Using the 3D-DDI, game companies will be able to port their existing programming code more easily so that their games will run under WINDOWS 95.

While WINDOWS 95 and the 3D-DDI sounds great, it's still on the horizon. In the meantime, you should expect to see several one-off DOS conversions of the leading DOS 3D games, followed by some original DOS 3D games, enhanced to be bundled with the various 3D products.

Initially, you'll encounter a large variety of products for 3D acceleration. Some will combine 2D and 3D acceleration like Matrox's MILLENNIUM. Others like nVidia's MULTIMEDIA ACCELERATOR will combine WINDOWS acceleration, General MIDI wavetable synthesis, and 3D acceleration all in one chip. Perhaps the easiest cards to deal with will be simple add-in cards that connect to your existing VGA card.

The one thing to remember is that these cards will not enhance your existing 3D VGA games. They may run VGA games a bit faster by virtue of their fast VGA technology, but only the games specifically written for 3D acceleration will be able to take advantage of these products.

The proliferation of accelarators and the hype surrounding them is going to create a lot of confusion. It will take a while for the smoke to clear, but when it does, we will be looking at a new world of 3D games and far more realistic gaming experiences.

THE PARTS DEPT.

Enhancing Video Quality In Windows

by Loyd Case

Like it or not, digital video is here to stay. It has become an integral part of some games, and it will be increasingly prevalent in multimedia and even business applications in the future. Yet most video on a computer, even a fast computer, is jerky, fits inside of a postage stamp screen and looks like it was created by a myopic pointillist painter.

You'll experience an interesting contrast when you demonstrate even the latest computer game video segments to non-gamers. When I show WING COMMANDER III to experienced computer types, they are stunned and impressed with the quality of the image. When I demo it to someone who is unfamiliar with computers, they comment on the *poor* quality of the video. After all, despite the technology, it doesn't look remotely like the quality of a lowly $300 color television.

What can be done to improve the picture? Let's take a look at two products that can enhance a game's video playback in WINDOWS. The first one is the **Diamond** STEALTH VIDEO DRAM, which uses the S3 Vision868 processor. The other one is the **Hercules** GRAPHITE TERMINATOR PRO, which uses the S3 Vision968.

DIAMOND STEALTH VIDEO DRAM

This is an awkwardly named product. When talking with dealers, it's easy to get confused, because many people mix the term "graphics" and the term "video." For example, VGA stands for "Video Graphics Array"; unfortunately, video in the larger context means images captured with a video camera and somehow digitized. We had sales people think we meant the Diamond STEALTH SE, the DIAMOND STEALTH 64 DRAM, and several other cards.

The first time we saw this card, we were amazed by the size and the number of chips. There are a total of 11 chips on the card; four of them make up two megabytes of DRAM. The card itself is tiny, about four by five inches. Installing it was simple in our 90 MHz Pentium PCI system, and the software (utilities and drivers for WINDOWS) was also easy to install.

The card delivers good DOS performance (see table), which is essential for gaming. While not quite as fast as the current favorite among some gamers, the Hercules DYNAMITE POWER, it's faster than past S3-based cards and offers stunning WINDOWS performance. We tested it on a number of SVGA games: WING COMMANDER III, PANZER GENERAL, DEATHGATE and U.S. NAVY FIGHTERS. All of them ran without a hiccup. The frame rate for WING COMMANDER III was glass-smooth, but U.S. NAVY FIGHTERS did show a frame rate hit in a furball at 640x480 with all options on, althought the game remained playable.

Next, we took a look at some video. The first point: this card will NOT accelerate video in DOS. It only accelerates video under Microsoft WINDOWS. So don't expect the digital video in, say, WING COMMANDER III to speed up. The second point is that the card ships with a soft MPEG driver, which allows the user to view MPEG compressed video. This sounds neat on the surface, but games that use MPEG-compressed video usually expect MPEG decompression hardware to be present, and often won't recognize the software driver. It will automatically play MPEG-formatted MovieCDs—when we did run MPEG-compressed digital video, the picture quality was superb, even at full screen. (Diamond has a daughtercard connector on their higher-end Stealth 64 Video VRAM to add actual MPEG acceleration hardware; this hardware will recognize games which have used MPEG compressed video.) At a typical street price of $199 for the 1MB version and $259 for

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the 2MB version, the Diamond Stealth Video is definitely worth looking at.

HERCULES GRAPHITE TERMINATOR PRO

The TERMINATOR PRO is a high-end graphics card, and can be equipped with up to 4MB of VRAM, enabling the card to handle up to 16 million colors at a resolution of 1172x870. The WINDOWS graphics performance is somewhat slower than the STEALTH VIDEO DRAM (a tribute to the WINDOWS driver developers at Diamond), but is slightly faster in DOS. Also, the Hercules application for switching color depth and resolutions in WINDOWS doesn't seem as well-considered as the Diamond version.

While the hardware was easy to install, there were some oddities in the software installation. For example, setting the refresh rate of the monitor requires that you be in WINDOWS. There is a way to set the refresh rate in DOS, but it requires a TSR program to be loaded, eating up precious DOS memory. Once a refresh rate is set, it remains at that setting for subsequent use, so having to use the WINDOWS program to change the setting is not that onerous.

The card performs smoothly, and the same DOS games we tried with the Diamond card ran well. Hercules doesn't ship a soft MPEG driver with the card, but based on our experience with Diamond's soft MPEG driver, this is no big loss. This is a high-end card, with a price to match: $389 suggested retail for the 2MB version or $559 with 4MB. Considering the price, it is spartan in features and wasn't all that easy to use.

Hercules does offer superb support, and their cards have a reputation for being very solid. If you need the high-end features, take a look at the Hercules, but check out the competition as well.

PERFORMANCE BENCHMARKS

Card	3D Bench	Vidspeed Low (read / write)	Vidspeed High (read / write)	PC Bench Video	Winbench 95
Stealth Video DRAM	83.3	19835 / 3241	17472 / 2140	4907	15.1
Terminator Pro	83.3	19835 / 3268	19826 / 2332	4992	14.4

Notes: Winbench 95 is at 640x480x256 colors; Vidspeed Low is 320x200x256; Vidspeed High is 640x480x256; system is a Pentium 90, Intel PCI motherboard, rev 12 BIOS, 32 MB RAM. Operating system is DOS 6.22/Windows for Workgroups 3.11.

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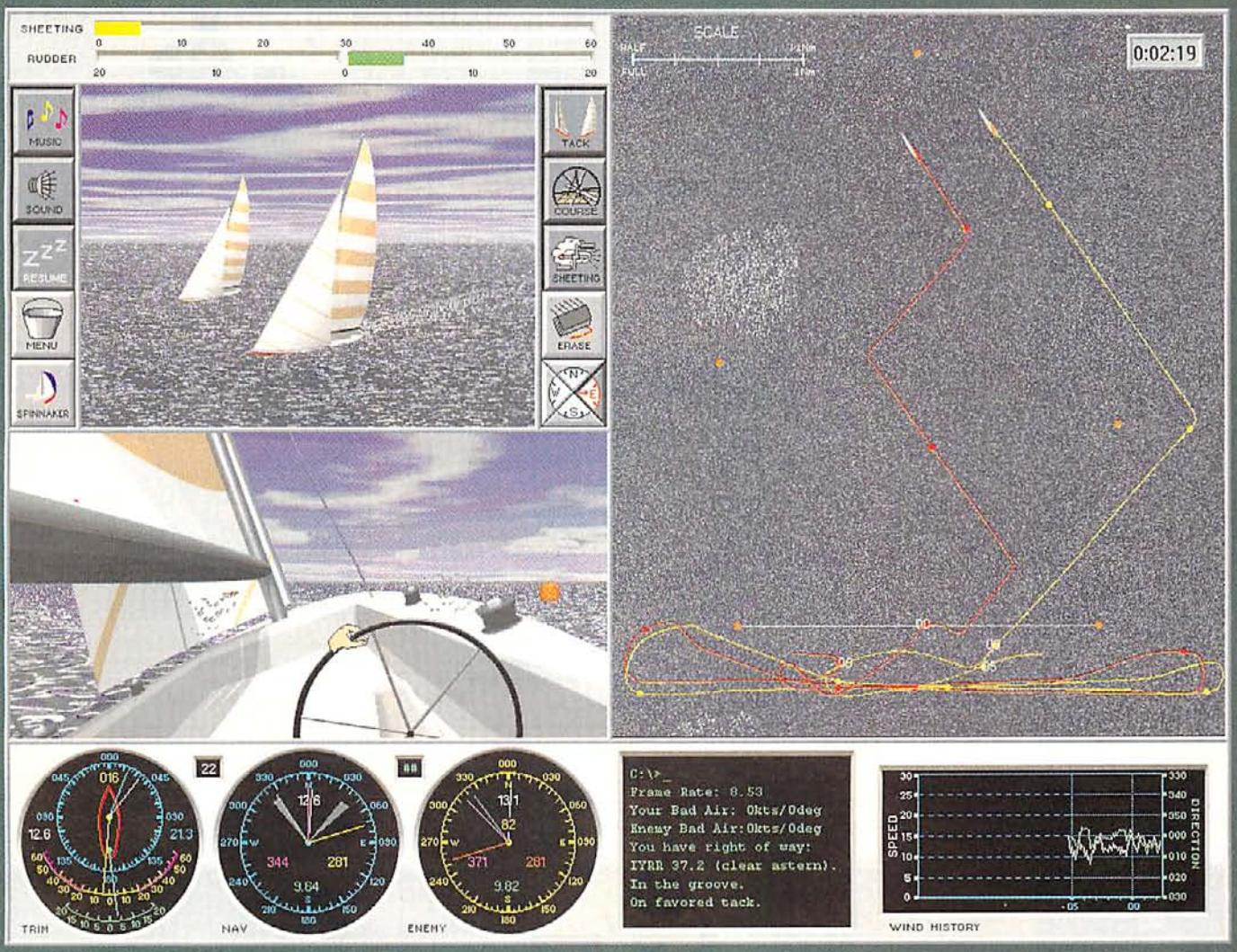

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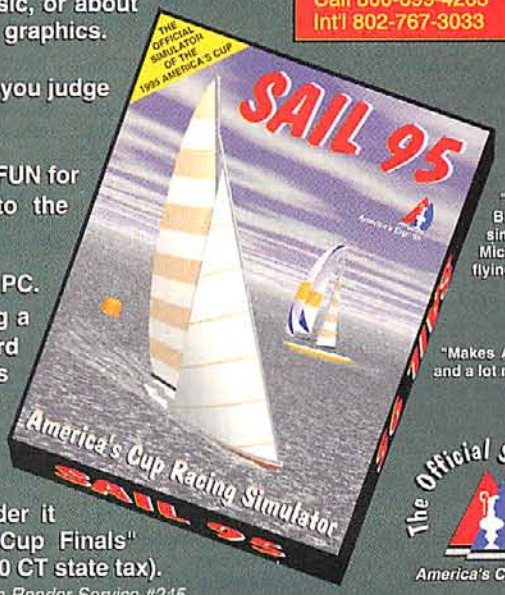

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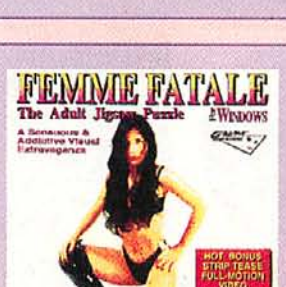

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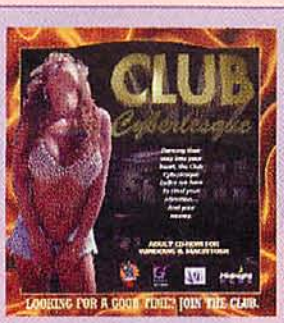

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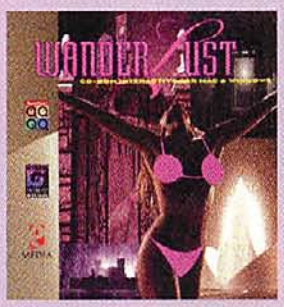

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Highlights

MECH BRIGADE
SSI, 1985

Producing a follow-up to KAMPFGRUPPE, one of the best WWII tactical games ever created, was a difficult task. But SSI didn't gain its reputation as the leading computer wargame company in the '80s by giving up without a fight. They refined the concepts of the award-winning system to reflect the increased lethality of the modern battlefield, and even corrected the one nagging problem of its storied predecessor. No longer could players stack too much armor on narrow frontages, which only added to the tension (and caused armchair generals to devise new tactical tricks). MECH BRIGADE offers neither SVGA battlefields nor stereophonic explosions, just a good AI and numerous scenarios packed with a lot of bang for the buck. One of the original inductees into the *CGW* Hall of Fame, it reigned supreme until the release of M-1 TANK PLATOON.

MIGHT & MAGIC
NEW WORLD COMPUTING, 1986

In the early days of computer role-playing games, there were only ULTIMA, WIZARDRY and a few pretenders. Then MIGHT & MAGIC gleefully tossed the hierarchy about. The game world of this epic RPG was huge, especially given the limitations of memory and data storage at the time. The 3D views certainly can't be compared to later games like DOOM, but their new, distinctive appearance added to the atmosphere of the world. Early RPGs often emphasized combat, but MIGHT & MAGIC's prolific hack n' slash fests served to advance the plot as well as keep players on their toes. Designer Jon van Canegham thought that tactical successes should build toward achieving an overall strategic goal, and he structured the numerous fights, puzzles and encounters to that end. With van Canegham involved in the design of MIGHT & MAGIC IV, it's obvious that New World feels the claims of role-playing's imminent demise are grossly exaggerated.

CIVILIZATION (MicroProse, 1991)
FALCON 3.0 (Spectrum HoloByte, 1991)
GUNSHIP (MicroProse, 1989)
HARPOON (Three-Sixty Pacific, 1989)
KING'S QUEST V (Sierra On-Line, 1990)
LEMMINGS (Psygnosis, 1991)
LINKS 386 PRO (Access Software, 1992)
M-1 TANK PLATOON (MicroProse, 1989)
RAILROAD TYCOON (MicroProse, 1990)
RED BARON (Dynamix, 1990)
THEIR FINEST HOUR (LucasArts, 1989)
THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND (LucasArts, 1990)
ULTIMA VI (Origin Systems, 1990)
ULTIMA UNDERWORLD (Origin Systems, 1992)
WING COMMANDER I & II (Origin Systems, 1990-91)
WOLFENSTEIN 3-D (id Software, 1992)

Inductees prior to 1989

BATTLE CHESS (Interplay Productions, 1988)
CHESSMASTER (The Software Toolworks, 1986)
DUNGEON MASTER (FTL Software, 1987)
EARL WEAVER BASEBALL (Electronic Arts, 1986)
EMPIRE (Interstel, 1978)
F-19 STEALTH FIGHTER (MicroProse, 1988)
GETTYSBURG: THE TURNING POINT (SSI, 1986)
KAMPFGRUPPE (Strategic Simulations, 1985)
MECH BRIGADE (Strategic Simulations, 1985)
MIGHT & MAGIC (New World Computing, 1986)
M.U.L.E. (Electronic Arts, 1983)
PIRATES (MicroProse, 1987)
SIMCITY (Maxis, 1987)
STARFLIGHT (Electronic Arts, 1986)
THE BARD'S TALE (Electronic Arts, 1985)
ULTIMA III (Origin Systems, 1983)
ULTIMA IV (Origin Systems, 1985)
WAR IN RUSSIA (Strategic Simulations, 1984)
WASTELAND (Interplay Productions, 1986)
WIZARDRY (Sir-Tech Software, 1981)
ZORK (Infocom, 1981)

THE SCORE

TOP ADVENTURE GAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Day of the Tentacle	LucasArts	9.87
2	Gabriel Knight	Sierra	9.42
3	Star Control II	Accolade	9.33
4	Sam & Max Hit The Road	LucasArts	9.30
5	The Seventh Guest	Virgin	9.25
6	Under A Killing Moon	Access	9.12
7	Ecstatica	Psygnosis	9.09
8	Quest for Glory I (VGA)	Sierra	9.05
9	Eric the Unready	Legend	9.04
10	Relentless	Electronic Arts	8.98

TOP ROLE PLAYING GAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Betrayal at Krondor	Dynamix	9.44
2	Ultima Underworld II	Origin	9.42
3	Might & Magic: Darkside of Xeen	New World Computing	9.37
4	Lands of Lore	Virgin	9.25
5	Might & Magic: Clouds of Xeen	New World Computing	9.11
6	Ultima VII: Part Two Serpent Isle	Origin	9.08
7	Wolf	Sanctuary Woods	8.88
8	Arena: The Elder Scrolls	Bethesda	8.85
9	Veil of Darkness	SSI	8.74
10	Menzoberranzan	SSI	8.26

TOP SIMULATION GAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	NASCAR Racing	Papyrus	9.97
2	Wings of Glory	Origin	9.66
3	US Navy Fighters	Electronic Arts	9.65
4	Aces of the Deep	Dynamix	9.52
5	Indy Car Racing	Papyrus	9.43
6	World Circuit	MicroProse	9.36
7	Comanche: Maximum Overkill	NovaLogic	9.27
8	Fleet Defender	MicroProse	9.25
9	Hornet	Spectrum HoloByte	8.96
10	Aces Over Europe	Dynamix	8.66

TOP STRATEGY GAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	X-COM	MicroProse	10.37
2	Master of Orion	MicroProse	10.21
3	Warlords II	SSG	9.95
4	Dune II	Virgin	9.82
5	Master of Magic	MicroProse	9.67
6	Warcraft	Blizzard	9.64
7	Sim City 2000	Maxis	9.58
8	Conquered Kingdoms	QQP	9.53
9	Incredible Machine 2	Sierra	9.23
10	Merchant Prince	QQP	9.08

READER POLL #130

TOP 100 GAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	TYPE	SCORE
✲1	Panzer General	SSI	WG	10.68
✲2	Wing Commander 3	Origin	AC	10.54
✲3	X-COM	MicroProse	ST	10.37
4	TIE Fighter	LucasArts	AC	10.33
5	DOOM	id Software	AC	10.24
6	Master of Orion	MicroProse	ST	10.21
7	Dark Forces	LucasArts	AC	9.97
✲	NASCAR Racing	Papyrus	SI	9.97
9	Warlords II	SSG	ST	9.95
✲10	Day of the Tentacle	LucasArts	AD	9.87
11	Magic Carpet	Electronic Arts	AC	9.84
12	DOOM II	id Software	AC	9.83
13	Dune II	Virgin	ST	9.82
14	Stalingrad	Avalon Hill	WG	9.70
15	Master of Magic	MicroProse	ST	9.67
16	Wings of Glory	Origin	SI	9.66
17	US Navy Fighters	Electronic Arts	SI	9.65
✲18	Front Page Sports Football Pro	Dynamix	SP	9.64
	Warcraft	Blizzard	ST	9.64
20	Front Page Sports Football 95	Sierra	SP	9.63
21	X-Wing	LucasArts	AC	9.60
22	Sim City 2000	Maxis	ST	9.58
	V for Victory: Market Garden	Three-Sixty Pacific	WG	9.58
24	Conquered Kingdoms	QQP	ST	9.53
25	V for Victory: Velikiye Luki	Three-Sixty Pacific	WG	9.52
	Aces of the Deep	Dynamix	SI	9.52
27	NHL Hockey	Electronic Arts	SP	9.49
✲28	Betrayal at Krondor	Dynamix	RP	9.44
	War in Russia	SSI	WG	9.44
30	Indy Car Racing	Papyrus	SI	9.43
31	Ultima Underworld II	Origin	RP	9.42
	Gabriel Knight	Sierra	AD	9.42
33	Heretic	id Software	AC	9.41
34	Operation Crusader	Avalon Hill	WG	9.39
35	Might & Magic: Darkside of Xeen	New World Computing	RP	9.37
36	World Circuit	MicroProse	SI	9.36
37	Carriers at War Construction Kit	SSG	WG	9.35
38	Pacific War	SSI	WG	9.34
	Flight Commander 2	Avalon Hill	WG	9.34
40	Star Control II	Accolade	AD,AC	9.33
41	Sam & Max Hit The Road	LucasArts	AD	9.30
	System Shock	Origin	AC	9.30
43	Comanche: Maximum Overkill	NovaLogic	SI	9.27
44	Lands of Lore	Virgin	RP	9.25
	The Seventh Guest	Virgin	AD	9.25
	Fleet Defender	MicroProse	SI	9.25
47	Incredible Machine 2	Sierra	ST	9.23
48	V for Victory: Gold Juno Sword	Three-Sixty Pacific	WG	9.18
49	Privateer	Origin	AC	9.16
50	Under A Killing Moon	Access	AD	9.12

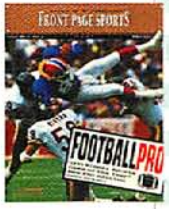
TOP WARGAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Panzer General	SSI	10.68
2	Stalingrad	Avalon Hill	9.70
3	V for Victory: Market Garden	Three-Sixty Pacific	9.58
4	V for Victory: Velikiye Luki	Three-Sixty Pacific	9.52
5	War in Russia	SSI	9.44
6	Operation Crusader	Avalon Hill	9.39
7	Carriers at War Construction Kit	SSG	9.35
8	Flight Commander 2	Avalon Hill	9.34
	Pacific War	SSI	9.34
10	V for Victory: Gold Juno Sword	Three-Sixty Pacific	9.18

TOP ACTION GAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Wing Commander 3	Origin	10.54
2	TIE Fighter	LucasArts	10.33
3	DOOM	id Software	10.24
4	Dark Forces	LucasArts	9.97
5	Magic Carpet	Electronic Arts	9.84
6	DOOM II	id Software	9.83
7	X-Wing	LucasArts	9.60
8	Heretic	id Software	9.41
9	System Shock	Origin	9.30
10	Privateer	Origin	9.16

TOP SPORTS GAMES



	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Front Page Sports Football Pro	Dynamix	9.64
2	Front Page Sports Football 95	Sierra	9.63
3	NHL Hockey	Electronic Arts	9.49
4	PGA Tour Golf 486	Electronic Arts	9.09
5	Front Page Sports Baseball	Sierra	8.80
6	Tony La Russa Baseball II	SSI	8.78
7	Hardball IV	Accolade	8.39
8	Jordan In Flight	Electronic Arts	7.85
9	Microsoft Golf 2.0	Microsoft	7.43
10	Ultimate Football	MicroProse	7.26

Vote!

You've read our take on the latest games, now here's a chance to see what your fellow gamers think. The *CGW* Top 100 is a monthly tally of game ratings provided by our readers via the *CGW* Poll ballot found in each issue. Approximately 50 games are rated each month, and the results are added to the aggregate results from past months. This historical database serves as a terrific reference for what you, the gamers, feel are the best plays in gaming.

51	Might & Magic: Clouds of Xeen	New World Computing	RP	9.11
52	PGA Tour Golf 486	Electronic Arts	SP	9.09
	Ecstatica	Psygnosis	AD	9.09
54	The Grandest Fleet	QQP	ST	9.08
	Merchant Prince	QQP	ST	9.08
	Ultima VII: Part Two Serpent Isle	Origin	RP	9.08
57	Syndicate	Electronic Arts	ST,AC	9.07
58	Quest for Glory I (VGA)	Sierra	AD,RP	9.05
59	Eric the Unready	Legend	AD	9.04
60	Descent	Interplay	AC	9.01
61	Battles of Destiny	QQP	ST	9.00
	Tanks	SSI	WG	9.00
	VGA Planets	Tim Wisseman	ST	9.00
64	Relentless	Electronic Arts	AD	8.98
	Clash of Steel	SSI	WG	8.98
66	Tigers on the Prowl	HPS Simulations	WG	8.97
67	Hornet	Spectrum HoloByte	SI	8.96
	Freddy Pharkas Frontier Pharmacist	Sierra	AD	8.96
69	Alone in the Dark	I-Motion	AD	8.95
70	Legend of Kyrandia 3	Virgin	AD	8.94
71	The Incredible Machine	Dynamix	ST	8.92
72	Wolf	Sanctuary Woods	RP	8.88
73	Transport Tycoon	MicroProse	ST	8.87
74	Incredible Toons	Dynamix	ST	8.86
75	Arena: The Elder Scrolls	Bethesda	RP	8.85
76	Empire Deluxe	New World Computing	ST	8.82
	Carriers at War II	SSG	WG	8.82
78	Serf City	SSI	ST	8.80
	Front Page Sports Baseball	Sierra	SP	8.80
80	Harpoon II	Three-Sixty Pacific	WG	8.78
	Tony La Russa Baseball II	SSI	SP	8.78
82	Myst	Broderbund	AD	8.77
83	Genghis Khan II	Koei	WG	8.74
	Veil of Darkness	SSI	RP	8.74
	Dracula Unleashed	Viacom	AD	8.74
86	Mortal Kombat II	Acclaim	AC	8.73
87	Aces over Europe	Dynamix	SI	8.66
88	F-15 Strike Eagle III	MicroProse	SI	8.65
89	MiG-29	Spectrum HoloByte	SI	8.64
	King's Quest VII	Sierra	AD	8.64
91	Superheros of Hoboken	Legend	AD	8.62
92	Space Quest V: Mutation	Sierra	AD	8.60
93	Hand Of Fate	Westwood Studios	AD	8.56
94	Kasparov's Gambit	Electronic Arts	ST	8.54
95	Rules of Engagement 2	Impressions	ST	8.52
96	Lords of the Realm	Impressions	ST	8.51
97	The Horde	Crystal Dynamics	AC,ST	8.50
98	Star Trek: Judgment Rites	Interplay	AD	8.49
	Prince of Persia 2	Broderbund	AC	8.49
100	The Lost Vikings	Interplay	AC	8.46

Games on unnumbered lines have scores equal to the line above. ✱ = Top game of type. Dark Teal = New Game
AD = Adventure, RP = Role Playing, SI = Simulation, ST = Strategy, WG = Wargame, AC = Action, SP = Sports

The Computer Gaming World Poll

A MONTHLY SURVEY OF THE READERS OF COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

PATCHES

Computer game programs have grown so massive and the number of hardware configurations has become so huge that incompatibilities and glitches are frustratingly common. Software fixes, or "patches," for buggy programs have become a necessary evil until we reach the golden age of standardized platforms and bug-free programs.

Ziff NET. These patches can usually be downloaded from the major online networks (CompuServe, GEnie, ZiffNet), but can also be obtained from individual software publisher's own BBSs or direct from the publisher with proof of purchase. Red indicates new files.

Alien Logic V1.1 Update: Fixes several problems, including the "Cleash General *Null Jig Tokens* Crash," as well as adding command line switches for many sound boards. 5/2/95

Big 3 for Windows Update: Updates Big 3 to the latest version, fixes several problems: in the retreat function, defender retreating function, control array element errors, and several other problems. 4/6/95

Colonization Version 3.0: Corrects reported problems and adds a map editor. Works *only* with the U.S. version of the game. 2/13/95

Daedalus Encounter V1.01: This major maintenance update fixes most if not all of the sound card-related crash problems with lower-end sound cards. Several other new bug fixes are also included. 4/25/95

Descent V1.2 Update: Includes several bug fixes and adds support for multiple sockets during netgames, hooks for Spaceball controller support and alternate joystick reading methods. 3/24/95

Doom V 1.9: Official Id upgrade works *only* with version 1.666. 2/8/95

Flying Nightmares V3.1a (Macintosh): Fixes several errors and provides improved joystick support. 3/29/95

FrontLines V1.02: Includes modem play as well as several other enhancements and bug fixes. 4/2/95

Front Page Sports: Baseball '94 V1.02: Fixes many reported problems, including crash bugs and General Manager AI as well as roster handling bugs. 2/3/95

Harpoon 2 Upgrade: Fixes some reported problems. 3/14/95

Harpoon Classic for Windows V1.55: Corrects several reported GPF errors, and fully implements all version 1.32 missile changes including bearing-only attacks; works with any version. 3/29/95

High Seas Trader Sound Update: Should fix any soundcard-related crashes. 4/4/95

Jagged Alliance V1.10: Fixes a few problems, including keyboard lockout and offers several enhancements to the interface, AI and gameplay. 4/14/95

Legions Windows Update: Allows Legions Windows to run under Windows NT and corrects a very rare problem with later scenarios. 3/29/95

Links: The Challenge of Golf Update: Fixes lockups with Soundblaster 16 cards. 3/22/95

Master of Magic V1.31 Update: Latest upgrade to MicroProse strategy/magic game with numerous fixes, new features, and major AI enhancements. Updates all versions. 3/07/95

Pacific Air War Gold CD-ROM update: Contains a new version of the file 1942CD.COM, which will correct a problem seen if your copy of the game has a volume label of PAW_1942 instead of 1942_PAW, where the game will not run from a minimum installation. 3/16/95

Panzer General V1.2 Update: Separate CD-ROM and floppy patches fix some reported problems, including sound drivers, crash bugs and bridge engineer problems. 3/4/95

Tanks V1.25: *Unofficial* patch by Norm Koger adds panic fire and retreats, hidden AT guns, variable weather, horse drawn artillery, reduced effectiveness air and artillery and much more. 1/25/95

Ultima 8 V2.12: Comprehensive patch includes fixes to many problems as well as several game enhancements. 2/17/95.

Warcraft V1.21 Upgrade: Offers improved sound card support, increased 2-player game speed and many more fixes. Also included are the WAR_EDIT unit editor and a complete list of cheat codes. 3/20/95

Publisher BBS Numbers

Many of these patches are available directly from the publishers' bulletin board systems. Call with your modem parity settings at N-8-1.

Accolade (408) 296-8800
Apogee (508) 368-7036
Bethesda (301) 990-7552
Blizzard (714) 556-4602
Broderbund (415) 883-5889
Capstone (305) 374-6872
Creative Labs (405) 742-6660
Id Software (508) 368-4137
Impressions (617) 225-2042.
InterPlay (714) 252-2822
LucasArts (415) 257-3070
Maxis (510) 254-3869
MicroProse (410) 785-1841
Microsoft (206) 936-6735
NovaLogic (818) 774-9528
Origin (512) 328-8402
Papyrus (617) 576-7472
Sierra Online (206) 644-0122
Spectrum HoloByte (510) 522-8909
SSI (408) 739-6137 or (408) 739-6623
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"What's the deal with...Clones?!"

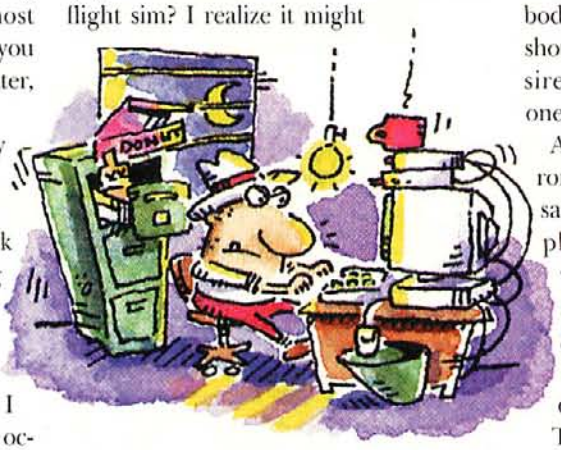
by Martin E. Cirulis

Cloning! Contrary to current media beliefs, cloning is alive and well, not in the realm of Dinos and dead fascist Tyrants with bad hair, but here in the land of computer gaming. We've all seen it before. First there is a hot, ground-breaking game; and then, for the next couple of years, there is the flurry of imitators. Some of these are improvements on the theme, but more often than not they miss the mark. I personally view game cloning the same way I view a band covering someone else's song: it's not the most original thing in the world, but hey, if you have a bee in your bonnet to do it better, more power to you.

Sometimes it pays off. Certainly Manfred Mann clarified Springstein's *Blinded by the Light*. On the other hand, did Guns 'n Roses really think Paul McCartney was on to something so good when he penned the immortal words "...In this world in which we live in," that it needed repeating when they covered *Live And Let Die*? I don't think so. And the same silliness occurs in the gaming industry when publishers are so desperate to imitate a formula that they seem blind to the realities of life. The fact is that you either have to do something a little bit novel with the product, or suffer the dreaded "Been there, done that" response.

Witness the seemingly endless LEMMINGS games and clones that march by, on the average of one per quarter. Not since the first sequel to LEMMINGS has anything even remotely new been done to the idea of helping little idiots from one side of the screen to another. Even the most die-hard manipulator must be getting a wee bit tired of it all—yet still the clones come, marching one by one to the edge of the shelf and over into the discount bin. Why? Surely game publishers must be higher up on the evolutionary scale than those fuzzy little cliff-divers.

I have the same sense of morbid wonderment every time I see a new Battle of Britain simulator. Do we really need another one? Or another Pacific War sim where I can't join the Australian, New Zealand or British Air arms? Here's an idea: instead of rehashing Spits and Stukas yet again, why doesn't some bright bunch of guys figure out where the vast majority of air-combat occurred, especially ground-attack, and do a Russian Front flight sim? I realize it might



take a leap in imagination to simulate a part of the war that didn't involve English-speaking people, but hey! Live on the edge, sim-designers!

And, of course, there is the little matter of DOOM.

Of the whole raft of born-again shoot-em-ups, only two of them seem to truly justify their existence: RISE OF THE TRIAD and DESCENT. A couple of others, while not breaking new ground, at least perpetuate the most innovative part of DOOM, the multi-player capability. And then we get to the Muzac category, the single-player DOOM-clones. I look at these games, especially the really nice ones like DARK FORCES and I ask myself, "What were they thinking?"

I realize that slaves to demographics must read the low numbers for network-capable computers and make the call from there—but wasn't there anybody standing around the LucasArts office saying "Ummm, excuse me...this is a beautiful looking game and all, but haven't we really cloned WOLFENSTEIN-3D? Maybe we should think about what made DOOM immortal, and network it. Maybe let players choose how their characters would appear to other players—little Wookies or Smugglers or even Ewoks."

Who knows, maybe there was somebody who said it—but certainly they were shouted down by the Dark Forces that desire mediocre clones instead of great ones.

And don't get me started on the horrors of STARFLIGHT clones. Let me just say this one thing to anyone contemplating one: ten actually interesting worlds/aliens are better than a thousand tedious ones! The secret to STARFLIGHT's success was *not* volume, volume, volume. It was depth, depth, depth.

Then there is the matter of games that need to be cloned, and nobody ever seems to get around to it. Where is our high-tech M.U.L.E. clone? Our new SUNDOG? A straight up IMPERIUM GALACTIUM with pretty pictures? Maybe there should be a space at the bottom of those endless registration cards for writing in which of the company's games you would like to see re-done most.

In the meantime, it appears it's not just those wacky Dino-doctors who have trouble with the realities of cloning.

If there's something going on in the industry you think Martin should be praising/butchering, let him know by sending a note to: "What's the deal with..." C/O CGW, 135 Main St. 14th Floor, San Francisco, CA 94105.

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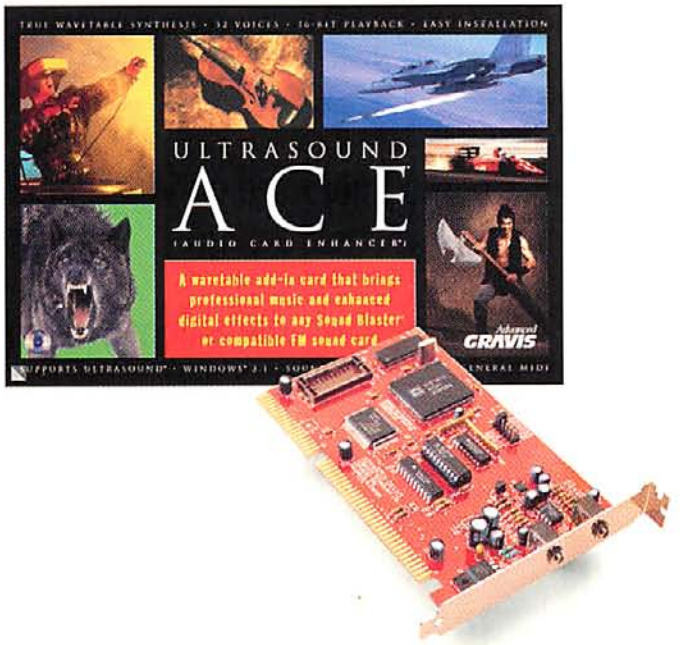

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— Computer Gaming World

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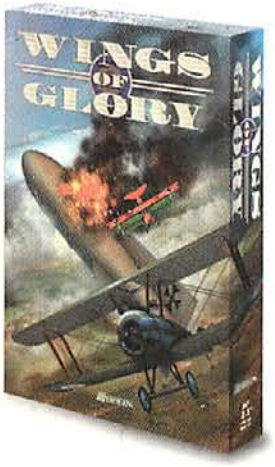

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