SPECIAL STATE OF THE ART SEGA SECTION!

ELECTRONIC GAMES

THE MAGAZINE OF INTERACTIVE EXPERIENCES

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 6

1994

GAMING PREVIEW

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March, 1994

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EG TAKES YOU BEHIND THE SCENES FOR AN EXCLUSIVE LOOK AT THE HOTTEST NEW GAMES OF THE YEAR!

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Weather conditions can often threaten your Game Gear's™ survival. But if you slip it into STD's Handy Gear you can play through rain, sleet or driving snow. Not only is the Handy Gear water resistant and shock absorbing, but it also has a built-in magnifier for better visibility and an adjustable screen protector to reduce glare. There's also room inside to store an extra cart. And the carrying strap makes it easier to play on the go. So strap on the Handy Gear and get ready for combat!

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STD

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410-785-5661

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CONTENTS

OUR EDITORS TAKE A DISCERNING LOOK AT THE TOP GAMES FOR THE GENESIS SYSTEM.

FEATURES

- **Pros Who Play Games**
  Some professional players who just can't get enough action on the field or court look to video sports games for some friendly competition that won't cause any season-ending injuries. 16

- **CES Express**
  Our editors are back from the Winter CES, and they've got the inside information on all the latest video and computer titles that wowed the crowds in Las Vegas. 26

- **State of the Art: Genesis**
  Check out this incredible 10-page section that details the very best in Genesis games in all categories. 36

- **EG Interview — Ken Tarolla**
  The brains behind Sherlock Holmes, Consulting Detective. 48

- **The Imagination Network**
  Sierra On-Line's new modem network uncovered. 54

- **Home Improvement**
  Grab your crescent wrench and your 5/8 socket! Tim Allen now stars in his own video game, and hardware is the hero! 56

- **Brutal Island**
  An inside look at the hot new fighting game on the Sega CD, and a peek behind the scenes of the game's production. 58

- **Puzzling it Out**
  EG continues its in-depth look at the latest and best puzzle games for those who want a different type of challenge. 60

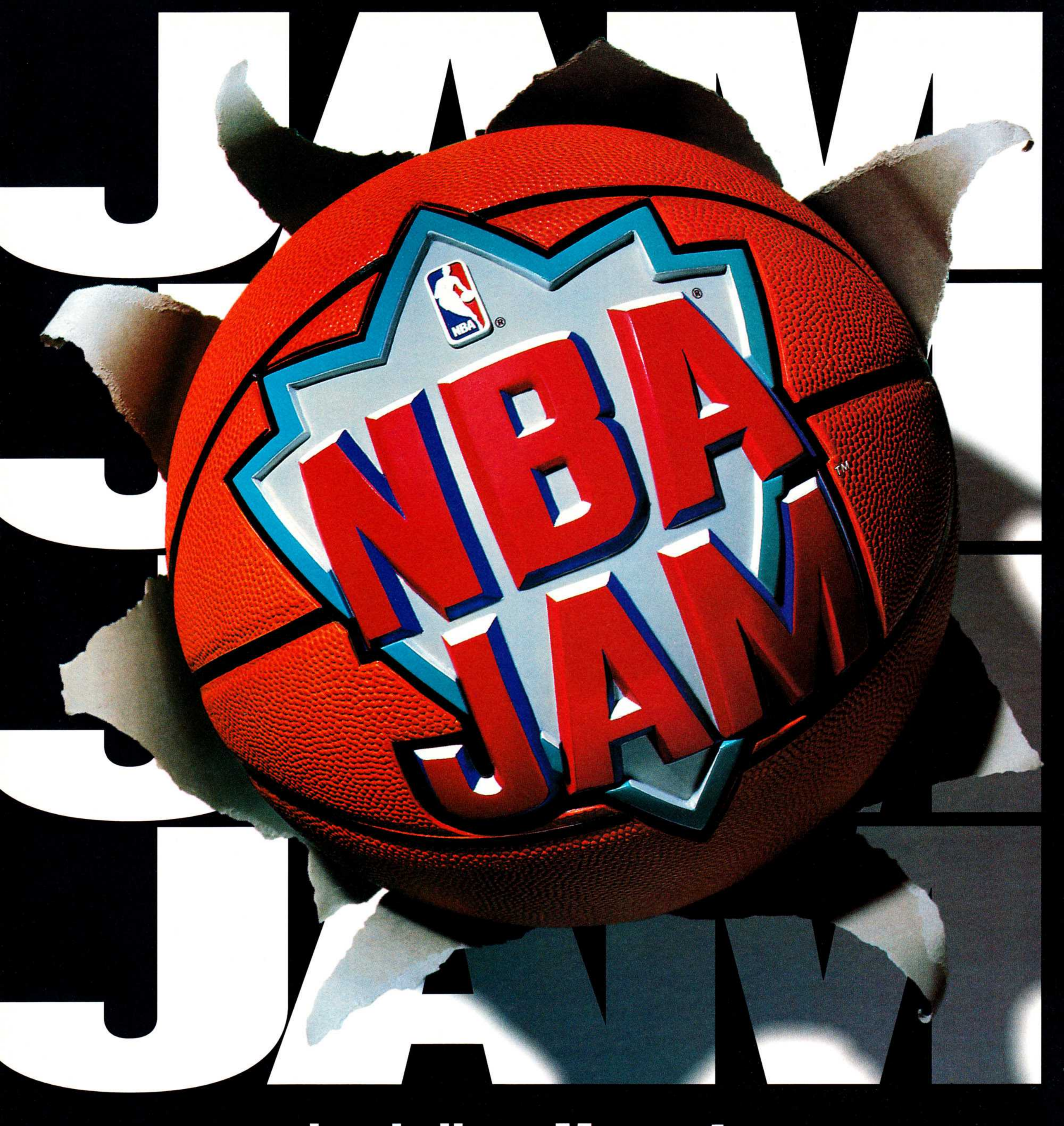
DEPARTMENTS

Power On!	6
Feedback	8
Hotline	10
Insert Coin	18
Game Doctor	22
Video Game Gallery	62
Software Gallery	70
Multimedia Gallery	82
Portable Playtime	86
The Kunkel Report	88
The Jury	92
Playing It Smart	93
Test Lab	94
Lore	96
The EG Poll	97
Things to Come	98

About the art— We at EG would like to thank the following artists for their contributions to this issue:

DC comics, MTV, and Paramount pictures for the use of the graphics on this cover.
Cliff Spohn for the EG Interview art.

While sitting here, scribing the March issue of EG, thoughts of spring come to mind. March will of course herald the coming of the season of life. Trees will don new mantals of leaves, flowers will bloom and the birds will return from their winter vacations. And while I consider these happy thoughts, the thermometer outside reads -22°. Somebody wake me in June.



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POWER ON!

CONSUMER ELECTRONICS SHOW: THE AFTERMATH

I went to the Winter Consumer Electronics Show—and lived! I increased the odds of survival by taking a party of seven **EG** editors. Eight of us ran 16 hours a day for nearly a week to get the whole story. My voice is hoarse from asking questions, my fingers are calloused from lugging 20-lb. sacks of booty around Las Vegas, insomniac circles rim my eyes, my body is bruised from a hundred mid-aisle collisions, and my legs feel like they're dragging lead weights.

Well, at least I have my health. Not to mention towering stacks of notes, photographs and demonstration disks. You don't have to run this marathon to share our discoveries, though. This issue is packed with news and product previews, including our semi-annual Show Picks feature. Next month, we'll be back with a complete rundown of everything new and exciting that premiered at WCES.

As I sit here amid the debris of CES activity, I'm starting to put together the Big Picture. Since it's hard to think about anything *else* right now, it's a good spot to share some of my observations about gaming's greatest event and what it promises for players over the next two years.

Multimedia is growing faster than anyone predicted. Leading software publishers have redirected development toward CD, and it's a rare video game company that doesn't have multimedia plans. A telling fact: Last year, most big multimedia titles were enhanced versions of floppy games. Now most are originals, some of which will be abridged for the computer edition.

The exhibition halls and temporary pavilions were clogged with new systems, though some had a disturbingly mythic quality. Nintendo showed a machine and extolled Project Reality, though the unit was a Silicon Valley Indigo work station, not the promised $200 set-top console. Other contenders previewed behind closed doors were the Sony PSX and Sega Saturn.

Those three 32-Bit multimedia systems aren't due to appear until fourth quarter 1994, at the earliest, but CD-I, 3DO, Sega CD and Jaguar are already in the stores and making noise. It surprises me to report that the news is good on all fronts. Third-party support will soon cure the game shortage for Sega's multimedia device; Jaguar has signed over 50 third-party supporters, CD-I is thriving with its $399 price and improved gameware, and 3DO may overcome its stumbling start with a big second-half push.

Second generation 3DO games look and play better than the first batch. That will make a difference. So will a price cut to $499, anticipated next fall.

Do you like screen savers? A lot of companies are betting that you do. If all the screen savers I saw during my CES tour come to market, you'll be expected to buy a couple of them a week until further notice. Many entries are clever and charming, but there's going to be a glut. That's the price of a free-market economy: six-dozen screen savers and not a single comprehensive simulation of strip dominoes.

As indicated by the cover, our editors chose **Star Trek: The Next Generation** as the best interactive electronic entertainment product unveiled at the Winter CES. Its outstanding audiovisuals, faithfulness to the characters and backgrounds of the television series, and universal appeal made it the consensus choice. Spectrum Holobyte is also readying a Genesis cartridge on a similar theme that drew critical raves.

Want to know more about what we saw? Start turning those pages!

— Arnie Katz

ELECTRONIC GAMES

MARCH, 1994

VOLUME 2, NUMBER 6

A DECKER PUBLICATIONS, INC. PERIODICAL

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DISTRIBUTED BY:
WARNER PUBLISHING SERVICES, INC.

BPA Consumer Publication Membership Applied for January 1993
Electronic Games (ISSN #1063-8326) is published monthly by Decker Publications, Inc. 1920 Highland Ave., Suite 222, Lombard, IL 60148. Second Class Postage paid at Lombard, IL and additional mailing offices. Subscription rates for U.S.: $23.95, Canada and Mexico: $33.95, and all others by air mail only: $80.00. Single issue rates: $3.95. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Electronic Games, P.O. Box 7311, Red Oak, IA 51591-2311. For subscription changes, change of address, or correspondence concerning subscriptions call 800-444-3334. The editors and the publisher are not responsible for unsolicited materials. No part of this publication may be reproduced without the expressed written permission of Decker Publications, Inc. Copyright © 1994, Decker Publications, Inc. All rights reserved. All materials listed in this magazine are subject to manufacturers change and the publisher assumes no responsibility for such changes.
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Meet Our Soul Survivor.

Our guy looks like he made it through MANSION OF HIDDEN SOULS with hardly a scratch. His wired jaw works pretty well and his new dentures are shiny white. The large bald spot on the back of his head doesn't seem to bother him. All of his organs, as far as we know, are original and still in the same places. And we don't hear him complain about the hair that won't stay down or the hands that won't close. Of course, we don't know anything about his mental state.

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FEEDBACK

REVEALED: THE SECRET TO CORRECTLY PRONOUNCING 'RYŪ'

It's time to settle a burning conflict in the world of **Street Fighter II** once and for all. In your December, 1993, issue, the Game Doctor replies to a question concerning **SF2** character names by consulting a phonetic guide, and gives Ryū's name as "Rie´-yu"–a common answer, although incorrect. A competitor claimed "Roo," which is closer, but still not accurate.

First of all, I'm not just another boastful gamer, but a self-taught student of the Japanese language that is determined to settle this dilemma.

In Japanese, the phonetic system ("iroha") consists of 5 vowels, 40 consonant-vowel combinations, and a syllabic "n." Three combos (ya, yu, and yo) can be combined with all combos ending in "i" (pronounced "ee") such as ki, ni, hi and ri. These create new hybrids: kyu, nyu, hyu, ryu, etc., with the first sounding like "cue" and the rest rhyme. One of these composes Ryū's name, with a long vowel sound kind of like "ooo" instead of "oo," and sounds like "are you" without the initial "ah." The initial "r" (which in Japanese sounds more like a Spanish "r"), combined with the "you" sound, doesn't exist in English outright, so gamers go for a general, ignorant assumption in pronunciation. These "ry" combos also apply to character names such as Ryō in **Art of Fighting**, Hiryū in **Strider**, and Ryōga in **Ranma 1/2: Hard Battle**. Your publication is informative and is one of the finest; just be careful when you claim that you've done your research.

David Erickson
Huntington Beach, CA

Thanks, David, for the explanation, although as a student of Japanese language you may have a more sensitive ear to fine differences than your average player. The Doc tells us he asked a Japanese gamer about Ryū, who told him something that sounded to his ear like "doo" (probably that Spanish-like "r" you mention), and so he went to the best (typographical) source he had.

No Pinball for Nintendo?

I have a question about the Super Nintendo. With the many hundreds of games out for this system, why are there no pinball games? Pinball games are my favorite.

Bill Galgano
Coram, NY

Good news, Bill! The word is out that a couple of pinball games for the SNES are *in the works. Of course Nintendo hasn't completely ignored pinball, if you want to count its Kirby game for the GameBoy.*

Cartridge Pirates?

Until just recently it seemed as if piracy had not been a problem for cartridge based systems, since there was no way to copy a game cartridge. Basically companies that would sell equipment capable of copying a game cartridge could not advertise without running a great risk of getting caught. Now I have seen an ad in a video gaming magazine selling one of these products claiming that it was used simply to back up your game cartridge onto diskettes. This is likely to bring trouble to companies like Nintendo who have spent so much time fighting piracy. Does anyone have any plans to keep these systems from copying their cartridges? Also about the Sega channel; if it becomes a reality companies will probably try to sell something that will allow you to catch the program as it is being sent into the Sega Genesis and replay the game at a later date. If the VCR made it these devices could probably make it too! Now if all this were to happen what would video game producers do to fight piracy?

Reynard Moore
Duluth, MN

Actually, cartridge systems have *been subject to piracy, almost from the beginning, though for the most part it is a sufficiently complex process that is unprofitable to the pirates at low volume. Probably the same would apply to capturing the downloads off the Sega Network. We haven't seen the ad you speak of, Reynard, but it's hard to believe that, regardless if the product itslef is legal, anything the consumer can do with it is.*

Morality Airbags

A woman is upset and angry because her child imitates the punches and kicks depicted in a video game she unknowingly rented ... Another episode in the raging controversy over violent video games, which is, in turn, the latest round in a war lasting generations. It is the same war waged on the battlegrounds of comic books, movies, television shows, popular music and books (Have I missed anything?). It is a war over responsibility.

Wide-scale censorship only results in severely limiting creativity and variation. It will also reduce commercial gain, which further limits creativity—etc. Worse still, it places all responsibility for (and power over) content in the hands of a small group of people. This is obviously not a good situation, and it is insulting to many who are fully capable of choosing their entertainment themselves. Censorship boards (or laws) are not "Morality Airbags." They are "Enforced Mass Transit"—picture someone taking away your car and handing you a bus pass and schedule.

A workable and fair solution is an honest rating using an objective standard—one which would, in plain language, indicate level and volume of sexual content and violence. Such ratings could be applied to *all* media. As they are currently in the bull's eye, game manufacturers need to get together and act, without prejudice or ego, before someone else's morality is stuffed down their collective throats.

Kenton Kihara
Pearl City, HI

Well said, Kenton. The "Morality Airbag" concept would seem to involve a lot of hot air, wouldn't it?

We certainly want to keep hearing from you, folks. After all, reading game manuals can get really boring after a while. Please send your questions and comments to us at:

Feedback, c/o Electronic Games, 330 S. Decatur, Suite 152, Las Vegas, NV 89107

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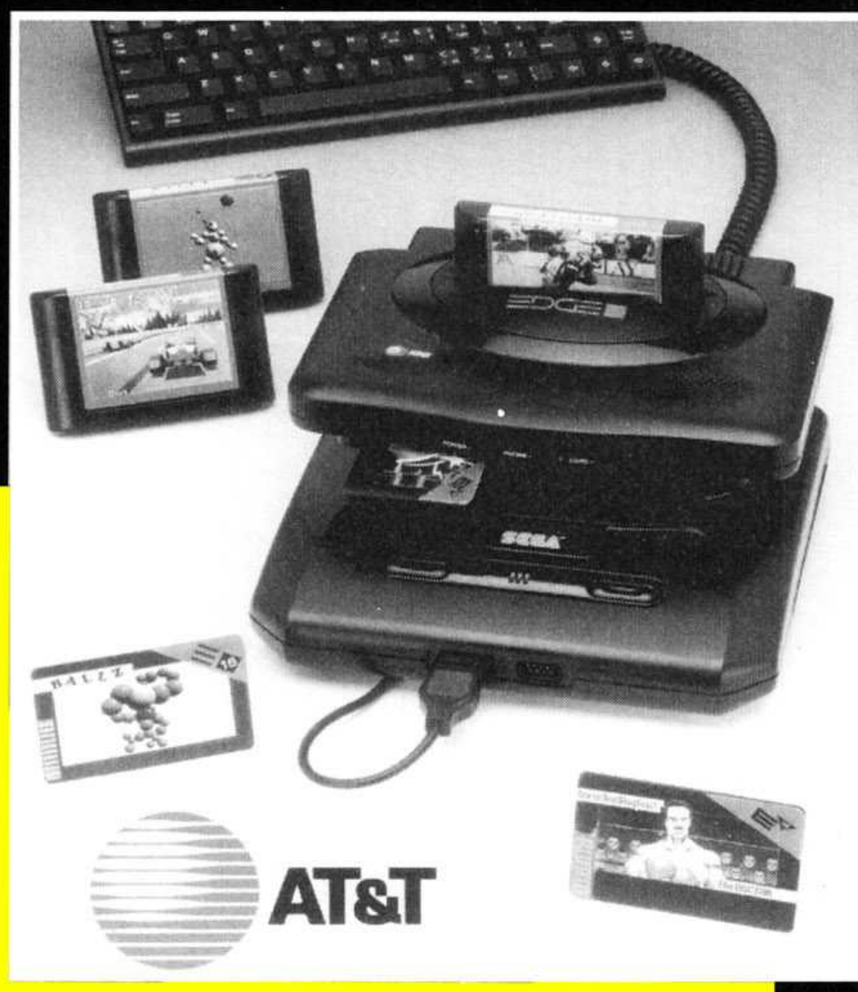
HOTLINE

Compiled by Joyce Worley and Ross Chamberlain

AT&T Gives Genesis an Edge

This autumn AT&T will introduce **The Edge 16** to allow Sega Genesis owners to play games and hold conversations using the phone lines. The Edge ($149) plugs into the Sega Genesis game slot, then the game cartridge goes into the slot at the top of The Edge and the phone jack plugs into the back of the unit to allow modem play. Optional clip-on microphone and speaker enables conversation. There will also be an add-on keyboard that will open computer-like features to Genesis players, including going on-line.

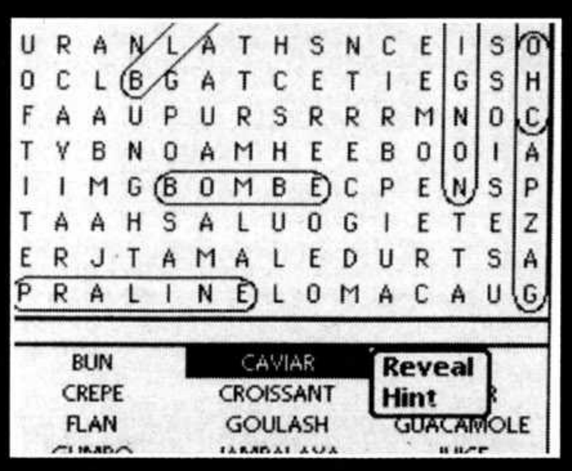
Sega, GameTek, The Imagination Network, PF.Magic and US Gold have announced games that take advantage of The Edge modem capabilities. Other companies supporting the device include Acclaim, Crystal Dynamics, EA Sports, Microprose, Spectrum Holobyte and Software Toolworks.



Apple Makes Gameware

Apple, after years of eschewing entertainment projects, is finally having a little fun through its Star Core Group, part of the Personal Interactive Electronics Division. The Group revealed game plans for the Newton personal pocket computer that will give business activities a contest for computing time.

Finger Tip For Golf is a golfer's assistant that keeps score, unscrambles wagers, calculates handicaps, suggests practice drills, stores scores and more. Other entertainments include a baseball game in development, **Casino** with poker, craps, blackjack, slots and baccarat, plus **Dell Crossword Puzzle** with unusual clues including showing the first letter, or circling the incorrect letters.



Newton users can take advantage of relaxing with Dell's Crosswords.

A portable whodunnit is ready to run on the Newton, thanks to Star Group.

Best looking title in the library thus far is **Columbo Mystery Capers**. A beautifully drawn illustration reveals clues as players click on different hot spots. It's a quick play; each mystery can be solved in a few minutes.

Star Group also announced over 20 CD-ROM titles for Macintosh and PC formats to be introduced during the first quarter, and over 40 for the year, including a series of electronic explorations from InterOptica Publishing. Photos, animations, text, and interactive video will let the player visit **The Egyptian Pyramids, The Great Wall of China, Taj Mahal, The Amazon Rainforest, The Grand Canyon** and other journeys that make world travelers out of armchair players.

Broderbund Signs Affiliates

Broderbund has become the exclusive North American distributor responsible for marketing products by three new affiliates, Three-Sixty Pacific, Cyan, Inc. and Vicarious Entertainment.

Tom Frisina, president of Three-Sixty, said his firm was "fortunate to find a company whose focus on IBM and Macintosh markets is the same as ours. Our product lines are also complementary in that there is very little overlap between their edutainment and productivity products and our strategy/simulation based entertainment." Three-Sixty publishes war simulations such as **Harpoon** and **Victory at Sea.**

Through the agreement, Broderbund will distribute Cyan's enhanced CD-ROM, **The Manhole Masterpiece Edition** and **Cosmic Osmo and The Worlds Beyond the Mackeral** and Vicarious' **CNN Time Capsule 1993**.

Acclaim Demos Technology

Acclaim's Technology Group is working to build games using highly realistic computer generated figures. They use a proprietary tetherless technique to tape actors making the moves, then wire-frame the images and texture cover them.

Acclaim demonstrated the technique at WCES with **The Duel**, a video of hand-to-hand combat between a human and monster, and with **Aliens**, which gives the gamer a first-person view moving through the spaceship, facing off against the scariest rendition of the aliens seen on the home screen so far.

Acclaim has not yet announced release of any game using the technology.

3DO Issues Rating System

The 3DO Company instituted its own rating system for software produced for its system. Its four symbols are: E, for Everyone, set in a green symbol like a "Go" traffic signal; 12 and 17, for games suitable for youth at or above these ages, each set in a yellow diamond resembling caution signs on the highway; and AO, for Adults Only, set in a red octagon like a stop sign.

Bob Faber, VP of Sales & Marketing, explained: "3DO technology, which enables a new level of realism, is being adopted by hundreds of software companies worldwide. Because we expect a large volume of software titles in many different categories, we felt it was important to move forward with a ratings system now."

Flight Sim Sets Sales Record

You just can't keep a good program down. Microsoft's new version of **Flight Simulator** has racked up sales in its first few months that total all the earlier versions of this classic put together. Meanwhile, the Bruce Artwick Organization is working on **Flight Into Space**, a space simulator that should be finished before summer, and Larry **"X-Wing, Secret Weapons"** Holland is working on a simulation/strategy product that won't be done until 1995.

Microsoft, now making a stronger commitment to entertainment software than ever before, announced that it plans to release 12 new titles during the next year, most of which will be on Windows. The next release will be **Best of Entertainment Pack** with 13 games, including **Tetris, Golf** (the card game), **Pipe Dream** (LucasArts), **Taipei** (a Shanghai-style tile game), **Ski Free** (with monsters and snow boarders) and eight more.

EG Readers' Popularity Poll

These games were voted the favorites in EG's monthly poll (see last page in this issue). Duplicate numbers represent ties.

Favorite Video Games
1. *Mortal Kombat*, Acclaim
2. *Street Fighter 2 C.E.*, Capcom
3. *Sonic 2*, Sega
4. *Secret of Mana*, Squaresoft

Favorite Computer Games
1. *Wolfenstein 3-D*, FormGen
2. *Darkside of Xeen*, New World
3. *Lemmings*, Psygnosis
4. *X-Wing*, LucasArts

Favorite Multimedia Games
1. *The 7th Guest*, Virgin
1. *Sherlock Holmes, Consulting Detective*, ICOM
1. *Sewer Shark*, Sega

Favorite Coin-Ops
1. *Mortal Kombat*, Acclaim
2. *Super Street Fighter 2*, Capcom
3. *Samurai Shodown*, SNK
4. *Lethal Enforcers*, Konami

Philips, MGM Sign CD-i Pact

Philips Interactive Media signed an agreement with MGM that will give CD-i owners access to 30 movies from the MGM and United Artist catalog of titles. This is in addition to a similar arrangement Philips has with Paramount. Some of the upcoming titles are *Indecent Proposal*, *The Firm*, *Sliver*, *The Coneheads* and *Apocalypse Now*.

Philips CD-i owners will soon be able to view movies on their players.

There are now 300,000 CD-i players installed, according to spokesmen for Philips Interactive Media, and the company expects to hit one million sales by the end of 1994. The $399 multimedia player is currently sold by 13,000 retailers worldwide, and will soon be available for rent as well. There are currently 150 titles available for play on CD-i machines.

The company also is introducing new CD-i controllers, such as the infrared remote, with action and directional buttons at the top, and play, stop, pause, track selection and volume controls under a sliding front cover.

The Philips touchpad remote controller features a directional stick, 4-way pad, action buttons and 12 feet of cord.

Sega CD Hits a Million

Sega released figures showing that the Genesis system outsold the Super Nintendo through the Christmas season, and sales of the Game Gear increased over 200 percent above last year, bringing its installed base to almost four million. In addition the Sega CD reached an installed base of nearly one million units.

Tom Kalinske, Sega's President and CEO, said "The holiday selling season ... was a complete blowout for Sega. In fact, several key retailers reported that sales of the Genesis system surpassed our competition by as much as five-to-one."

Triax Stick Tailors Play

Triax will introduce a Multi Function Joystick for SNES and Genesis this September that changes the way games are played. Triax is working with companies like Electronic Arts, Virgin, U.S.Gold, Ocean, Sunsoft, Tengen, Namco Teemo and Interplay to create games encoded with special features for the Multi-Function controller.

It will allow the gamer to grab hold of any sports team player, car, cycle or plane, then customize their moves in an extremely lifelike way, with angles, turns, jumps, variable speed, multi-directional movement, 3-D action, and more. The controller works normally on regular software. The Multi Function Joystick is compatible with both Genesis and SNES systems.

AT&T Readies 3DO Players

AT&T will launch their own 3DO multiplayer during the 4th quarter of the year, as well as peripherals that add voice capabilities to their own and other 3DO machines. The AT&T 3DO Interactive multiplayer is similar to existing units that attach to TV sets to deliver multimedia. The 3DO Multiplayer with built-in AT&T Voice Span, provides voice capabilities so players can chat. Finally, the Voice Span peripheral connects to 3DO systems to add the voice capability.

Support Grows For Jaguar

Atari's Jaguar completely sold out the first 20,000 machines in one day, and the company expects to sell 500,000 in 1994. Introduced first in New York and San Francisco, the product will have its national rollout during 1994. It will also be available for rent at Blockbuster stores later this year.

Atari also announced that there will be a Jaguar CD peripheral during the second half of this year, with a suggested retail price of $250. There are also plans in the works for a virtual reality helmet.

Over 35 developers have licensed to produce games for the Jag, and there should be three or four games per month introduced by third party developers starting in April.

aggressive two-on-two street basketball game starring Sir Charles and street players with signature moves. It features lots of hot spots that allow trick shots (loops, spins, rim hangs, etc.), power-ups and no ref or penalties.

Sir Charles leaves Phoenix for the courts of the city in his new game.

HardBall III (SNES, March) is different from the Genesis version in that it has NLBPA players. It also lets players customize uniform colors, logos, names, stats and provides for stat or arcade style play.

Accolade Fields Sports Label

Accolade sports titles have a new moniker, Sport Accolade. First product in the new line is **Barkley: Shut Up And Jam!** (Genesis, SNES), a very

VideoFreedom Censors Play

VideoFreedom Systems, Inc. believes it has developed a means to end the rating debates with technology that lets players choose whether or not to see selected elements of any video presentation, whether a game or program. It requires preprocessing, encoding each frame with special information that blurs selected audio and visual elements at four levels of intensity, from nearly complete elimination to no blurring at all.

Games will be coded at a general audience level, but a special control system, sold separately, can deblur the images. Codes will be divided into four categories: Sex/nudity, violence, adult situations and language.

Top Video Games Dec. 13, 1993

The following figures are provided courtesy of Babbages.

Super NES

1. *Madden NFL '94*, EA Sports
2. *Clayfighter*, Interplay
3. *NHL Hockey '94*, EA Sports
4. *Secret of Mana*, Squaresoft
5. *Tecmo Super Bowl*, Tecmo

Sega Genesis

1. *Madden NFL '94*, EA Sports
2. *NFL Football '94-Joe Montana*, Sega
3. *Mortal Kombat*, Acclaim
4. *NHL Hockey '94*, EA Sports
5. *Sonic Spinball*, Sega

Game Boy

1. *Mortal Kombat*, Acclaim
2. *Kirby's Dream Land*, Nintendo
3. *Super Mario Land*, Nintendo
4. *Kirby's Pinball Land*, Nintendo
5. *Zelda: Link's Awakening*, Nintendo

NES

1. *Tetris 2*, Nintendo
2. *Kirby's Adventure*, Nintendo
3. *TMNT: Manhattan Project*, Konami
4. *Caesar's Palace*, Virgin
5. *Jurassic Park*, Ocean

Sega Game Gear

1. *Mortal Kombat*, Acclaim
2. *Sonic Chaos*, Sega
3. *Ecco the Dolphin*, Sega
4. *The Ren & Stimpy Show*, Sega
5. *Columns*, Sega

Sega CD

1. *Sonic CD*, Sega
2. *Lethal Enforcers*, Konami
3. *Joe Montana's NFL Football*, Sega
4. *Prize Fighter Video Boxing*, Sega
5. *Ground Zero, Texas*, Sony Imagesoft

Top Software December 1993

The list of top-selling computer software was compiled by PC Data of Washington, DC., based on units sold by 10 retail chains, representing over 1300 stores.

TOP MS-DOS Games

1. *Microsoft Flight Simulator*, Microsoft
2. *Privateer*, Origin
3. *AD&D Dark Sun*, SSI
4. *Return to Zork*, Activision
5. *Scenery Disk: San Francisco*, Mallard
6. *Masters of Orion*, MicroProse
7. *Microsoft Arcade*, Microsoft
8. *Street Fighter II*, Hi Tech Expressions
9. *X-Wing*, LucasArts
10. *Blue and Grey*, Impressions

Top CD-ROM Titles

1. *Return to Zork*, Activision
2. *7th Guest*, Virgin
3. *King's Quest VI*, Sierra
4. *Romaterial*, Moon Valley
5. *MPC Wizard*, Aris
6. *Dracula Unleashed*, Viacom
7. *Mad Dog McCree*, American Laser
8. *Day of the Tentacle: Maniac Mansion*, LucasArts
9. *Just Grandma and Me*, Broderbund
10. *Wing Commander: The Secret Missions*, Origin

Crystal Dynamics Visits Saturn

Crystal Dynamics, multimedia game developer whose **Crash 'N Burn** is packed with Panasonic's 3DO systems, has signed with Sega to develop titles for several Sega systems, including the Saturn system scheduled for introduction late this year.

"Working with Sega achieves another milestone toward making Crystal Dynamics a leader in multiplatform interactive entertainment software," said Strauss Zelnick, Crystal Dynamics president and CEO.

Blue Force— Starring You!

Anyone with a video camera can now become part of **Blue Force** (Tsunami's police adventure) through **Video Injection** (Tsunami/MS-DOS/$29.95). Tape a short clip, then inject it into the game, to become an employee in City Hall's information service.

Each visit to the service reveals a little more of a sub-plot, and the film capture is windowed as a talking head against the office background.

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IBM screens shown. Actual screens may vary.

Playmate Shows First Carts

Playmate Toys is entering the video game business with two cartridges to be released this fall. The toy company will ship **Star Trek: Deep Space Nine** and **Exo Squad** this fall, both developed by Novotrade International (**Ecco the Dolphin**, **Cyborg Justice**) for SNES and Genesis. An in-pack offer will give purchasers of each game a chance to get a free, exclusive action figure.

Deep Space Nine is set on the starship *Saratoga*, the planet Bajor, the Cardassian Flagship and Deep Space Nine space station. Players first assume the role of Commander Sisko, and later take the parts of Odo, Kira, O'Brien and Dax.

Exo Squad lets one to four players garb themselves in a hero's E-frame exo-skeletal war machine, armed with weapons and gadgets. An unusual Multi-Player Mode lets two players control one E-frame through three play stages that climax in mid-air battle a sequence.

David Perry (Virgin's **Aladdin**, **Cool Spot**) has contracted to do future games for Playmates, with the first due as early as November.

Sierra Gears Up

Sierra On-Line is beefing up, to the tune of about $400,000 worth of new equipment to enable broadcast-quality graphics. You'll see the difference in **Phantasmagoria** (CD-ROM, November) now being programmed in high-res 3-D on Silicon Graphics work stations, to have multiple "camera angles" throughout the virtual rooms. The horror-psycho thriller starts when a couple moves into a house with a personality that'll drive you crazy.

Other plans for the year have Al Lowe designing a family game, Roberta Williams creating a horror game, arcade-style titles and another **Space Quest** for Roger Wilco's fans.

MCA Forms Game Unit

MCA formed Universal Interactive Studios to consolidate its efforts in interactive software, according to Sid Sheinberg, president and CEO of MCA Inc.

"We felt the time has arrived to establish a 'dedicated' activity to ensure that MCA will participate fully in the various types of interactive product markets that will develop," Stienberg said.

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Playing With The Pros

Athletes Work Out with electronic games

Ricky Watters, S.F. 49er, spent an afternoon checking out Madden 3DO before hitting the field.

When they're not playing with their teams, they're burning up the electronic playfields!

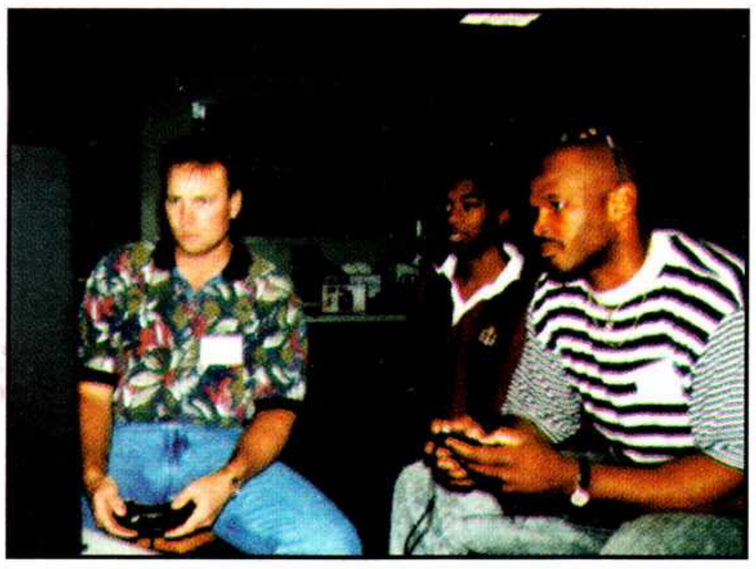
EA*Sports welcomes a lot of professional players into their offices, meets others on the road and at sporting events, and learns through the grapevine of athletes who also enjoy electronic gaming. The guys are always anxious to get some hands-on playtime with the latest sports titles.

Many of them have a long history of video gaming, but they're all knocked out by the realism and the exciting play action in the latest versions.

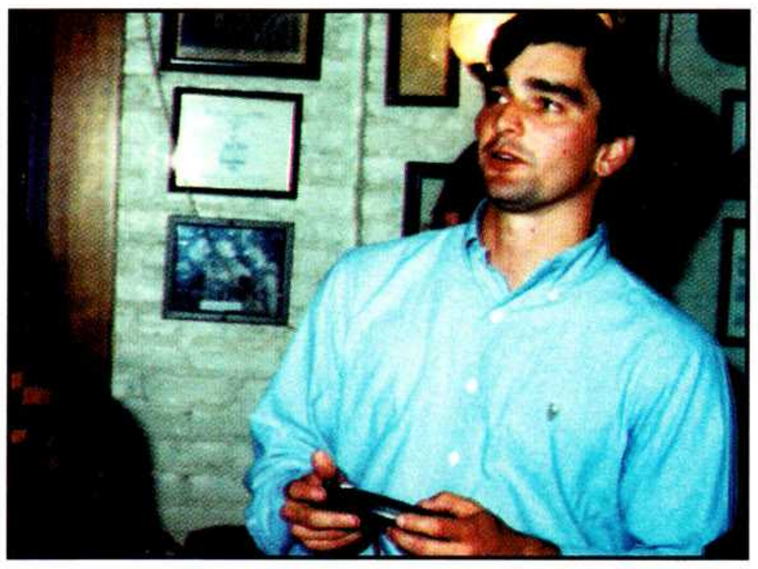
Jimmy Spencer, Keith Taylor and Toi Cook of the New Orleans Saints play Madden 3DO.

Marcus Turner and Ronnie Lott of the NY Jets got an up-close look at Madden NFL '94.

Latrell Sprewell and Byron Houston, Golden State Warriors, in the locker room.



Rod Brewer and Mark Whiten, St. Louis Cardinals, relax before a game.



Trevor Wilson, of the San Fransisco Giants, tries not to strike out when taking on video opponents.

Luc Robitaille of the L.A. Kings can score goals on the home ice and on the electronic hockey rink.

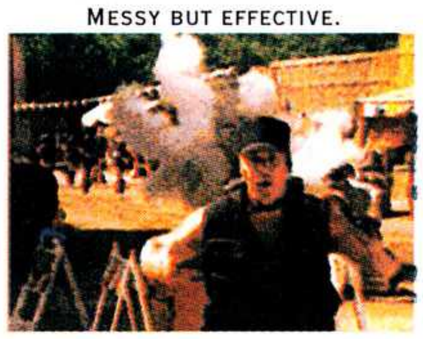
ALIENS HAVE COME TO TEXAS TO ENJOY BARBECUED RIBS. YOURS.

The blood-thirstiest aliens in the universe have landed and your job is to stop them in their six-toed tracks. (In Texas parlance, that's kick some alien butt.) It won't be easy. You'll have to blast them with their own artillery. But before any shooting begins in Texas, we had to do a little shooting of our own — in Hollywood. For the first time ever, an entire movie was shot for the sole purpose of making the ultimate interactive game. Then we digitized the whole thing. The result is a game where every decision you make changes the action every time you play. Ground Zero, Texas is so realistic that it will probably revolutionize the way games are made in the future. If there is a future. That's up to you, partner.

Available for Sega CD.

Commence 5 levels of extraterrestrial-bashing. It's all live action with live actors. At least they're alive when you start.

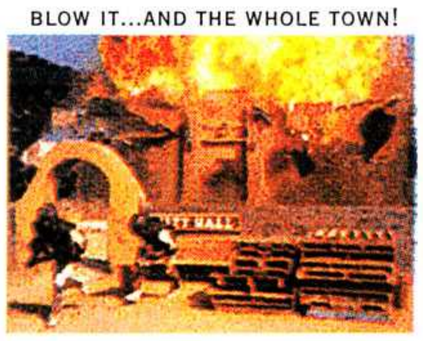
View action through Battlecams armed with plasma disrupter particle beams. Messy but effective.



SONY IMAGESOFT

(sure, it's just a game.)

Clues lead you to the invader's arsenal. Careful, Ace. One wrong move and you'll blow it...and the whole town!



Agent DiSalvo clues you in to the whereabouts of a Laser cannon. Find it, vaporize the mothership and save the human race from becoming sushi.

Digital Pictures

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INSERT COIN HERE

GOOD DESIGN AND A STRONG STORYLINE HELP KEEP THE ARCADES AFLOAT.

We pick up again on the theme we focused on last issue; the continuing emergence of design depth and storyline as an integral element in overall game presentation. The impact can't be over-emphasized, especially in light of CD-ROM systems where storage space is seemingly limitless compared to many of the existing platforms—in the home as well as the world of arcade games.

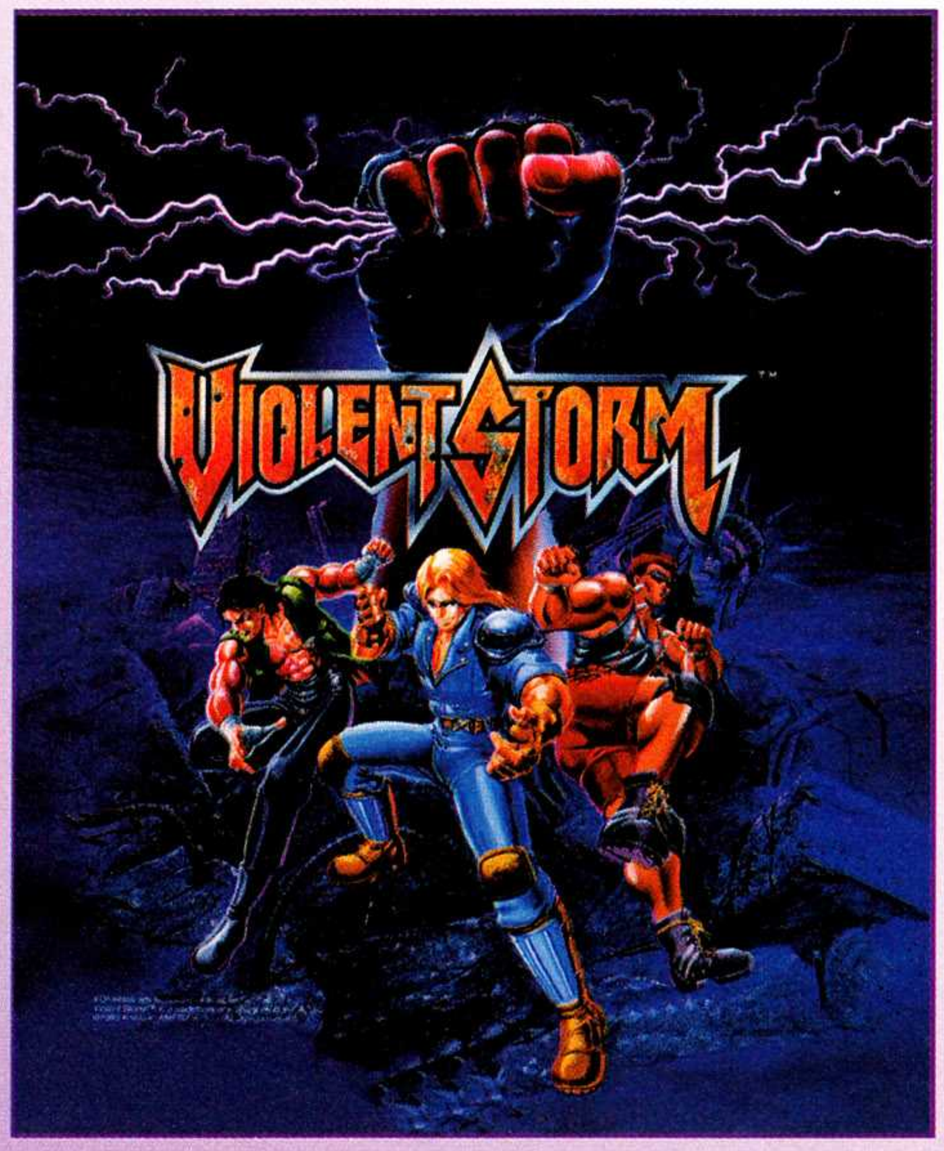
Since the challenge of coin-op entertainment has always been to stay at least one or two steps ahead of anything else, the gauntlet has been dropped to serve up deeper and deeper game play. It's a double-edged sword for the arcade game designer, since there has to be an immediate understanding of basic game rules and enough substance over the long haul to attract and capture players.

That, indeed, is a very fine line to travel and the reason why there have never been any simple solutions or formulas for creating the perfect game. It's always a crap-shoot, although it's often easy to determine those games which will endure over time and gain a loyal following. When the design team goes that extra mile to build in more play value, we'll keep coming back for more even if we've mastered a given machine.

And so it is that the stakes increase, especially for those manufacturers who are willing to pay the price to create the exceptional rather than the ordinary. Development schedules get extended to allow for extra tweaking and fine tuning and as a result what we experience is that much better.

As we saw last time around, this is definitely the case for pinball players. Fortunately, it's also true for video gamers where there's much more choice and a broader selection of themes along with many different player control interfaces. In point of fact, there truly is something for everyone.

If you're a fan of action/adventure, Konami is hoping that one of their two most recent releases might just be the attraction you've been looking for in a game. In the horizontal scrolling world of **Metamorphic Force,** anywhere from two to four players can take on the persona of a brave warrior to defeat the forces of The Evil One.



Borrowing a bit of Greek mythology to set the stage, the premise is one where you're on an island and must defeat a constant stream of bizarre creatures—from two-headed beasts to a very flammable chicken-man and even robots made of ice. On your journey through a landscape of fiery lakes and shimmering shrines, the ultimate goal is the castle for the final encounter. The twist to what is a basic joystick and dual action button controlled game is your ability to transform into a beast with super powers that can get you from one stage to the next.

Violent Storm delivers another variation on the destroy and rescue theme where World War III has just ended and civilization is attempting to get back on track. For two to three players, you're now a vigilante protecting the innocent from the evil Geld gang. Whether you select Boris, Wade or Kyle, there are a host of special moves and combinations via the joystick and two action buttons as you rescue Sheena.

Of course, standing in your way are a variety of adversaries and obstacles as you maneuver through a ghost town, on a runaway train, alleyways and taverns and finally, the museum of Geld for the last confrontation.

Under a license from SNK, Data East's **Spinmaster** comes out as a Neo•Geo system compatible cartridge where the emphasis is, again, more depth of storyline for either one or two players. Here the challenge is to find pieces of a secret treasure map in order to find where the treasure is hidden and then claim it for your own.

Although not having the impact in the home that some might have expected, the Neo•Geo system has proven to be a solid entry in almost every coin-op location and this title should fit in nicely to the current library with a world that features a colorful array of interesting backdrops and stylized enemies waiting to be enjoyed.

Depth of game play and diversity of themes continue to proliferate across the board. Next time around we'll see just how pervasive it has become in the growing number of sports games as well as the latest novelty attractions. Until then keep on playing.

— Jay Carter

ReadySoft Incorporated & Epicenter Interactive Present

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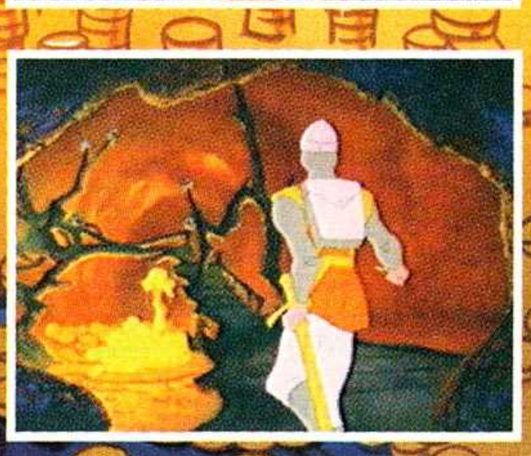

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Street Fighters Go RPG!

Capcom brings D&D to the Arcades

There are street fighting games and there are fantasy role-playing adventures and most gamers probably assumed the two genres would never meet. But assumptions are like clay pigeons in the world of electronic

Characters from our favorite Dungeouns and Dragons games are hitting the arcade screens.

entertainment—targets to be shot down by innovative designers such as Capcom's Alex Jimenez, designer of the new coin-op **D&D Tower of Doom**.

The Street Fighter games always contained a kernel of role-playing within their highly structured context; players tried to get inside the heads of the different fighters, using their individual moves almost the way an RPG maven notes their character's charisma, strength and dexterity ratings. With **D&D Tower of Doom**, however, Jimenez kicks out the role-playing jams with a full-blown real-time adventure that offers multiple perspectives, maze exploration, multiple paths, as well as macro and micro missions.

Gamers can enter the **Tower** as any of four stock RPG character types: fighter, cleric, elf or dwarf. The only major category not included is magic user, though magic does figure prominently in the game. Besides, Capcom had to save *something* for a sequel (can **D&D: Turbo Championship Edition** be far behind?!?).

The plot has up to four players fighting to rid the heretofore peaceful Republic of Darokin of dragons and other traditional fantasy game pests. The combat sequences are displayed in the familiar angled side-view perspective, with up to eight characters battling on-screen at the same time. Each character is endowed with more than two dozen different attack maneuvers, as well as the ability to carry an inventory of supplies and objects obtained during the course of the quest.

Special game features allow new players to join an adventure in progress, while the branching storyline guarantees that the game can be different each time it is played. While there have been some attempts in the past to bring the excitement of fantasy role-playing to coin-operated arcade games—most notably in Atari's **Gauntlet** series—**D&D Tower of Doom** is the first time that the touchstone franchise for *all* fantasy role-playing games—TSR, Inc.'s Dungeons & Dragons—has appeared on a coin-op.

Tower of Doom offers multiple levels. Character attributes are also included to affect game play.

Special weapons and attacks are available so that players can take advantage of D&D excitement.

"With some 60 millions video game enthusiasts and 12 million RPG fans nationwide, **D&D Tower of Doom** will be a popular and exciting addition to ... arcade and amusement centers ... by offering a unique, but highly-recognizable form of entertainment," said Joe Morici, senior v.p. of Capcom.

Can a multiple-perspective, real-time fantasy role-player work in the arcade environment? Will the inability to save games present an insurmountable obstacle to recreating the role-playing experience? Or can the company that re-invented the street fighting genre pull the role-players into the arcades while still satisfying the twitch game posse?

Only time and tokens will tell. Stay tuned ...

—Bill Kunkel

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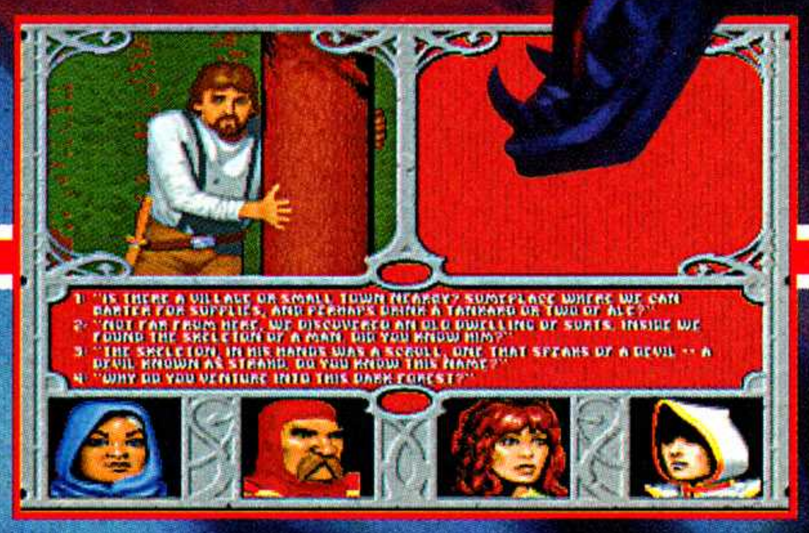

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GAME DOCTOR

THE GOOD DOCTOR TAKES A DIVE TO FIND THE TRUTH ABOUT WATER WORLD!

First, a word of advice to gamers everywhere: Never become involved in litigation with Shane Shaffer. I mean, I've known people who went to great lengths to prove a point, but for sheer determination, Shane wins the award (not to mention a Game Doctor Prize Packet).

Shane, of Taneytown, MD, and I got into a mini-controversy in last December's issue over the existence of Atari's **Water World** game from its aborted 2600 SwordQuest series. Shane insisted that this third game in the projected four game series was released, while I remained skeptical. Well, Shane has now satisfied my skepticism by sending copies of E-Mail from a variety of on-line gamers who saw or actually own a copy of the game.

Now, onto this month's collection of questions and comments:

Q: Doc, is Project Reality with Silicon Graphics a cartridge system? If not, what is it? Will the games for this system have real-life video like Sega CD? Also, what is Silicon Graphics? Is this system beyond CD-ROM technology? How does this system tie in with the arcades, and how much will the system's games and the system itself cost?

Jeremy Brown
Long Beach, CA

A: *Although most of the details have yet to be released, Project Reality is the name given to a planned 64-Bit video game system to be cre-*

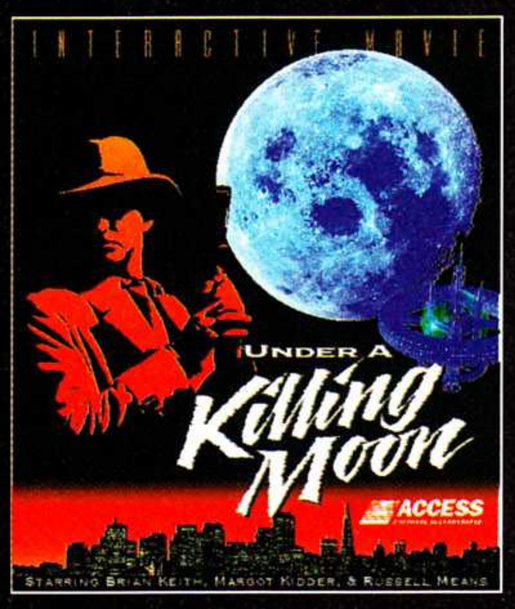
ACCESS Brings You a Virtual World Interactive Movie!

What Reviewers Are Saying:

"Lots of games push the envelope—Under a Killing Moon blows it to smithereens!"
—William Trotter, PC Entertainment

"A ground breaking CD adventure!"
—Joyce Worley, Electronic Games

"Under a Killing Moon combines the best elements of movies and computer games... It literally pulls you into the screen."
—Denny Atkin, Entertainment Editor, Compute Magazine



This category-creating Interactive Movie from ACCESS Software goes light years beyond any other product labeled "interactive." *Under a Killing Moon* takes you to the streets of post World War III San Francisco and casts you into the role of Tex Murphy, Private Investigator, who first appeared in *Mean Streets*, then *Martian Memorandum*. *Under a Killing Moon* is a Virtual World full of people and places so richly detailed, you'll feel like you're actually there.

ated jointly by Nintendo and Silicon Graphics, Inc. The system will be based around a version of the MIPS (Millions of Instructions Per Second) Multimedia Engine, a chip-set consisting of a 64-Bit MIPS RISC microprocessor, and a graphics co-processor chip.

Silicon Graphics, Inc., meanwhile, is the leading developer of graphics work stations; SGI technology has been used extensively in creating the special effects for films such as The Abyss, *and* Jurassic Park. *SGI technology is already being used extensively to create cut scenes and special graphics effects for 3DO and computer games.*

The idea is that Nintendo provides the money and marketing muscle while SGI produces the technology, based on its Indy and Indigo Magic units. When you ask about "real life video" I presume you mean full-motion video (FMV), and you can expect plenty of it on Project Reality games, if and when it is released (see this issue's "Kunkel Report").

Also, when you ask if this technology "goes beyond" CD, I think you are expressing a fundamental confusion shared by many gamers. Although it is not specifically stated in any of Nintendo's current press materials, Project Reality is certain to feature a CD-based drive. CD-based technology is not essentially different from ROM cart or floppy disk technology—it just holds a lot more data. As a result, sophisticated game systems will require CD or some superior data storage technology in order to show off its capabilities.

As for its link to the arcades, Nintendo hinted early on that Project Reality technology might show up in arcades before the home version appears. The idea is to use the SGI technology as the engine for a series of coin-ops, much as SNK uses its Neo•Geo technology to run both arcade and home video games.

Finally, we have the issue of price. Nintendo's "target price" for the system is less than $250, but there is tremendous skepticism in the industry as to whether this is realistic.

Q: My favorite cartoon characters in the whole world are definitely Beavis & Butt-Head—those guys really rule. So why hasn't Acclaim or TH*Q or one of the other big video game guys snatched up this license. And don't pull my finger, Doc—I need to know this stuff!

Billy "Beavis" Giovanelli
Tampa, FL

A: *Heh heh heh heh. The world's worst fast food employees haven't been scarfed up by one of the video game heavyweights for a very good reason: The company that owns them has just gotten into the video game business. Viacom, the folks who own MTV and Nickelodeon—and who've been in the news a lot lately while trying to purchase Paramount—are now producing software. The first two releases will be* ***Rocko's Modern Life*** *(based on the excellent Nick cartoon) and, of course, Messers.* ***Beavis & Butt-Head.***

Send your Qs, comments, and corrections to:

The Game Doctor (EG)
330 S. Decatur, Suite 152
Las Vegas, NV 89107

UNDER A

Killing Moon

Q: What do film stars *Brian Keith*, *Margot Kidder*, & *Russell Means* all have in common?

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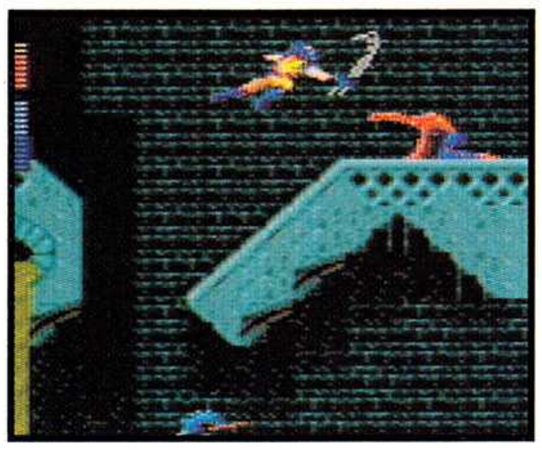
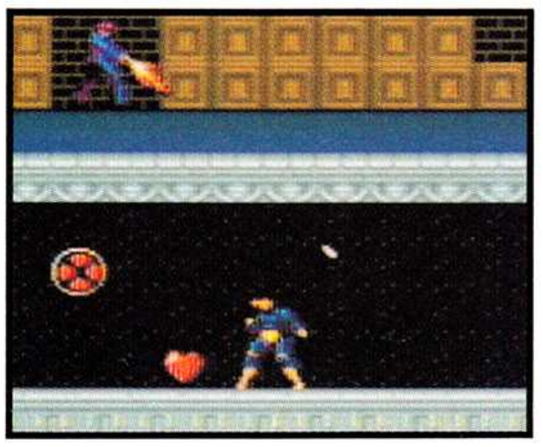


These Morlocks require a quick, fast attack or you're bound to take damage. Beware! The sewers can be very slippery.

Some areas of Madripoor may be difficult to pass, so choose your X-Men wisely.



The Hellfire Club hides a special bonus room. Find it! (Be sure to look everywhere.)

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DIRECT FROM LAS VEGAS... EG PICKS THE HITS!

Here's the best of what we saw at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas!

by the Editors of Electronic Games

What does a roomful of **EG** editors talk about after six grueling days of the Winter Consumer Electronics Show (WCES)? Believe it or not, those who still had voices argued the merits of all the new video, computer and multimedia gaming software and hardware.

Take our word for it, there was a lot to see when over 100,000 representatives of the interactive electronic entertainment industry met in Las Vegas. Each of our eight editors stepped off up to 20 miles a day to make sure we visited every exhibit and hotel suite.

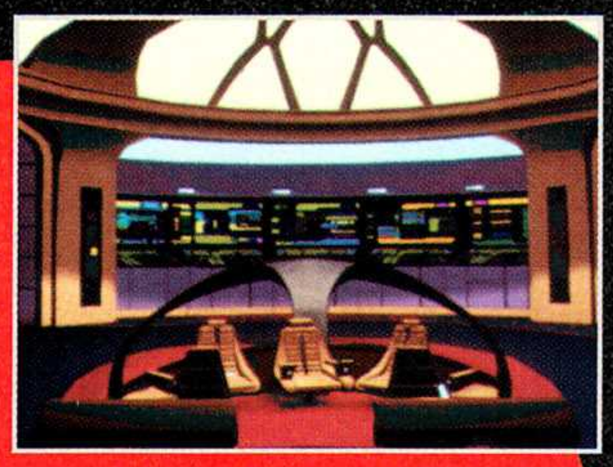
Next issue will feature our comprehensive Spring-Summer Gaming Preview, but we couldn't wait to tell you about the cartridges and disks that impressed us most. So here they are, **EG**'s Picked Hits of Winter CES '94!

Cartridge Picked Hits

Alien vs. Predator (Atari/Jaguar), out in March, shows off the power of Atari's Jaguar with smooth video techniques, quick animation and highly detailed graphics. As an Alien, a Predator or a Colonial Marine, there's plenty of action awaiting the player in this fast-paced shoot-em-up.

The 3-D first-person perspective calls to mind a whole genre of games as players wander the mazes in pursuit of the other species. The music and sound effects intensify the experience and suck the player into the molten heat of the play-mechanic.

Alien vs. Predator will excite fans of the creatures' movie counterparts and action game fans, too. You never know what might lurk behind that next corner!



Best Electronic Game

Star Trek: The Next Generation (Spectrum Holobyte/MS-DOS CD-ROM, 3DO) was our choice as tomorrow's best seller. It could become a way of life for fans of the TV series when the game debuts later in 1994. This massive, incredibly rich simulation is structured around a macro-mission, but with lots of sub-quests along the way.

Every element of the Trek legacy is included: beaming down, tactical space battles, command of the bridge and even a *Star Trek* database. And look for a surprise on the holodeck! This multi-character adventure features a totally modeled 3-D view of the Enterprise bridge and incorporates the same engine as the forthcoming *ST:TNG* flight simulator.

Bubsy II (Accolade/Genesis, SNES) won't zoom onto the market until next August, but what we've seen looks mighty good. The publishers, benefiting from player feedback on the 1993 winner, are crafting a more playable and less frustrating game than the original.

Take a walk on the wild side when fighting enemies in Alien vs. Predator for the Jaguar system.

This time, Bubsy must save the Bubsy Twins and history from the greedy cloven feet of Oinker P. Spamm, a porker who wants to capture pieces of history for his Amazatorium theme park. **Bubsy II** is intentionally nonlinear so that players can try out the game worlds in any order. Bubsy also moves faster, especially when he flies a biplane. Three mini-games, multiple perspectives and eye-pleasing color keep **Bubsy II** visually exciting. Bubsy's new verbal comments and a spirited musical score are also strong points.

That fabulous furball, Bubsy the Bobcat, is off on another adventure, this time through history!

Breath of Fire (Square Soft/SNES) is the next game in Square Soft's line of intriguing, exciting RPGs. Fans of previous ones, like the **Final Fantasy** adventures, will recognize the simple interface and overhead perspective.

The player guides a group of warriors in battle against dragon clans that threaten the world. The mid-year entry features many mini-quests within the overall story, automated combat and a multitude of Mode 7 special effects. The top-notch graphics and sound effects heighten the inherent drama.

Breath of Fire is a deep game, with a play-life of over 65 hours.

Incredible Hulk (US Gold/Genesis) is a side-scrolling platform game, but it requires strategy and gives a true comic book feel. With seven layers of parallax scrolling, the Hulk really looks like the Marvel monster/hero.

The green-skinned giant (no, not the jolly one) is out to wreak some havoc on his comic culprits.

The playability is good: It's easy to learn, and you don't need to memorize a zillion instructions. Despite the restrictive side-scroller format, **The Incredible Hulk** is the most satisfying attempt to bring this popular character to the interactive screen.

Impossible Mission 2025 (MicroProse/Genesis) modernizes the game originally published by Epyx in the early 1980s for the Commodore 64. The gamer picks a character from a pile of dossiers and then begins a platform adventure with power-ups and prizes.

The object is to find nine puzzle pieces on each level, put them into the on-screen computer and assemble the encrypted message. The backgrounds are well-textured, with nicely articulated animations through six levels.

How far have video games advanced in 10 years? The cartridge also includes **Impossible Mission** with the graphics and game play that launched a thousand platform games.

Players must avoid evil denizens as they try to gather the pieces of a secret coded message.

MTV's Beavis and Butt-Head (Viacom/SNES, Genesis) should not be blamed for the atrocious writing sure to be found in many reviews next summer. The humorous action/adventure game is unexpectedly faithful to the TV cartoons, though the finished product is certain to rattle the chains of would-be censors.

The animated bad boys must collect pieces of a pair of tickets so they can see GWAR, the gruesome punk band that dresses in costumes and sprays its audience with blood.

MTV's Beavis and Butt-Head is full of ridiculous sub-goals and situations. The team's fans will love the sound bites of their most famous expressions and the animations that include headbanging and walking funny. (Note: They paid us extra not to say "cool" or "sucks.")

Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure (Activision/SNES, Genesis) is a 16-Meg, '90s sequel to the swinging classic of a decade ago. In the mind-blowing introduction, Pitfall Harry pushes a window with a scene from the original game off the screen, and the title for the new one crashes into view. Whether any of this sequence will be in the final product is unclear.

What *will* be part of the new product is a file with the original **Pitfall**. Pitfall Harry Jr., the hero, looks a lot better than his dad, thanks to graphics that rate in the mid-'80s.

Shortly after **Pitfall:The Mayan Adventure** appears for the 16-Bit consoles in the fall, Activision will also market a Game Gear cartridge.

Rise of the Robots (Absolute/SNES) is high-tech street fighting with robot warriors. Visual Contouring gives the visuals a sculpted look with real-time movement.

This 16-Meg game is set in the not-so-distant future where an evil supervisor droid at the Electrocorp robotics factory has infected a legion of robots with a powerful virus. The villain is ready to unleash them on humanity.

In the one player version, you are an experimental cyborg and attempt to destroy the diabolical robots. One virtue of this game is the extensive artificial intelligence of the robot adversaries. A 3DO edition is also in the works and will premiere a few months after the video game.

Best Video Game

The Death and Return of Superman (Sunsoft/SNES) is the interactive version of the most exciting event in recent comic book history. Superman's death, and subsequent return, in 1993 is a lengthy series of comics that sold out across the country. Sunsoft has captured the entire storyline in one ambitious 16-Meg cartridge, which is on the schedule for July.

The Death and Return of Superman is a simple side-scroller, but the story and cinematic graphics make the experience much more captivating than most games in this format. Superman dies in the 10-level game's second level, but players follow the comic series and control the Superboy, Eradicator, Man of Steel and Cyborg characters until the real Superman returns.

Now fans can live the landmark series instead of just collecting and reading about it.

Radical Rex is just way too cool to be extinct. Players must guide him through vigorous screens.

Radical Rex (Activision/SNES, Genesis) is a skateboarding, fire-breathing, T-rex who's too hip to be extinct. In this colorful, cartoonish offering, the player guides Rex through five side-scrolling worlds, with 10 levels in each. Pterodactyls and sabertooth tigers add tension.

After defeating Sethron, the final big boss, the player turns around and goes back, right to left through all 50 levels. But it isn't just a reverse-direction rerun, because there are lots of new traps and creatures!

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Skitchin' (Electronic Arts/Genesis), a hybrid of skatin' and hitchin', uses the **Road Rash** engine. It puts the player in a pair of in-line skates and on the road as a competitor in the hot, underground sport of skitchin'.

In this game-with-an-attitude, players race by hitching rides on passing vehicles and earn bonus points for executing stunts and clobbering rivals. During a stunt attempt, three skitchin' masters hold up placards, Olympic style, with scores.

Skitchin' has authentic graffiti graphics, courtesy of a well-known street artist, and a rock and roll soundtrack. The box for the March release carries a prominent warning not to try this stuff away from the gaming screen. Fortunately, the electronic version of this daredevil sport will be enough for action gamers.

The radical ride your mother always warned you about is now available on the home systems!

Star Trek: The Next Generation (Spectrum Holobyte/SNES) is a multi-level simulation of the hit syndicated TV show. The March cartridge offers digital imagery, plenty of strategy, space battles (ala **Star Control**) and a neat plot about three races competing for control of a doomsday device.

Tempest 2000 (Atari/Jaguar) brings the arcade classic into the 1990s. The Llamasoft neo-classic offers several variations including the traditional version. Others include **Tempest Plus** (with a help feature), **Tempest 2000** (with shaded polygons) and **Duel** (head-to-head).

Tempest 2000 is as good as you remember it. And if you don't remember it, do you have a treat in store!

Virtua Racing (Sega/Genesis) stopped traffic in the Sega exhibit at CES, as its sensational visuals and sound overpowered one gamer after another. This spectacular version of the smash coin-op uses Sega's new SVP chip with results far more impressive than in Nintendo's **SFX Stunt Racing**.

Best Computer Game

Wolf (Disney/MS-DOS) was the most overpoweringly original and compelling computer entertainment title at CES. Derived from Disney's *True Life Adventure* film, this simulation casts the player as an Arctic, Timber or Plains wolf. Future games in this series will involve land, aquatic and flying creatures.

Players experience the life of a wolf as a chain of mini-adventures connected by the demands of daily existence. A typical exploit: Your pups are stolen and taken to a zoo, from which they must escape and return home. Successful role-playing causes your wolf to rise to alpha male status in the pack and pass along your genetic code.

Wolf includes an "interactive museum" which lets users compare wolf and human senses. A bank of 40 characters are based on real wolves in zoos and sanctuaries! Start saving your superlatives for next summer.

Computer Picked Hits

Battlecruiser 3000 A.D. (Mission Software/MS-DOS) superficially resembles many other space exploration/combat titles. Closer examination reveals much more depth than any product that has preceded it. In fact, it is virtually bottomless.

Instead of testing players with a series of set-piece episodes, the engine generates an infinite variety of missions. The user has ultimate freedom to explore, establish trade routes, conduct research ... whatever suits their fancy.

The action encompasses 16 star systems with over 80 planets. A central storyline is available for those who wish to pursue it. As captain of a Battlecruiser with a crew of 75 personnel, the gamer intercedes in a conflict between two alien races. Each crewman has a unique AI program that shapes their behavior and makes some more suitable for specific tasks than their shipmates. This command simulation sets a new benchmark for play-life.

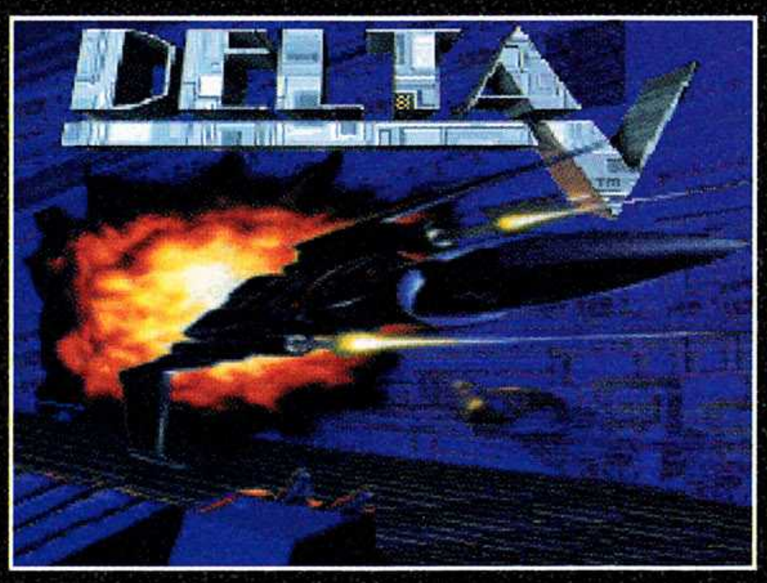
Battlecruiser's in-depth game play will take some time to get used to, but it is very intriguing.

CyberSpace (Empire/Amiga, MS-DOS), based on the board game, is set in a world of capitalism run amok. The city has 100,000 people and 10 million rooms. If the city isn't enough, jack into cyberspace for additional encounters.

The player can explore, talk, go to the bars, and in general flake out, but vacations don't last forever. Eventually the hero gets caught in the plot, a war between the mega corporations. The responses and reactions of

Battlecruiser 3000 AD is a 3-D space adventure with flight simulation and resource management.

non-player characters vary according to the profession of the player. This mammoth game should take hundreds of hours to solve, but a dedicated explorer could spend thousands of hours wandering the city and talking to its residents.



Delta V, the long-awaited release from Bethesda, is a first-person space combat simulation/game.

Delta V (Bethesda/MS-DOS) is a first-person flying and shooting fest that can't be beat for sheer, blinding speed. Appropriately, the "V" in the title stands for "Velocity." The polygon graphics are serviceable, but watching them zoom past at 24 frames per second is an exciting new experience.

Designed by V.J. Lakshman, this is the hottest and most stylish game of the show. Short on complications but long on playability, **Delta V** could be 1994's biggest computer action disk.

Mechwarrior 2: The Clans (Activision/MS-DOS) incorporates FASA's *3055 Compendium*, which includes the rules for clans. Each clan prefers a particular type of mech, so players can experience the tactics unique to each mech.

The game features 16 mechs and almost 100 weapons systems. An add-on disk will provide 17 more mechs for a total of 33. Gamers can also build a mech from the ground up. **Mechwarrior 2** has a new 3-D graphics engine and supports modem play. Cartridge versions for the Genesis and SNES are scheduled for next fall.

Noctropolis (Electronic Arts/MS-DOS) is a nod to the growing demand for more serious adult games like **Gabriel Knight**. It's a cinematic adventure full of murky, brooding graphics, professionally-dubbed voices and escapades on two game-worlds.

The player, the manager of a comic book store, idolizes Darksheer and Stiletto, his favorite comic book characters. A special edition comic book sucks the player into the characters' stomping ground, Noctropolis, where he prevents a host of super villains from escaping into the real world.

Noctropolis, also coming for PC multimedia, features an intuitive pop-up interface. Many cinematic touches reinforce the story's dark and disturbing atmosphere.

SimTown (Maxis/MS-DOS), will join Maxis' catalog of fine strategy games in August. It applies the **SimCity** approach to urban development and scales it down to the neighborhood level. Players develop the individual houses, culture and economy of a small suburban area.

The game's families grow minor crops in their yards, clean the streets and roads and perform other common neighborhood activities. **SimTown** is relevant to children as well as adults, and it's so detailed that you can follow events in individual rooms of the houses. This is the kind of creativity and imagination gamers expect from Maxis.

System Shock (Origin Systems /MS-DOS), earmarked for March, is

In the tradition of Wolfenstein 3-D, System Shock will be charging through PCs in early March.

"Our answer to **Doom**" says project director Warren Spector. It's a a wild trip through cyber space at about 15 frames per second. When a hacker is caught in the system, his choice is prison or employment. Surprisingly, the hacker agrees to perform actual work. Somehow, the AI computer seizes the system, and the gamer becomes the last human survivor.

This sophisticated shooter's interface is simple and direct, without conversation or object inventory, but it does have a nifty infrared viewing system and 360-degree movement.

TIE Fighter (LucasArts/MS-DOS), out in a couple of weeks, is a sequel

Ever wonder how the other side sees a battle? Join the Dark Side in LucasArts' TIE Fighter.

to **X-Wing**. It's even slicker and just as much fun, Larry (**X-Wing, Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe**) Holland designed it. How much more do you need to know?

This time you fly for the Imperial Navy. In addition to the action, shown from the viewpoint of the Imperial forces, there is an element of political intrigue.

Best PC Multimedia Game

Outpost (Sierra/MS-DOS CD-ROM), planned for March roll-out, extrapolates science fact into science fiction in a visually stunning package. After a collision with an asteroid turns Earth into a pleasant memory, the player embarks on a truly epic adventure to find a new home for our species among the stars.

The player commands this expedition, refueling in Jupiter's atmosphere and launching probes to find a planet suitable for colonization. The possibilities are less than ideal, so home sapiens' new home must be terraformed. The process is the sci-fi equivalent of the fantasy approach of **Populous**. Gamers who haven't had enough can build a new starship and head further into space.

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Ultima VIII: Pagan (Origin Systems/MS-DOS) continues the current Guardian epic with a new game system. Unlike recent Ultima RPGs, **Pagan** focuses on a single character and is set on a new world far removed from the domain of Lord British, Britannia.

Ultima VIII unfolds on a world already subjugated by the Guardian. To survive, you must defeat four

elemental titans and once again subdue the Guardian. This is more horrific than previous titles in the series, because it takes place in a fiery world full of demons and monsters, but veteran adventurers are going to love it when they boot it in March.

Console Multimedia Picked Hits

Battlecorps (Core Design/Sega CD) is a first-person science fiction shooter. The player pilots a mechanized walker while working for a mining company. The company's claim must be protected from the other mercenary mining company.

The walker's head swivels, so that a player can move in one direction and fire in another. The action takes place on four large moons and each of the game's nine bosses has special AI programs. A heavy metal soundtrack provides inspiring music to scrag bad guys by in this second-quarter title.

Chaos Control (Philips/CDI with MPEG cart) proves that it's too soon for action gamers to write off this set-top multimedia system. This superb first-person shooter sends the gamer flying through a cityscape, blasting enemies. This third-quarter title excels in both graphics and play-action.

The Horde (Crystal Dynamics/3DO) combines well-acted full-motion video, strategy, and arcade action. The March release, which also has a strong MS-DOS CD-ROM edition, has both good game play and star power going for it.

Kirk Cameron of *Growing Pains* plays the hero, Chauncey, a geeky page boy. He saves the King's life one day and receives a parcel of land and the title of Sir Chauncey. This leads to the usual Medieval fantasy adventures.

The play-action could be described as "**SimFarm** meets video games." Chauncey must save his animals and land from the Horde, a ravenous pack of red monsters. Nine species of monsters and many strategic options add variety. Colorful graphics and goofy sound effects show off 3DO's power. **The Horde** is an addictive strategy game in the tradition of **SimCity** and **Civilization**.

Litil Divil (Philips/CD-I),

developed by Gremlin, shows the Philips is bent on getting more entertaining, playable games into its disk library. The humorous dungeon crawl stars a devilish protagonist who seeks the mystic Pizza of Plenty in the Labyrinth of Chaos.

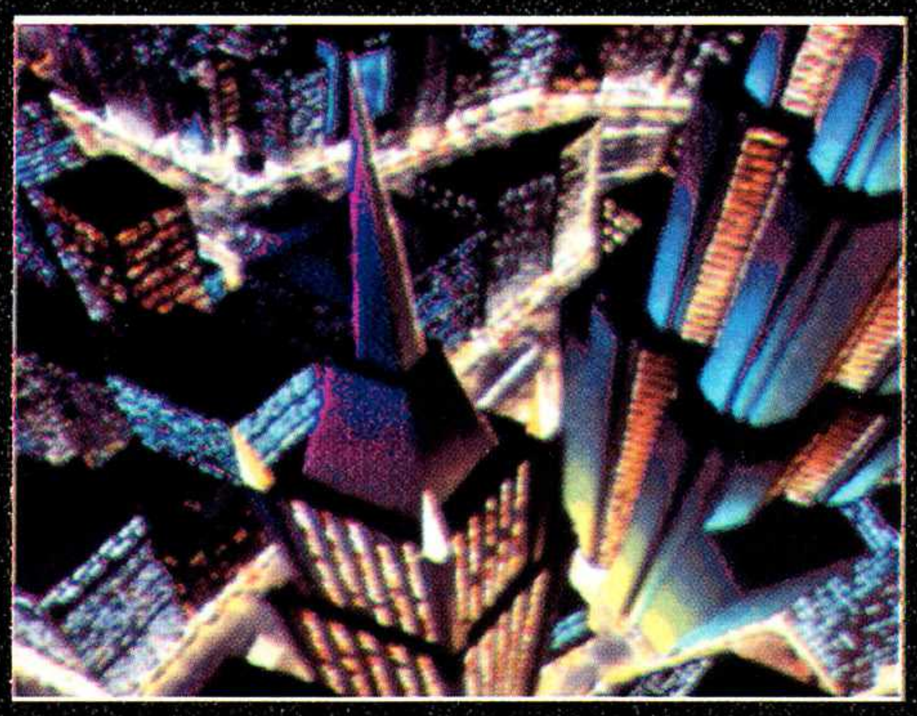
Why not just call Dominos? Well, this is a lot more fun, and a whole lot less calories than one of those gigantic pepperoni specials. **Litil Divil** uses a **Pole Position**-style first-person, into-the-screen perspective. Five levels of well-rendered art and captivating game play make this a wholly pleasant experience.

Tomcat Alley (Sega/Sega-CD) may not suit the diehard sim fans, but it's going to score high in playability. The graphics are realistic and varied in this exciting, cinematic arcade-style combat shooter. Fans of such action-packed carts as the **MiG 29** and **F-15 Strike Eagle** titles will find a lot to enjoy on this CD version. The enhanced sounds and graphics are really put to good use

Best Flight Simulator

1942: The Pacific Air War (Microprose/MS-DOS) treats a subject that has been used many times before, but no one has ever done it more skillfully. **1942,** not to be confused with the coin-op of a similar name, allows players to fly in historical battles like Midway, Coral Sea, Eastern Solomons and Santa Cruz, or fly original missions created with the mission builder.

A unique feature is the virtual cockpit. The cyber-pilot scans the sky fluidly as opposed to jumping among four or five fixed viewpoints. This makes it much easier to track enemy planes during a dogfight. The sky is filled with friendly and enemy craft, each magnificently rendered with proper light source shading and dithering that must be seen to be believed. **1943**, with 10 different aircraft, supports modem play, which is getting to be a necessity for simulator fans.



through the Sega CD, and the non-stop play mechanics will keep air-jockeys busy while fending off multiple attacks from oncoming bogies.

Way of the Warrior (Naughty Dog/3DO) brings fighting games to this platform. Dynamic panning and zooming keeps the battlers on-screen by constantly adjusting size. When they're close together they fill the screen, but when they move apart, the viewpoint backs off accordingly.

There are 10 fighters in **WotW**, each brought to life with 2 MB of graphics and animation. Every character has 15 or more special moves plus two fatalities, on top of 30 or 40 normal moves, and they are not all exactly the same size as in other games. There are two 3-D modeled bosses, a dragon and a demonic skeleton. The 3DO certainly needs a good martial arts title, and **Way of the Warrior** is standout material, sure to attract **SF2** fans.

PC Multimedia Picked Hits

Beneath a Steel Sky (Revolution Software/MS-DOS CD-ROM), also earmarked for a floppy edition, comes from the same design team that produced 1993's popular **Lure of the Temptress**. The April release is a tense science fiction adventure game that overcomes a plot in which the main character has no knowledge of his identity at the beginning.

As usual with these amnesiac adventures, the hero's goal is to reconstruct his past from bits and pieces discovered during the game.

Beneath a Steel Sky uses Revolution's side perspective "virtual theater" interface. Cinematic scenes complement the familiar adventure game icon commands. The dark, gritty graphics suit the theme. Dave Gibbons, of *2000AD* and *Watchmen* fame, painted all of the backgrounds and the bonus booklet that introduces the game-world.

Harvester (Merit Software/MS-DOS multimedia), also ticketed for floppy, should be in stores by late spring. Horror fans are so often neglected in gaming that a new product often gets more attention than normal. **Harvester** deserves it. Talented Texan Gilbert Austin, who previously worked on the **Wing Commander** series, **Strike Commander** and **Privateer** for Origin Systems, has produced a game filled with intense terror. As a citizen of Harvest, an all-American town, the player discovers that Harvest holds many evil secrets. **Harvester**'s 3-D graphics are as realistic and gruesome as its story is complex and mysterious. Austin used his film background to develop the music, sound effects and jolting, realistic scenery that underline the terror in many *Twin Peaks*-ish ways. **Harvester** redefines multimedia gaming.

Hardware Picked Hits

VFX1 Head Mounted System (HMS) (Forte Technologies/PC) is the first professional quality VR helmet for home use with 386+ platforms. Since the headgear doesn't rest on the nose or face, it's comfortable even during long sessions. The color LCDs may be adjusted left or right for proper eye spacing and individually focused. That's good news for eyeglass wearers.

Each LCD screen offers 428x244 resolution, and their combined effect

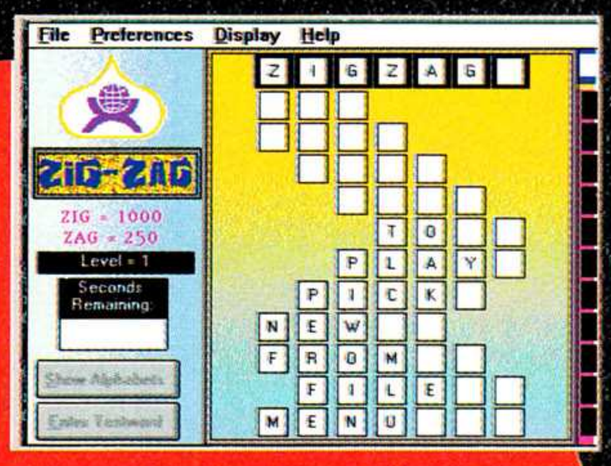
is quite remarkable. The VFX1 interface card connects to all existing VGA cards and is fully compatible with all current first-person perspective games. An internal head tracking system converts head movement to pitch, yaw, and roll commands for flight simulators.

The VFX1's internal headphones work with the Gravis UltraSound board, which is capable of pin point sound placement on a theoretical sphere around the user. Expect the first units to arrive on the market this fall at slightly less than $1000.00 a copy, not bad for the quality of presentation.

The Edge 16 (AT&T/Genesis) is a 4800 baud modem for the Genesis available next fall. It allows two similarly equipped players to compete head-to-head or play cooperatively over phone lines. Optional clip-on microphones and speakers facilitate conversation during play.

The unit comes with 128k RAM to augment the Genesis' 64K. While this

Best Windows Game



Zig-Zag (QQP/Windows), like all the great ones, is simple to learn, highly addictive and difficult to master. **Zig-Zag** is exactly this kind of game. Free-form word puzzles are the heart of this March introduction. The object is to solve a word puzzle. Underneath the letter boxes for the word in question are parallel boxes of different word lengths that may be skewed either left or right. The player inputs any word of the right length into that line. If one letter is correct, it is a Zig, which is worth 500 points. With two letters correct, but potentially out of position, it is a Zag, which is worth 1000 points. Players compete to solve words quickly and achieve high scores for making the Zigs and Zags. Scrabble? Who needs it?

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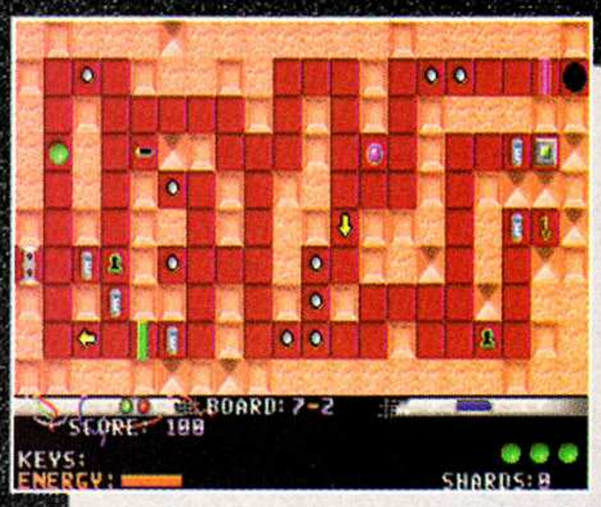
will not change existing carts, it opens a lot of possibilities for future video game development. More than a dozen publishers will support the Edge 16. AT&T will also market Edge Cards, plug-in memory units that will allow players to individualize their characters or add new game statistics.

The Edge 16's keyboard slot is compatible with any IBM AT-style keyboard. The ImagiNation Network is developing a Genesis version of its BBS that will work with keyboard units. The Edge 16 will retail for under $150.00, with Edge Cards priced under $20.00. A network kit, including keyboard, will cost less than $30.00.

Interactor (Aura Systems/all platforms) is a lightweight vest that connects to the existing audio jacks through an electromagnetic actuator. It converts the audio output into kinetic feedback cued by the on-screen action. Controls fine-tune output from a feather touch to intense pounding, though one would really have to be into the game to endure the latter.

Music suppression is also possible, so that only the punches, kicks and booms come through. As a bonus, the Interactor works with any audio output, including VCRs and CD players. The Interactor is an outgrowth of technology Aura developed for U.S. Military simulators. Look for it priced at $80 by mid-year.

That about does it for a brief wrap-up of what we thought were the best products showcased at the Winter Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas. It is not surprising to see such a plethora of new products ready for the consumer market, but it is a refreshing surprise to know that many of the games coming out soon are of top-notch quality. This continues to prove that electronic gaming is not just a fad—fads rarely are doing $5 billion worth of business. As the hobby picks up, expect more!



Best Puzzle Game

Elements (Villa Crespo/MS-DOS) will be the puzzle-game that keeps us all awake nights this spring. The graphics are simple, both in design and color, but not crude. The artists and designers have apparently put in a lot of time in order to come up with a good puzzle game with unique colors and color schemes.

This very addictive strategy game has more than 30 brain-teasing levels. Using a combination of keys, switches and energy pellets, the gamer must discover a way out of a maze. It sounds simple, but mistakes haunt the gamer in subsequent levels, as do migrane headaches!

Whispers from Pavilion X

He's everywhere! JJ BARREL puts his eyes and spies into every corner of electronic gaming. Here's his confidential dispatch from the Winter Consumer Electronics Show...

Nintendo, Sega and Sony all had 32+ Bit consoles, but none seemed completely satisfied with their hardware. This touched off sizzling rumors about possible buy-outs of ready-to-go systems that ran through the show like spoiled sushi...

The 3DO Company had an outstanding show, dispersing the clouds of pessimism that have hung over the system since the sputtering fourth quarter start. Things look brighter again. Panasonic will be pushing harder both here and in Japan, Sanyo and AT&T will have their hardware in stores by fall, and a still-unannounced fourth manufacturer is also expected to launch a multiplayer. The software is much better, and there's a lot more of it going to retail...

Jaguar is slowly gaining acceptance. They've added some brainy executives and, more importantly, more than 50 third-party licensees. The machine sold well in its test markets and is exciting a lot of chain buyers across the country.

The Software Publishers Association (SPA) held a meeting about an electronic gaming advisory code, but they reached no consensus. Long-standing antipathy between cartridge makers and software publishers may rule out SPA for this role...

Will the MPAA ride to the rescue? The group that rates movies reportedly met with representatives of the electronic gaming industry during CES. Word is that MPAA, which initially rebuffed the electronic gaming industry, has reevaluated its position...

Three-Sixty Software was less visible at CES than in recent years. The company had tough going when **V for Victory** and **Theatre of War** didn't turn out as well as hoped. The publisher has a new distribution deal, according to president Tom Frisina, and work has resumed on **Harpoon II**...

Way of the Warrior, shown at the 3DO booth, may go to the arcades. Looks like it'll land on Sega CD, too, but only after it collects lots of quarters...

Are you waiting for a fighting game starring Shaq? EA thinks so. **Shaq-Fu** features rotoscoped moves by the young hoopster, but it doesn't pack much punch. Same outfit's Michael Jordan side-scroller, on the other hand, is great! The animation is flawless, and so are the graphics. Everything has a basketball tie-in, including extra points for a timely slam dunk...

Product glut alert: screen savers. Every company's got one, but does every computerist want one? Some of the individual savers, like like MLSA's **Time Out Baseball**, are impressive, but there are going to be too many entries...

Roger Wilco will not die! A new **Space Quest** will soon begin development at Sierra On-Line. Expect a new co-designer...

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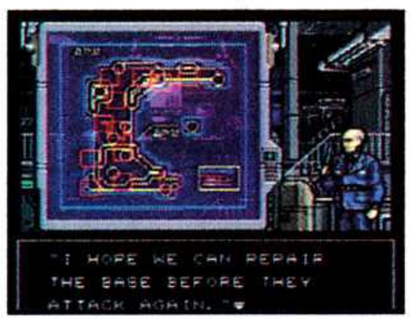

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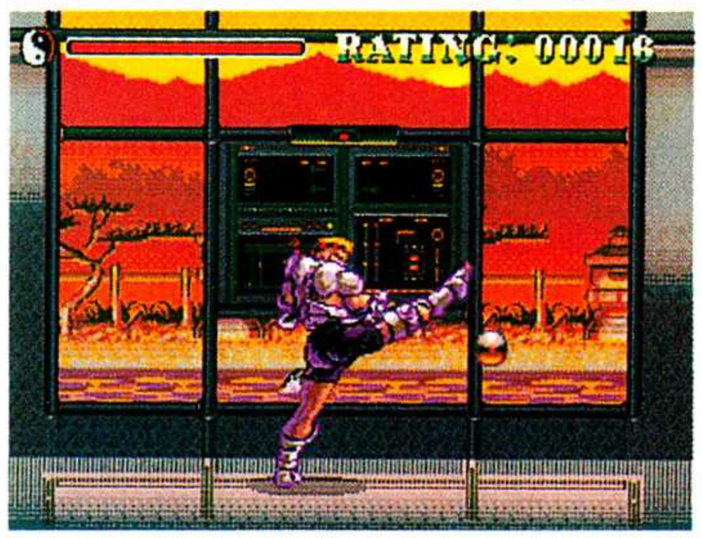
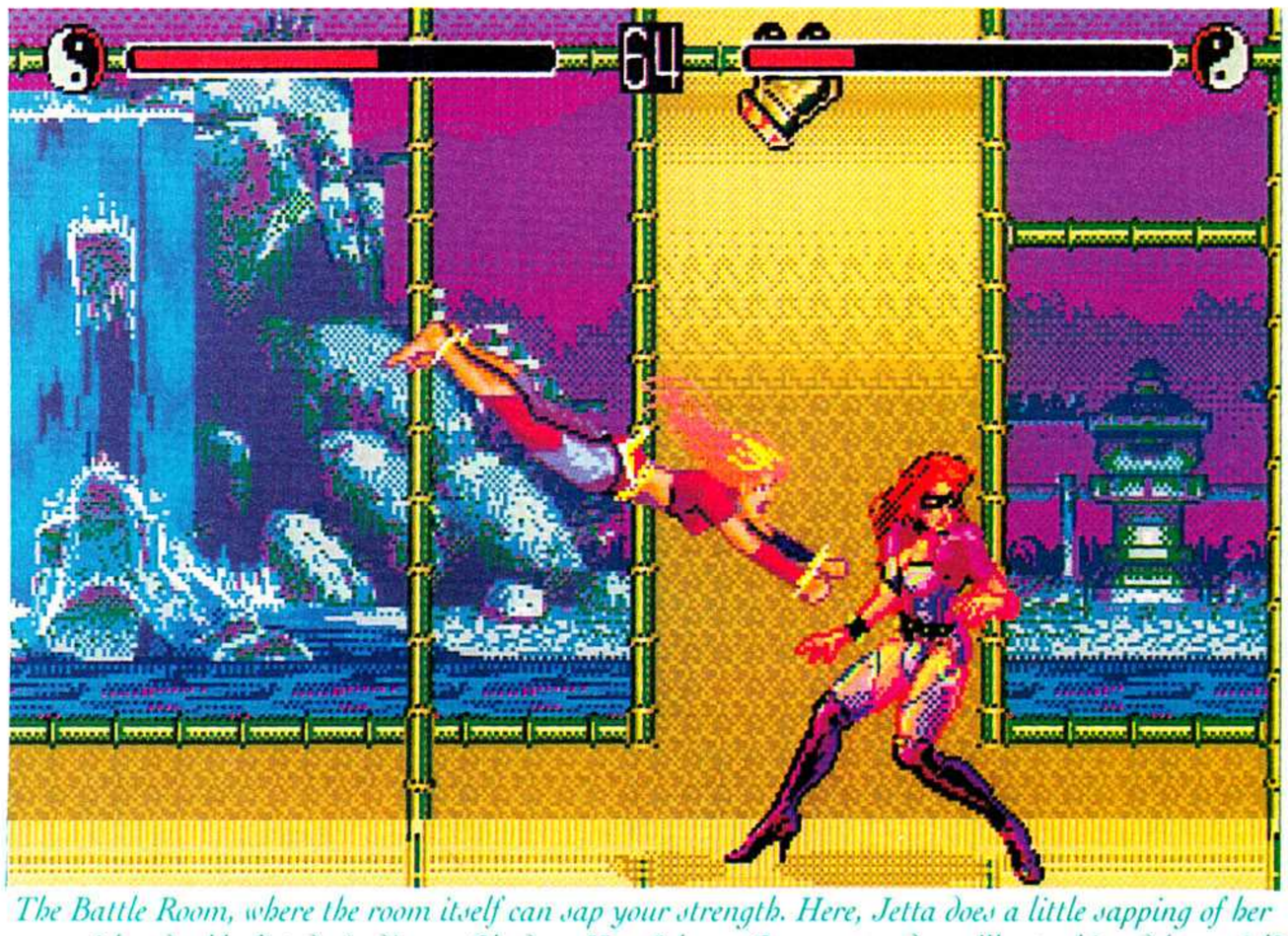
In a full force attack, Blade humbles Slash in China. Look at these warriors, they're huge. A wimp like Blanka wouldn't stand a chance.

In the Tournament Mode, Trident pulls a downward flying attack on Midknight. 32 players can compete here, 20 more than any other fighting game.



Check out Rax doing a few kicks in the practice mode. Name another game that lets you hone your skills before battle. Don't rack your brain, there isn't any.



The Battle Room, where the room itself can sap your strength. Here, Jetta does a little sapping of her own with a double-fisted air-dive on Shadow. Hey Johnny Cage, scared you'll get whipped by a girl?

You probably aren't prepared for such an intense fighting game. Few are. That's why we've included the Holo-Trainer and Instant Replay, to help ready you for fierce competition. You'll battle nine huge warriors, each with their own martial arts fighting style, like Jeet Kune Do and Ninjitsu. With 35 killer moves, any of these guys could kick Guile's butt. Get good enough and you'll discover all the cool Overkills. Prepare yourself. Because when it comes to pain, it's better to give than receive.

SEGA GENESIS

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STATE OF THE ART GENESIS

Cartridges on Today's Cutting Edge

by the Editors of Electronic Games

Like a nervous debutante who ceaselessly fusses with her hair before the grand fete, **Electronic Games** is always working over the rating system. We review it at least every two months, and it's rare that we don't find something to fine-tune.

At least we have a good excuse. Quality standards change so fast that leaving the ratings untouched would quickly render them useless to the readers. Doubters are invited to compare the games reviewed in this issue with the ones we covered a year ago. Even when technology isn't vaulting ahead at supersonic speed, designers and programmers make discoveries and improve their ability to exploit a system's full potential.

Our endless debates over state of the art have sparked the introduction of this new monthly feature. Each issue of **EG** will spotlight one or more platforms and present the games that represent state of the art.

Right here. Right now. We don't care how great a game was last year. Once it's surpassed, it flies off to Classic Land for veneration (and replay) another time. In this space, we're after the complete, published games that define gaming on this system.

We've elected to start with the Genesis. It's the top 16-Bit system, and it has shaped video gaming so far in the 1990s. The software library was a little spotty, especially cartridges from small third-party companies, but **Sonic the Hedgehog** and to a lesser extent, **Toejam & Earl**, proved a turning point for the Genesis. Since then, triumph has followed triumph.

Here's where the Genesis is at today.

The Genesis Top Five

Aladdin (Virgin/Sega)

When three giants like Sega, Virgin and Disney get together to produce a game, the potential for disaster is enormous. The inevitable chafing between companies, piled onto the usual intra-corporate nonsense, is a mighty barrier in the way of an outstanding product. **Aladdin** successfully bucked the odds. The result is a game enriched by input from three of the world's great entertainment forces.

The 10-level solitaire action game is essentially an interactive presentation of the animated film. As Aladdin, the player voyages through gorgeous graphics from the Agrabah Market to the final encounter with the evil Vizier. The animators, some of whom worked on the film, produced smooth motion of beautifully drawn characters and backgrounds.

Aladdin isn't a very complex game, but it certainly is a satisfying one to play.

Mortal Kombat (Arena)

Four million American gamers can't be wrong! The home version of Midway's coin-op blockbuster has only one serious rival for supremacy among fighting games (see **Street Fighter**.)

Mortal Kombat not only sold millions of copies, but it also created a hotbed of game ratings debates.

The 16-Meg cartridge is the leading example of the super-heroic approach to fighting games. Each of the seven characters performs martial arts moves never seen in any dojo. The artwork, based on digitized video, is remarkable, especially on the more human-like characters such as Sonya Blade and Johnny Cage. Although the four-armed Goro isn't quite as smoothly animated, the technique yields a mutant menace who looks and acts like the ultimate combat nightmare.

One of the keys to **Mortal Kombat** is the developer's persistence. Early versions of the design lacked both speed and finesse, but Probe showed its fighting spirit by sticking with **Mortal Kombat**

Best Pinball: Virtual Pinball (Electronic Arts)

This flipper table simulation combines the best of both worlds. The gamer can create and play a customized board or enjoy playfields developed by design experts.

This cartridge marks the return of the legendary Bill Budge to interactive electronic entertainment. His new construction set includes: an assortment of prefabricated plans, ranging from classic to quad; a number of backgrounds, including the tech-look of a power unit and the soothing calm of bamboo; six styles of board parts, including classic and gore; three speed selections; and several styles of music, appropriate to each board set-up. The gamer can mix-and-match all of the components until satisfied.

The flipper action is a realistic video interpretation of the stand-up machines. Budge and his crew refined the ball movements until they had simulated Newtonian physics under full control. Virtual Pinball shows that grandmaster Budge has lost none of his skill or flair.

until they reached the peak of graphics and playability found in the finished product.

Sonic 2 (Sega)

If only we had a character of our own like that Mario, Sega executives often moaned in those dark days when the Master System clung to only a sliver of the American market. **Sonic the Hedgehog** changed all that. Its enormous success gave the Genesis cartridge library a focus.

Sonic's blazing speed and adorable animated movements captured

Sonic sped across the gaming world once again, this time with the furry flying Tails, at his side.

players' fancy, and **Sonic 2** holds that audience tight with more of that compelling game play, humor and audio-visual brilliance. The game introduces a sidekick, Tails, and further expands the limits of the platform game form with exceptional levels like Night Casino.

Sonic 2 is actually a little faster than the first title, but the real improvements lie in graphics, sound and play-mechanics. Sega has its star, and video gaming is richer for its success.

Street Fighter 2: Championship Edition (Capcom)

When the last two fighting game fans twitch their fingers one last time,

Street Fighter 2: Championship Edition recreates the magic of the original, with added features.

it's a safe bet that one of them will be playing **Mortal Kombat**, and the other will be pounding the buttons on **Street Fighter 2**. As indicated earlier, **Street Fighter 2** adopts a more serious stance than its famous rival. The characters are colorful and the moves are eye-popping, but **SF** emphasizes mastery of orthodox, if ornate, fighting moves. The action may be exaggerated, but it does not fly as much into the realm of fantasy.

Street Fighter 2 wasn't the first game of its type, but it's the one that electrified players, first in the arcades and then in the home. There's now a legion of cyber-combat masters who have learned the control system so well that playing **Street Fighter** and its offshoots qualifies as a hobby within the large hobby of electronic gaming.

Toejam & Earl 2 (Sega)

When the development team that created the unconventional **Toejam & Earl** accepted the assignment to create a sequel to that funky, funny game, no one could have predicted the outcome. Although it's a side perspective platform game, **Toejam & Earl 2** still exceeds the original. It has so many great play-elements and kinetic puzzles that even those who turn up their nose at most platform titles are likely to feel quite differently about this superb cartridge.

When video gaming's favorite hip hoppers returned to Funkatron at the end of **Toejam & Earl**, they unwittingly brought along some human stowaways. They've got to navigate 17 amazingly quirky levels to round up all the people, before they ruin the planet. The first game's soundtrack was state of the art—until this musical score hit the speakers.

TJ&E 2 is hardly a grind-it-out, get-to-the-next-level exercise. Players will want to cruise each level, searching the scenery for hidden prizes, scanning for items with the heroes' funky power, and just having fun.

Best Multi-player: Gauntlet IV (Tengen)

This is a compelling fantasy action game and an irresistible gaming value. **Gauntlet IV**'s cartridge includes not only a faithful translation of the coin-op, but additional modes designed especially for video gamers. One to four can enjoy an action quest or face off in the deadly arena.

Gauntlet IV has a quartet of valiant warriors, any or all of whom can fight against the Army of Darkness. Thor, Thyra, Merlin and Questor have pluses and minuses that affect their combat ability. Thor is the strongest, for example, but Merlin's lightning bolts destroy evil as long as he stays out of hand-to-hand range.

Multi-player sessions, using the adaptor, are the ultimate **Gauntlet** thrill. Combining the group's abilities can forge an unstoppable engine of righteous wrath that sweeps away screen after screen of grunts, ghosts and other menaces.

STATE OF THE ART GENESIS

The Best Action Games

Claws Encounters of the Furred Kind (Accolade)

This cartoonish platform game is better known to many by the name of its main character, Bubsy Bobcat. Whatever the name, this is one sweet video game cartridge.

Although Bubsy is capable of considerable ground speed and can launch himself through the air, also, this is one action contest that doesn't rely on either nonstop combat or a twitch game pace. Bubsy must jump, zoom and pounce his way through multi-layered playfields filled with intriguing sidetrips and unexpected sequences, like the water flume.

Claws Encounters will never be the favorite cartridge of high score fanatics. It is a tough nut to crack in many spots, and careful play often out-does rushing forward at full feline speed. Yet those who like their action games rich and varied, with lots of different situations and tactical challenges, must rank Accolade's lighthearted scroller near the top of any best list.

Eternal Champions weaves an excellent story with an all-out fighting game to create a great cart.

Eternal Champions (Sega)

The mystical storyline tells of an Eternal Champion who brings together nine fantastic fighters whose lives were cut short before they could fulfill their high purpose. That's all the excuse needed for outstanding martial arts action.

Options are important in **Eternal Champions**. Solo gamers can enter a tournament or practice. Two can challenge each other in a single- or double-elimination Round-a-Bout. There's also a Battle Room, where players can build their own robot adversaries.

Another menu customizes game length, controller configuration and Inner Strength. The latter factor, if enabled, restricts the use of the special moves possessed by each of the nine combatants. Wasteful use of the special moves uses up energy and forces the character to fall back on the basic assortment of three kicks and three punches.

Eternal Champions is excellent in every respect. Its simple control system, insistent musical score and dramatic graphics make it a modern-day action classic.

Lethal Enforcers (Konami)

The Justifier, packaged with this 8-Meg wonder, is the most accurate light pistol in video gaming. Players need all the sharpshooting help they can muster in this hard-driving fire fight. As in the hit coin-op, the player tackles five ultra-violent scenarios, each of which begins with a sequence that depicts a major crime.

When the game goes interactive, the first stage is always a shoot-out on a non-scrolling display. Then comes a second gunfight at a fixed location, a moving target sequence and the ultimate reckoning with that level's boss criminal.

The cartridge's audiovisual quality doesn't suffer much in comparison with the Sega CD edition. The characters are realistically menacing, and the death sequences are gritty. At this writing, **Lethal Enforcers** is the only Genesis cart to earn an MA-17 rating from Sega. This gut-wrenching shooter certainly lives up to that reputation.

Like Mortal Kombat, Lethal Enforcers caused quite a stir with its violent content and adult themes.

Road Rash II (Electronic Arts)

The ultimate head-to-head combat motorcycle racing simulation repeats its position as a top Genesis cartridge (see **EG** 4/93).

Road Rash II requires cycling skill, smarts and guts.

The player works his way up through the five ability ranks. Fourteen of the roughest bikers ever to race the digital highway stand between you and the finish line. While initially without weapons, the gamer does have the ability to grab clubs and chains from bikers he passes. Each successive level tempts the rider with more money, higher fines, longer courses, nastier opponents and hordes of cops. The Rashmaster wannabe must achieve at least a Third Place standing to progress to the next level.

This is also a well-executed split-screen two-player configuration. It doesn't interfere with play, whether you're going head-to-head combat or racing against the pack. **Road Rash II** is constantly changing and always provides outstanding variety.

RoboCop vs. The Terminator
(Virgin)

The images are riveting and the sound throbs, but it's the action that sticks in the memory. This crossover game sends the cyborg law enforcer into the futuristic world of the unstoppable hunter-killers. Based on the Dark Horse comics series, **RoboCop vs. The Terminator** sends RoboCop after the Skynet CPU, as the rebels try to win the war by changing history.

All this is backdrop for 16-Megs of side-scrolling fury. The Bosses at the end of each of the 10 levels are imaginative and fierce, and there's a great variety of targets ripe for blasting. The major tactical question is which weapon to use, from a grenade launcher to a plasma rifle.

Subtlety is not this game's signature. The play-mechanics are simple and the goal boils down to clearing the screen of everything that stands in RoboCop's way. It's not quite mindless destruction, but it's close enough. Besides, fans of either the RoboCop or Terminator movie series are quite used to having a touch of violence–the picture of the future looks a bit grim, and these games do a good job of recreating the feel of the movies, with incredible game play thrown in.

Rocket Knight Adventures
(Konami)

This fast-action side scroller shows that a publisher can capitalize on a trend without just swiping ideas from every previous successful product. Granted, there have been a number of titles that utilize furry little creatures in rather extraordinary circumstances, but most of them have done quite well. Can another fur-ball create a winning game without coming off as a complete copy? **Rocket Knight Adventures** answers this question with a resounding "Yes!"

Rocket Knight owes something to mega-hits like **Sonic the Hedgehog** and **Claws Encounters of the Furred Kind**, the cart that introduced Bubsy Bobcat to a waiting world, but its action and presentation are distinctive enough to earn it inclusion here.

This 8-Meg, solitaire game has seven levels of fluid action. Sparkster the Opossum the Rocket Knight has the longest name in the annals of animal herodom, but it doesn't slow him down much. Newly elevated to his exalted position, Sparkster must

use his rocket pack to achieve the bursts of speed that come so naturally to Sonic and Bubsy. There are also flying sequences in which the marvelous marsupial tastes the heady brew of unlimited rocket power. His other weapons are his prehensile tale and a mystic sword that shoots crescent-shaped energy bolts at Axle Gear's scurvy band.

Rocket Knight Adventures is pure action, and pure fun. Plus, it has a very original storyline.

Best Menacer: T2: The Arcade (Arena)

Another game that has held its position at the top since our last state-of-the-art study is **T2: The Arcade**. The two-mission cart puts plot elements from both *Terminator* movies into a high-tech shooting gallery.

The first scenario is set in 2029 Los Angeles. The gamer must use the on-screen cursor to destroy as many targets as possible. The overall goal is to penetrate SkyNet and temporarily halt the project. In the second segment, a T-800 battles Aerial Hunter-killers, human SWAT teams, and the morphing T-1000.

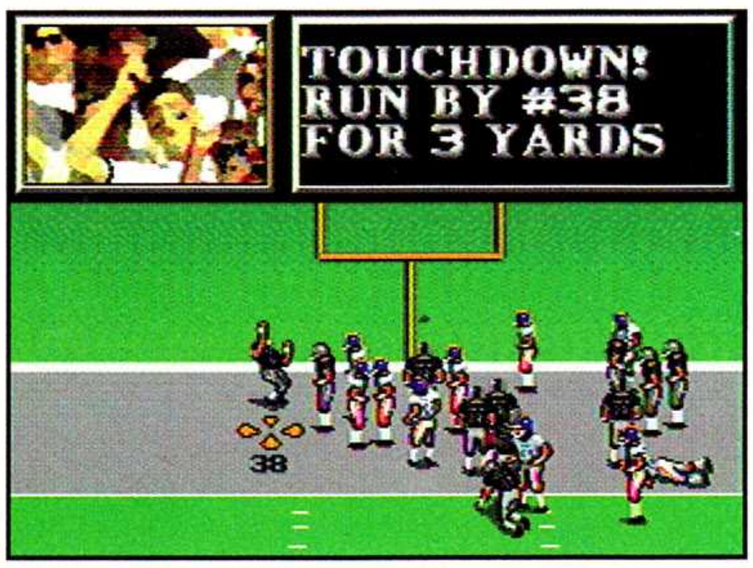
The graphics capture all the visual appeal and glamour of the movies. The Menacer extends the vicarious experience by making the gamer feel he is actually armed with deadly weapons capable of blowing apart everything. **T2: The Arcade** can be played with a standard Sega controller, but it takes the Menacer to bring out the full intensity.

STATE OF THE ART GENESIS

The Best Sports Games

Madden '94 (EA Sports)

The first Madden football game, a computer simulation, was a dog, and not a red dog, either. The initial video game was a lot better, but it wasn't until the first sequel that gamers knew they'd found something special. The latest edition, **Madden '94**, is everything its predecessors were—and more.



Madden '94 imitates life as you guide the L.A. Raiders to victories over the Denver Broncos.

Through four successively polished cartridges, designers, programmers and developers have honed every aspect of Madden, from the steeply angled vertically scrolling playfield, to the special moves ball carriers and defenders can perform after the snap. The play-calling system is a jewel of elegant simplicity and tactical versatility.

Madden is a statistically influenced action simulation of professional football that incorporates the real franchises and players. Madden himself scouts the teams and offers strategic advice during the game, if desired. By embracing the strengths of video gaming instead of fighting them, **Madden** has become a perennial favorite that never stops expanding the limits of sports simulations.

NBA Jam (Arena)

The home version of this basketball-fighting game hybrid achieved the highest playability rating in the history of this magazine, 99, and was in the '90s in every other rating, too. Ratings can sometimes mislead, but they paint an accurate picture of this one-to-four player arcade contest.

NBA Jam is two-on-two basketball displayed from an angled side perspective. Game modes include Solitaire, Head-to-head two, three and four-player and Two-player cooperative against the machine. An options menu fiddles with game length and difficulty factors. Each tandem represents an actual NBA team, so the court is filled with nothing but superstars.

NBA Jam comes to the Genesis after a red-hot debut in the arcades. Play 2-on-2 with the pros!

The extras and frills may not be strict NBA roundball, but there's nothing like seeing one of your shooters on a hot streak, dribbling a

Best Football: NFL '94 Starring Joe Montana (Sega)

The best entry in the Joe Montana series of video games has, at least temporarily, pushed **Madden** out of first place among Genesis football cartridges. The one- or two-player game uses real teams and players, with each athlete rated in all performance areas in a game which can be reconfigured to suit individual preferences.

The announcing is better than ever this year. The voice is clear, and the spoken works mesh perfectly with the gridiron action unfolding on the screen. The zoom feature still puts the ball carrier in the spotlight, and the close-up character animations are even more lifelike. Another improvement is the greater variety of extra moves which players can do when under direct human control. Naturally these extra flourishes also make the plays look better as they develop on the scrolling gridiron.

NFL '94 Starring Joe Montana fulfills the promise of the earlier editions. **Madden** remains close to the lead, but Montana finally has an electronic championship to go with his four real ones.

Best Soccer: Pele Soccer (Accolade)

The exuberant immortal Pelé has infused his kickball philosophy into this exceptional action simulation of world-class soccer. Radical Entertainment's one- or two-player design is perfect for Americans, because it takes very little knowledge about the sport for granted. Given most gamers' ignorance, choosing formations for the team doesn't mean much, unless, as in **Pele Soccer**, the selection screen explains the consequences of the choice.

The cartridge contains four play modes: Practice, Exhibition, Season, and Tournament. Tournaments and seasons in progress can be retained for multi-session gaming.

Digitized players rove the diagonally scrolling pitch, shown in angled overhead perspective. The display gets close to the players, though excellent response to changes in ball direction keep the athlete with the ball near the center of the screen.

This has been a banner year for soccer games, spurred by the forthcoming World Cup series. Most of them are strong, playable games, but **Pelé Soccer** stands out as dramatically as the soccer great did during his active playing days.

The stars of the rink return in top form to skate against your opponents in NHL Hockey '94.

Best Baseball: Tony LaRussa Baseball (EA Sports)

Stormfront Software (formerly Beyond), which produced the computer **Tony LaRussa** statistical simulation, also developed the multi-mode video game. Fortunately, they had the insight to realize that a cartridge is not a computer program, so **Tony LaRussa Baseball** for the Genesis is a blending of arcade action and mathematical precision. One or two managers can play the high scoring pure action version, add real player statistics, or watch the machine manage both teams.

The playfield shows the batter and pitcher in a large central window, flanked by views of first and third bases. An overall schematic of the field appears at the bottom center of the screen. When the bat meets the horsehide, the display pulls back to a grandstand view and tracks ball movement with a spotlight. If you've ever had trouble sorting out the location of a batted ball, this one feature is enough to justify purchase of **Tony LaRussa**. Even if this isn't a problem, this authentic recreation of the National Pastime belongs in every Sega sports gamer's collection.

flaming basketball toward the hoop. Turbo, which gives a speed burst on offense or defense, is another unorthodox feature that fits **NBA Jam**'s half-court frenzy.

NHL '94 (EA Sports)

The search for the perfect game never ends. Just when you think a cartridge has scaled unassailable heights, another rushes past it to the top of the software mountain. For the last several years, the hockey game to beat has been the previous years' **NHL Hockey**. And every year, EA coaxes a little more out of the Genesis to surpass themselves.

True to form, **NHL '94** pushes state of the art forward a couple of notches in both graphics and game play. Added features in the latest version include four-play capability (with the EA adaptor), direct goalie control, flip passes to clear the puck from in front of the net, penalty shots and a much needed "Shoot Out" Mode.

The audiovisuals are also better. More animations portray the checking game, crowd reaction derives from the game situation, and Dieter Ruehle contributes digitized organ music. The one-timer, a pass-and-shoot combination maneuver, is another new element that makes **NHL '94** even more like the professional sport.

Riddick Bowe Boxing (Extreme)

After a brief lull in the fighting, boxing is back on the video game screen—and better than ever. Publishers have shaken off the licenses that didn't pan out and KO'd the old hat ring presentations. The star of **Riddick Bowe Boxing** lost a close one to Evander Holyfield last year, but his game is this category's undisputed kingpin.

Riddick Bowe's visual presentation gives the best of both worlds: digitized close-ups of the fighters and a long-view to check the relative positions of the two boxers in the squared circle. The fighters are large and realistic, which gives a more powerful play experience than tiny animated figures slinging two-step animation punches. The rights and lefts, punctuated by the sound of leather pounding flesh, look like what you'd see on a TV fight.

Whether it's a solitaire bout against the machine, head-to-head play with another gamer, or an extended career campaign, **Riddick Bowe Boxing** is a winner in and out of the ring. No boxing cart packs a more potent combination of true to life atmosphere and crunching fisticuff action.

2020 Baseball (Electronic Arts)

SNK scored big with this sci-fi baseball game in the arcades, and EA deserves a championship ring for this 16-Meg cartridge. Baseball is still popular a quarter-century from now, but the rules and participants have changed. Men, women and robots play on a revamped field dotted with explosive crackers and other hazards.

A lot of thought went into the changes, which have a huge impact on diamond strategy. For instance, home runs are out of reach for all but the most powerful hitters, so it makes sense to stroke toward the corners, where a ball is sure to land for a single in what once was foul territory.

The graphics are up there with the best sports titles. **2020 Baseball** features very large on-screen characters, realistic animation, and a fine view of the batter-pitcher confrontation. Ball movement, a problem in some arcade baseball titles, is well executed here.

It's *not* your father's baseball game. That doesn't keep **2020 Baseball** from providing plenty of play value for solo or head-to-head competition.

Best Wrestling: WWF Royal Rumble (Flying Edge)

While the Genesis cart is not quite as hot as the SNES version, this is still a superb pro wrestling simulation. The stars are the familiar grapplers of the World Wrestling Federation, including current champion Yokozuna.

The characters work, move and sometimes even wrestle like their real life counterparts. Both the Royal Rumble, where wrestlers enter the ring at timed intervals and are only eliminated by being thrown over the top rope, and three-man tag teams, permitting six wrestlers in the ring at one time, are available. Each wrestler can perform his signature finishing maneuver and the visual recreations of the moves are sometimes astonishingly good. A metal folding chair is even accessible to spice up the out-of-the-ring action.

Some mat titles have little more than the name in common with their subject matter. **WWF Royal Rumble** delves into the intricacies of this sports entertainment.

STATE OF THE ART GENESIS

The Best Strategy-Action Strategy Games

General Chaos (Electronic Arts)

This action-heavy war game fills an obvious gap between the pure arcade combat shooters and hexgrid military simulations. One to four players control small armies of troopers in this 8-Meg cartridge. You can test your command skill against the machine-guided General Havoc or up to three other humans. It offers cooperative, as well as competitive, play.

Squads and soldier specialization separate **General Chaos** from military themed blastathons like **Contra**. It requires a lot of thought to put together a squad with the right combination of abilities for the task at hand. After the gamer assembles a team, there's still more strategy in optimizing the positioning and activities of each soldier. Some have weapons that need some range for maximum effectiveness, while others must work their way closer to the enemy to do real damage.

Served with a light dusting of humor, **General Chaos** is a thinking gamer's shooter.

General Chaos brings new meaning to the term as you try to out-maneuver your multi-talented foes.

Jungle Strike (Electronic Arts)

There are many ways to simulate combat. The stately pace of hexgrid war games is fine for the tabletop, but electronics open many additional possibilities. **Jungle Strike** represents combined arms military encounters as real time, arcade sequences with a strong tactical and strategic foundation.

Jungle Strike presents 10 missions in modified overhead perspective. The objects and troops are fairly detailed, so this is not nearly as much of an abstraction as games that use icons to symbolize combat units.

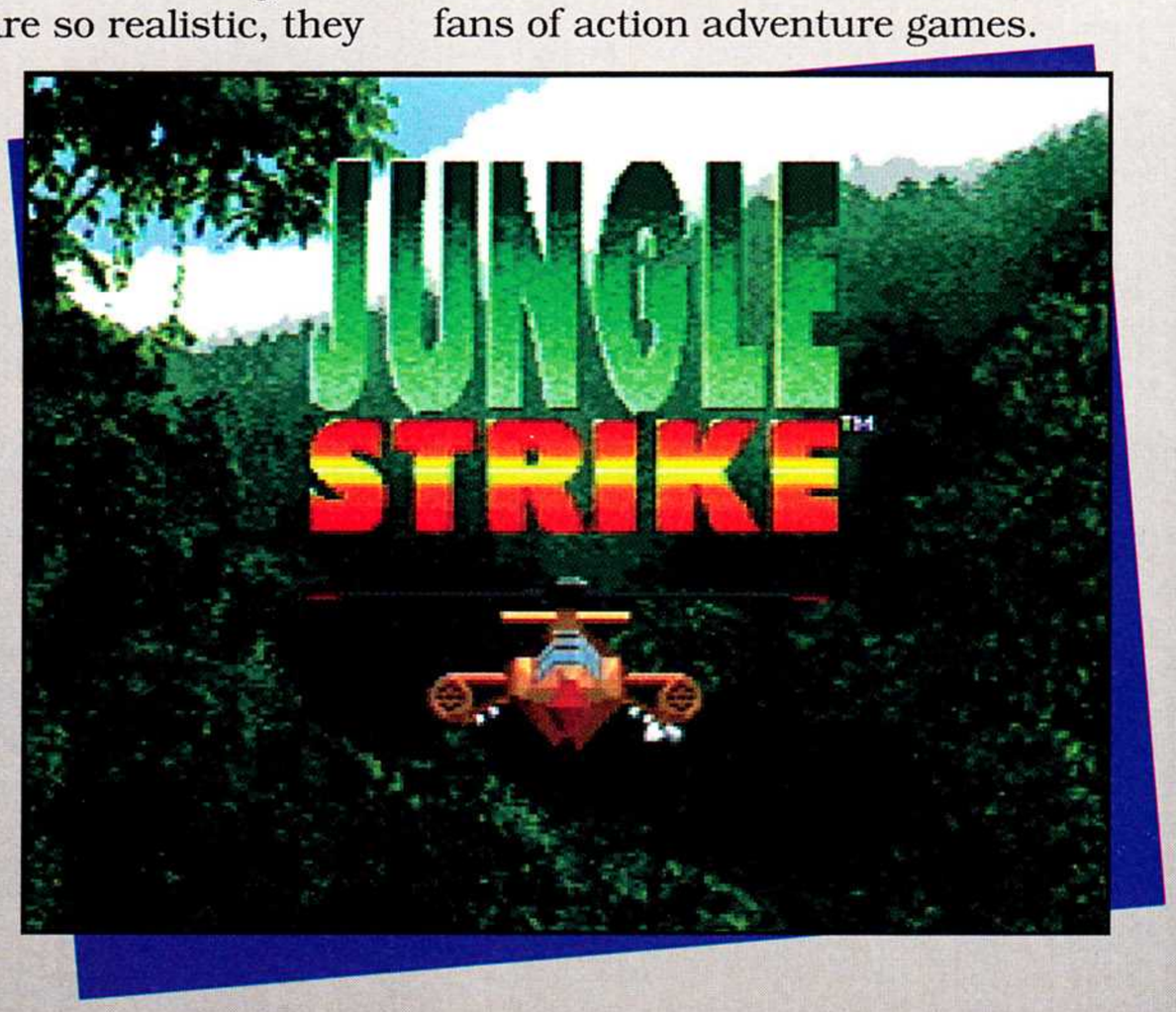
Your mission in Jungle Strike is to protect various interests of your country's governing body.

Jungle Strike displaced **Desert Strike**, its predecessor, on the cutting edge because of its more complex animation routines and the greatly enhanced artificial intelligence that directs the opposition army. Welcome to the Jungle!

X-Men (Sega)

Marvel Comics' merry band of mutant superheroes, the X-Men, really shine on this first-rate platform action adventure. While some games involving comic book heroes deviate from the character's given powers, Sega has done a good job of remaining true to the strip's storyline and character's abilities. Magneto has returned and taken control of the Danger Room, the X-Men's training area, and created a world of dangerous illusions that are so realistic, they can kill.

Wolverine, Gambit, Cyclops and Nightcrawler must search the seven levels for Magneto and his evil band of mutants, including Juggernaut, Zaladane and Deathbird. The X-Men backup team, consisting of Storm, Iceman, Rogue and Archangel is also available for assists. Each of the four X-Men have special moves, which should help the player decide which character to use on each level. **X-Men** also has a two-player option. This difficult game will not only appeal to die-hard comics and X-Men fans, but for most fans of action adventure games.



Best Puzzle: Dr. Robotnik's Mean Bean Machine (Sega)

While at first **Dr. Robotnik** may look a bit like Sega's **Columns**, it's a whole lot more. As the beans fall into chambers, the player can rotate them into different positions. Four or more beans grouped together, by color, in any formation gives them their freedom. **Dr. Robotnik** is based on an extremely successful Japanese coin-op, with Dr. Robotnik's

character added for marquee value. There are three modes available: Scenario, which is solo play against the computer; Two-player competition; and Practice, which gives the player the chance to start slow and adjust the intensity and speed.

The Best Graphics

Simpsons II: Bart's Nightmare (Flying Edge)

Acclaim, the company behind the Flying Edge brand name, was quick to buy this license when the Fox Network series caught fire. Thanks to terrific design/development work by Utah-based Sculptured Software, **Bart's Nightmare** is both enjoyable and extraordinarily faithful to the look and feel of Matt Groening's brainchild.

With a bow toward its humorous touches and exceptional varied play action, what makes this cartridge fly on the edge is the graphics. Whether Bart is trudging through Windy World or glorying in his role as Bartzilla, these five game-worlds exude the same artistic sensibility as the animated adventures.

This is more than just a technically proficient animation job. Sculptured took the time to understand the material. Every character has the right walk, the perfect gestures. Best of all, they reached this level of graphical sophistication without sacrificing interactivity.

Flashback's amazing visuals and animation have been expertly recreated on the Sega Genesis.

Flashback (U.S. Gold)

Conrad Hart, the lead character in this amnesia drama, gets sucked into a battle against aliens on Earth and other worlds during his search for his own past. For this game, it's a case of the journey being a lot more exciting than the destination. **Flashback** is a real grabber, and its excellent graphics have a lot to do with its power to mesmerize.

When U.S. Gold released **Flashback** in the first-half of 1993, some first-timers thought it was a CD product. The stylish artwork, deft animation, and realistic figure work proved that a video game could have the look of a multimedia product. The cut scenes are good, but the graphics are every bit as impressive in the combat phases, especially in the jungle.

Flashback may be almost too distinctive to spawn many direct imitators, but it's a game no one forgets to mention when the subject turns to superlative video game visuals.

Jurassic Park (Sega)

When a company tackles a video game version of a movie like Jurassic Park, which devastated audiences with its stunning visuals and special effects, the design team's goal is clear. They've got to bring the same intense excitement to the interactive screen.

Mission accomplished. The play mechanic is solid, if unexceptional, but the graphics take second place to no other title. This 16-Meg game casts the player as either a scientist trying to escape the dinosaur park or a raptor whose aim is to level the place. The characters look like their analogs in the film, are well drawn and skillfully animated. This side-scroller grabs the gamer and keeps the involvement at fever pitch with ferocious enemies and painstakingly depicted natural disasters. The sound is also top-shelf, which makes the graphics seem more solid and substantial.

The seven levels of this solitaire game are a visual feast and a diverting play experience. Although the cartridge's plot has little in common with the Michael Crichton novel or the movie, everything looks so right that absence of a familiar story is not at all troubling.

Mutant League Football (Electronic Arts)

Take the typical Joke Game ... please.

You know, the ones based on a cute idea some guy got while waiting for a plane. Soon after, the product comes out and wows a bunch of chain buyers who don't play anything but **Quicken** on their home computers.

Mutant League Football is the exception. It takes a wild concept; creatures playing a futuristic brand of football, and fully develops it into a playable action-simulation. Even after you get used to the mutants and monsters, there's still a game worth playing. The secret: **Mutant League Football** is a close cousin of **John Madden** and benefits from its play mechanics.

Sonic Spinball (Sega)

The Casino Night Zone phase in **Sonic 2** sparked the creation of this electronic pinball title starring Sega's big-name hedgehog. The first Sonic game created in the U.S., it transforms the speedster into the equivalent of the familiar silverball. Sonic must survive four large levels, each lavishly decorated with appropriately themed artwork, to deflect Dr. Robotnik's latest scheme for converting the animals of Mobius into robot slaves.

Texture mapping creates an excellent 3-D effect, especially when Sonic is bouncing around the Pinball Defense System. Sonic's two special moves, the Super Spin Dash and the Cliffhanger Flip, look good and give the hedgehog hero a better chance against the snares that await him in this colorful cartoon action game.

Sonic seems to be everywhere these days. He is even showing up in his own exciting pinball game.

STATE OF THE ART GENESIS

The Best Sound

Awesome Possum (Tengen)

When it comes to environmental crusaders, you can keep Captain Planet and his Planeteer toadies. Gaming's number-one earth activist is the wisecracking do-gooder star of this 16-Meg masterpiece. When Dr. Machino puts the destruction of our precious resources into high gear in the early 21st century, Awesome Possum races through 24 levels of side-scrolling jumping and running to derail the dastardly doctor.

Those who exercise the option to mute the sound miss one of this cartridge's best features. It has outstanding music, sound effects, and speech. Awesome keeps up a steady rush of chatter as he goes through his acrobatic paces. His pet phrase: "I'm so *hyper!*"

Cool Spot (Virgin-Sega)

Unlike the cerebral **Spot** computer program, a variation of reversi, **Cool Spot** is a humorous action title much like the 7-Up television commercials. The energetic little critter explores 12 levels to liberate his trapped friends by collecting red spots.

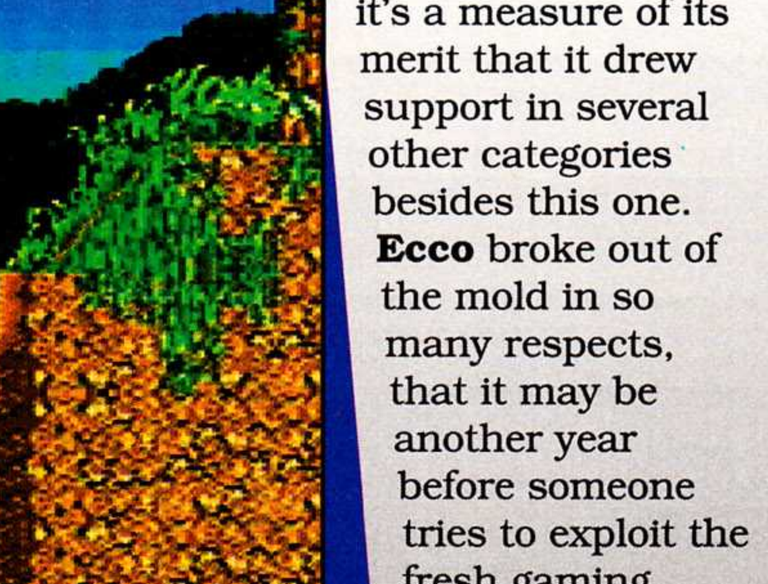
Blessed with slick animation and excellent play-mechanics, **Cool Spot**'s audio is still the chief bragging point. Each level has its own musical theme, usually a well-known popular song like "Wipeout." All the sounds Spot makes in the TV ads are included in the video game, accompanied by the character's well-known gestures.

Sound doesn't have a direct impact on game-events, but it is a major element in creating the context for Spot's rescue mission. The music sets the mood for one of the most charming video games of 1993.

Ecco the Dolphin (Sega)

This is one of the oldest games in our report on Genesis state-of-the-art, and it's a measure of its merit that it drew support in several other categories besides this one. **Ecco** broke out of the mold in so many respects, that it may be another year before someone tries to exploit the fresh gaming territory it discovered.

After some debate, we put **Ecco** in this category, because the sound is still its most revolutionary feature. A lot of video games feature fine music, excellent sound effects, and clever spoken phrases, but rarely does the game hinge on the audio output. By incorporating sonic feedback as an important play-element, **Ecco** insured that this remarkable product delivered a refreshing and remarkably innovative play-experience.



Ecco the Dolphin's sounds are award-winning, and the game's graphics are also a sight to see.

Axel and Blaze are off on another adventure to try and rescue Adam Hunter in Streets of Rage 2.

Streets of Rage 2 (Sega)

When Adam Hunter, one of the three heroes of the original **Streets of Rage**, is taken in a revenge kidnapping, it's up to the two remaining members of the team to perform the rescue. This time, Axel Stone and Blaze Fielding have added two new comrades, Max the wrestler and streetwise Skate to their assault team.

Streets of Rage 2 is redhot street fighting with the usual assortment of weapons, martial arts maneuvers and lethal villains. One of the things that keeps players kicking and punching all the way to the end is the heavy-duty musical score. The technical quality of the audio is very good, but it's the relentless insistence of the beat that helps make **Streets of Rage 2** a cut (and chop) above carts with blander tunes.

The Best Sega CD

Double Switch (Sega)

Talk about star power! Sega signed Hollywood's Mary Lambert (best known for Madonna and Janet Jackson videos and the feature film *Pet Sematary*) to "direct" and Deborah Harry (of Blondie) and Corey Haim (of the Coreys) to star. They've produced a sophisticated, big-budget blend of **Night Trap** and **7th Guest**. The player follows Corey Haim, a computer nerd who maintains a state-of-the-art computer security system to protect his apartment building, The Edward Arms, from the more hostile homeboys in his crime-stricken hood.

Double Switch incorporates a mix between Night Trap and The 7th Guest to enrapture gamers.

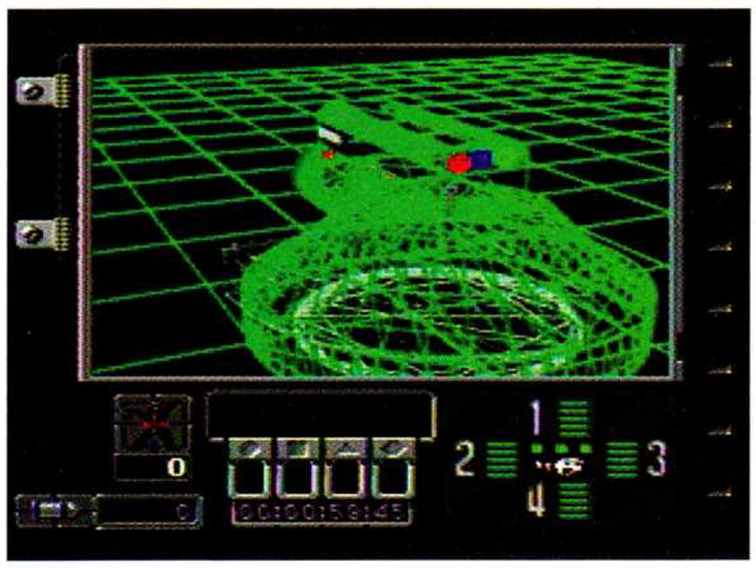
The interior sequences were filmed on actual sound stages, making the exploration process visually compelling, while the gamer's grey matter is engaged in unraveling the secrets of Corey's security system. The script, meanwhile, offers equal parts comedy, action and mystery. And, unlike many film-types, Lambert seems to have grasped the essential difference between a game and a movie.

Double Switch is one of the most successful cinematic CD games.

Ground Zero, Texas (Sega)

Although the company seems to have backed off on pushing this game in favor of **Tomcat Alley** and **Jurassic Park**, it remains one of the most artistically satisfying titles on Sega CD. The plot isn't groundbreaking—Evil Aliens have invaded a small town in Texas and, disguised as humans, intend to take control of the planet—but the execution is really fascinating.

Ground Zero employs a cinematic format and interface in the tradition of **Night Trap**, and is actually a much better send-up of vintage sci-fi films (with a nice, modernistic graphic veneer). It's also less likely to send knee-jerk politicians into spasms of



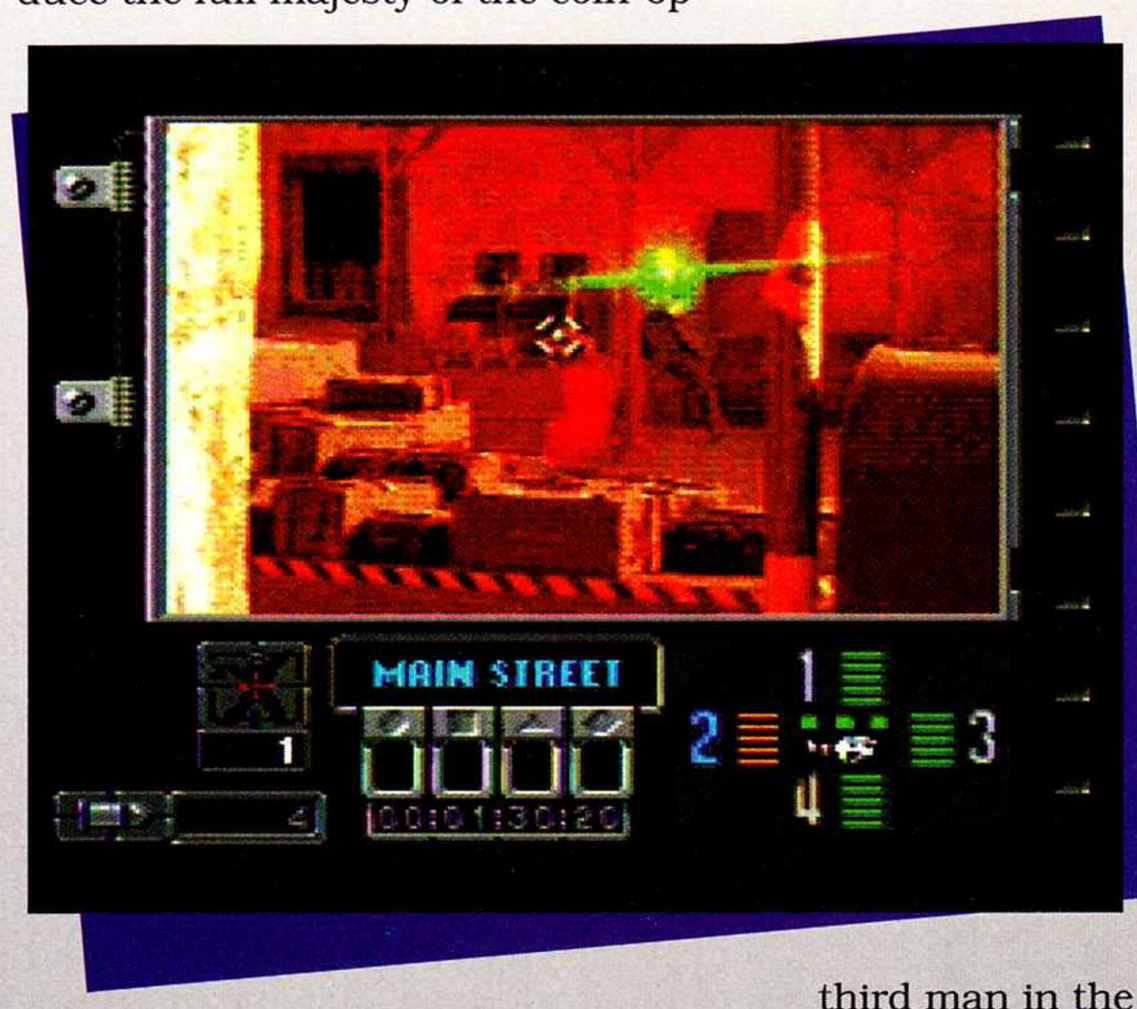
Ground Zero, Texas seems like an innocent enough burg, but deadly aliens must be found and killed.

sanctimony; i.e., the accent is on action rather than babes in nighties. The player uses first-person targeting to dust the sinister spacemen against a variety of backdrops, set in different areas of the dusty small town setting. Alas, traditional weapons only stun the aliens, so part of the game involves locating heavy-duty spaceguy weaponry.

Ground Zero, Texas has lots of cool FMV sequences with a strong storyline to keep things humming.

Mad Dog McCree (American Laser Games)

The publisher's decision to enter the home market shows how far multimedia entertainment has progressed. This version of **Mad Dog McCree** was impossible until recently. The Sega hardware can't quite reproduce the full majesty of the coin-op



graphics, but it comes admirably close and is a fine reproduction for enjoying the game on a home console.

ALG's arcade machine blew the doors off amusement centers with its wall-to-wall full-motion video. Despite limited interactivity, **Mad Dog McCree** is a great game. Every scene is filmed using professional actors and authentic locations. There's some over-emoting, true, but it's in the spirit of the bullet-riddled plot. The sequel, already far along in development, is said to be even more spectacular, but it will be hard to beat this western shooter.

Prize Fighter lets you climb into the ring with an amazing amount of control and detailed fighting.

Prize Fighter (Sega)

A real slap in the face, in more ways than one. The notion of producing a first-person boxing game on the Sega CD was conceptually daring enough, but doing it in black & white *really* took guts. The results, however, are astoundingly successful. Remarkable fight scenes choreographed by Ron Stein who staged the boxing sequences in *Raging Bull* are the grittiest, most realistic images in the history of gaming.

The most impressive thing about **Prize Fighter** is its playability; the controller response is lightning fast, with punches, sweat, spit and other fluids flying freely. Everything in this production is first rate, including the use of ring announcer Michael "Let's Get Ready to Rumble!" Buffer, and wrestler/actor/referee "Judo" Gene LaBelle is the ideal third man in the ring. **Prize Fighter** is a heartening demonstration of how multimedia technology will generate games that are not just different, but better. With more and more technology available to the programmers, the Sega CD will definitely be soaring high in the coming months.

You won't find in any

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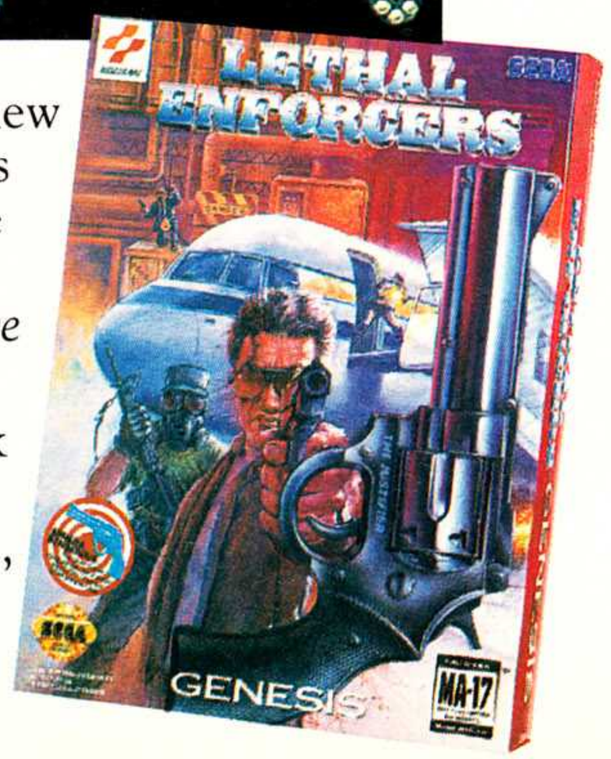

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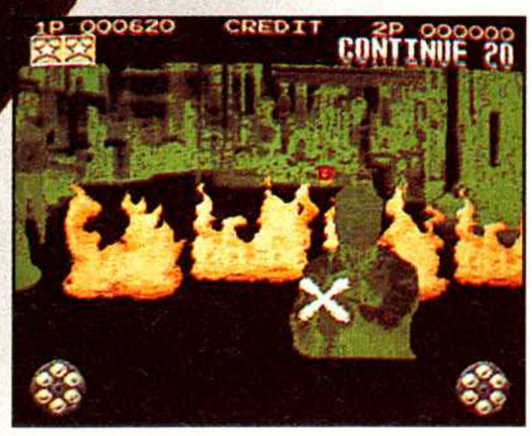

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EG INTERVIEW

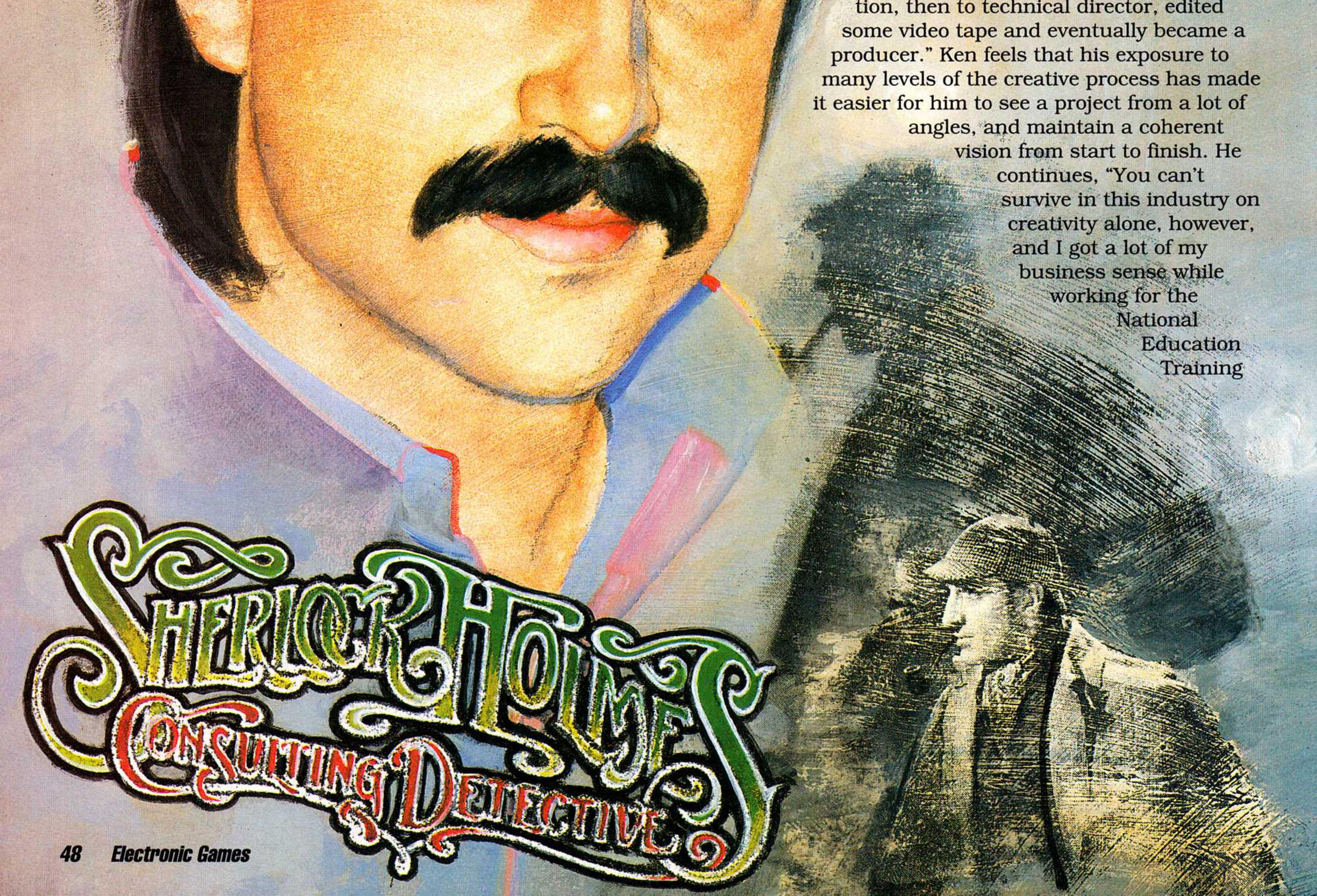
THE MIND BEHIND THE MASTERMIND

An Interview with Sherlock Holmes Designer Ken Tarolla

by Ed Dille

If ever there was a case of "Hometown Boy Makes Good," Ken Tarolla fits the fairy tale scenario to a tee. Born and raised in the Chicago area, Ken graduated from Northern Illinois University with a degree in communications and hasn't looked back since. Ken holds a great deal of fondness for his early years in the business, since he feels he could not be where he is today had he not paid those dues.

"I started out working as a cameraman for companies that did educational films and laserdiscs. After a while, I moved into a set designer position, then to technical director, edited some video tape and eventually became a producer." Ken feels that his exposure to many levels of the creative process has made it easier for him to see a project from a lot of angles, and maintain a coherent vision from start to finish. He continues, "You can't survive in this industry on creativity alone, however, and I got a lot of my business sense while working for the National Education Training



Group. I supervised a staff of about 35 people and we put together 165 programs while I was there. I also did some freelance commercial work during this period."

When prompted as to what spurred his interest in gaming, Ken was quick to dive in. "About 1989, I saw that the timing was right. I saw that the adoption of the CD-ROM could take computers beyond EGA and VGA, and it seemed like a wonderful springboard to a purely digital medium. I saw the collision between the computer and video film business early on, and that jazzed me up, that was my motivation to leave what I had been doing and go out on a limb, so to speak."

Since arriving at ICOM, Ken has continued to progress at a phenomenal pace, moving from designer during the Sherlock series to Director of Product Development and eventually to Vice President under Viacom, his current position. "I have had the privilege of watching a small company mature into a very capable development house for all the platforms. Also, one that is currently managing a number of projects for other software publishers as well. Your readers may not be aware of it, but we produced many of the successful Loony Tunes titles for Sunsoft, including **Death Valley Rally**, **Duck Dodgers in the 24th-and-a-Half Century** and **Bugs Bunny Rabbit Rampage**. When I first arrived here, we wouldn't have dreamed of such projects, but the company has come a long way since then."

Ken is quick to point out that the road to the top isn't easy, however, as he relates some of the difficulties of producing a series like Sherlock. "Well, first, you have to remember that no one had ever done what we were attempting. When we developed the concept in 1990, the hard part was to playback video with an effective frame rate and proper lip synch. We were developing technology to capture analog and convert it to digital video but, at the same time, when you are talking about thousands of frames, we also had to come up with an automated process to convert these frames in an efficient amount of time and cost effective manner. That was the true test of trying to pull this project off. The second thing was actually producing the video. We had done some tests, but we were forced to go into this part of the process without a warm and fuzzy feeling about what we could get away with in terms of movement, camera cuts and angles, etc. It wasn't an inexpensive undertaking that we were going into blind either. The problem with all leading edge technology is that you are often creating and refining that technology at the same time you are producing a title. This adds expense, and also the challenge to ensure the tech is fully in place in time to release the title."

ICOM avoided the potential pitfall of using untrained company staff members as actors and actresses, but their foresight extended way beyond that, thanks to Ken and a number of other film professionals that worked on the project. They recognized that portions of the production process would translate directly, but also that other crucial details, such as color composition and reproduction, would require tremendous attention to detail. Were it not for their expertise and creative flexibility, the Sherlock series could have easily died on the vine or, as a minimum, taken far longer to appear on our CRT screens than it eventually did.

Ken elaborates on the initial portion of production, "From the video standpoint, portions of the process were just like producing for TV or Hollywood. We started with the script, made all the notations, prop creations, story boarding etc., in fact, that part of it was easier than TV, because we knew precisely where we were going, and that isn't always the case in the other industry. The major difference between shooting for the game and otherwise was that we had to shoot at 15 frames per second, *vice* the standard 30. We discovered that, because of that limitation, camera composition and blocking became critical. You don't want to zoom in or out, pan, truck the camera or any of that, or the dropped frames become very noticeable in the final version. As such, we produced **Sherlock** and **Dracula** with locked cameras. The other cinematography lesson we learned was that, because you are also working in a small window, you must get in really tight on the actors and avoid wide shots. Because both of these products were very dramatic storylines, this technique worked.

With the help of Dr. Watson, you can interview a variety of people. You must find the right clues!

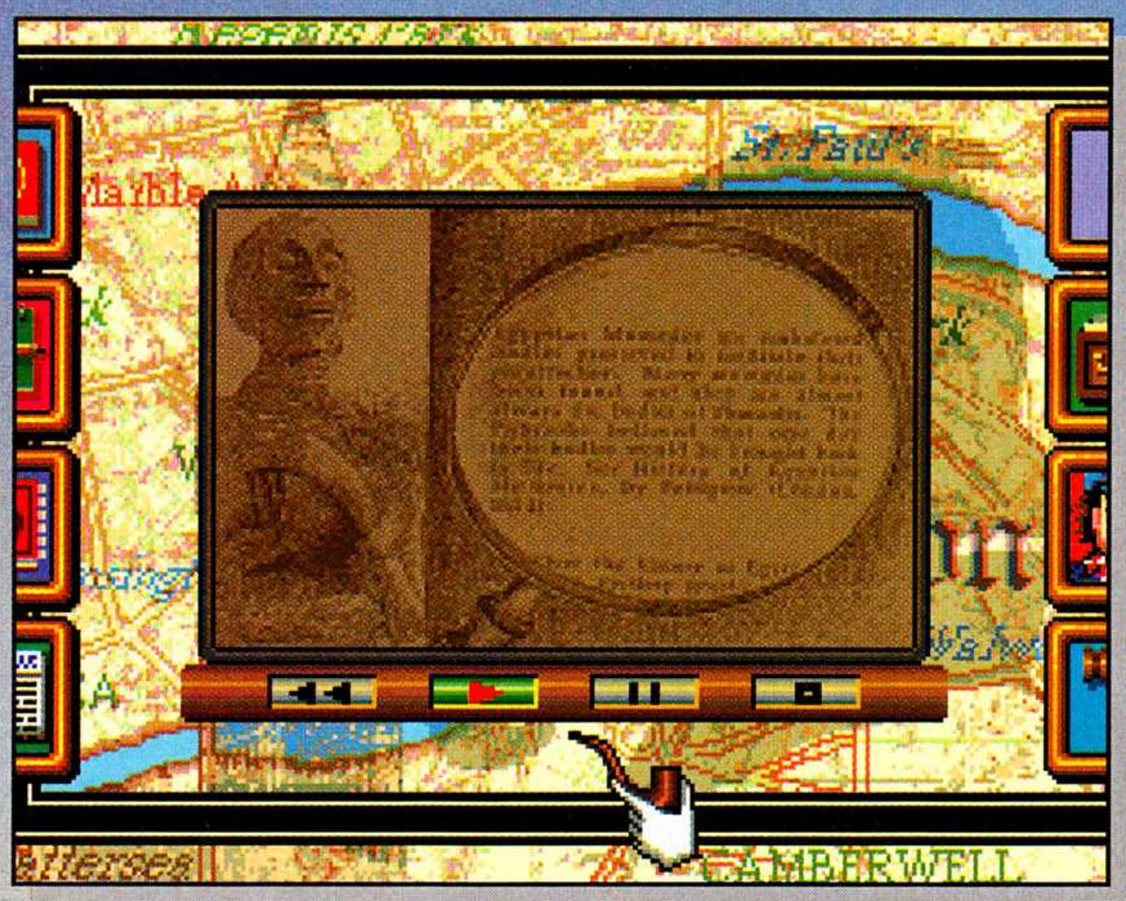
Armed with this knowledge, production of the first Sherlock title began in earnest. Again, since this was the first title of its kind, ICOM had allowed only enough funds for a limited number of shooting days. Ken and Crew managed to find their rhythm, however, and pulled the whole thing off with a minimum of waste amidst great wailing and gnashing of teeth at all levels of the project. Despite one of the tightest schedules in the business, **Sherlock** turned out to be a polished production of the first magnitude and garnished media and consumer praise commensurate with that status.

Accomplishing something that had not been done before offers many rewards to the artist who can pull it off, as Ken relates, "To be able to put together a production of the magnitude we did on a CD-ROM, and actually create a movie with a crew that had to be educated on our process from the ground up was very satisfying. I mean, everyone from the grips to the cameramen had to realize that lighting and color selection was limited to a VGA display on a quarter screen. Initially, everyone felt it very constraining. It was a real learning curve for everybody, but managing to teach all of them the nuances and actually pull it off in much greater

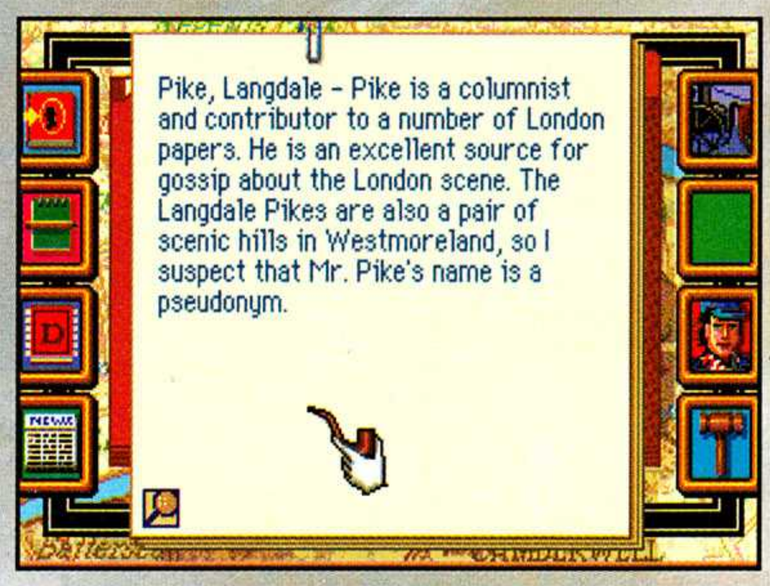
time constraints than TV suffers from was rewarding. **Sherlock** is close to my heart, but I consider **Dracula Unleashed** to be the culmination of that whole genre we created. We pushed the technology further than anybody else and I'm very proud of that."

One sore point for Ken is the rampant misuse of the term, Interactive Movie. "People are getting confused by companies who are calling graphic adventures interactive movies. That simply isn't true, but time will sort things out. In two years, you can expect to see price points of multimedia drop, bigger video windows, higher frame rates and, with the advent of the new MPEG standard, full screen video programming. At this point, the consumer will be able to readily see who is doing Interactive Movies and who is just a pretender. In five years, we will see the interactive movie begin to crossover into television. When that happens, I expect Viacom to be in the premiere position to capitalize on that medium. Viacom is trying to marry the creativity of both markets already, and that puts us way ahead of the game in the long run. We want to use all the skill sets that Hollywood and Silicon Valley can bring to the table in creating new software titles, and I am very thrilled to be part of that philosophy."

He continues excitedly, "**Rocko's Modern Life** (SNES) is a perfect example of the new method, because it was a joint project between Nickelodeon and Viacom from day one. Rather than butting heads, as some people might think, it turned out to be one of the most synergistic relationships I've ever had the pleasure of being a part of. Both parties had strong feelings about what had to go into the project, and we were able to incorporate all of these elements into the final release. We produced it on time and in budget. The characters are very true to the series, game play is very unique and we are getting some tremendous feedback. You have to use your twitch skills with the controller but, more



importantly, **Rocko** is puzzle based and you have to work with your characters and stay true to their personalities to get through it. Both companies also felt that the final result would have to be really hot to market it with a joint label, but that is exactly what happened. We are all very excited about this one."



Including a notebook in the game was a stroke of brilliance. Careful notes lead to quick arrests!

As to the future, Ken thinks it's very bright. "I don't think you will see another **Sherlock**, the three volumes will be the family for that title, but we will use the technology and style of **Sherlock** in future titles. There are a lot of possibilities. Computers are faster and more capable than when we started. Also, whether you are talking about 3DO or any of the other platforms out there, it is all tied to the technology. Every year, technology advances at an exponentially faster rate, and that opens up a lot more options for me, and other creative artists as well. My personal goal is to keep bringing unique products to the market such that, as consumer expectations rise, our vision is there to meet them." If past efforts are any indication, consumers can expect a lot in the next **Sherlock** installment.

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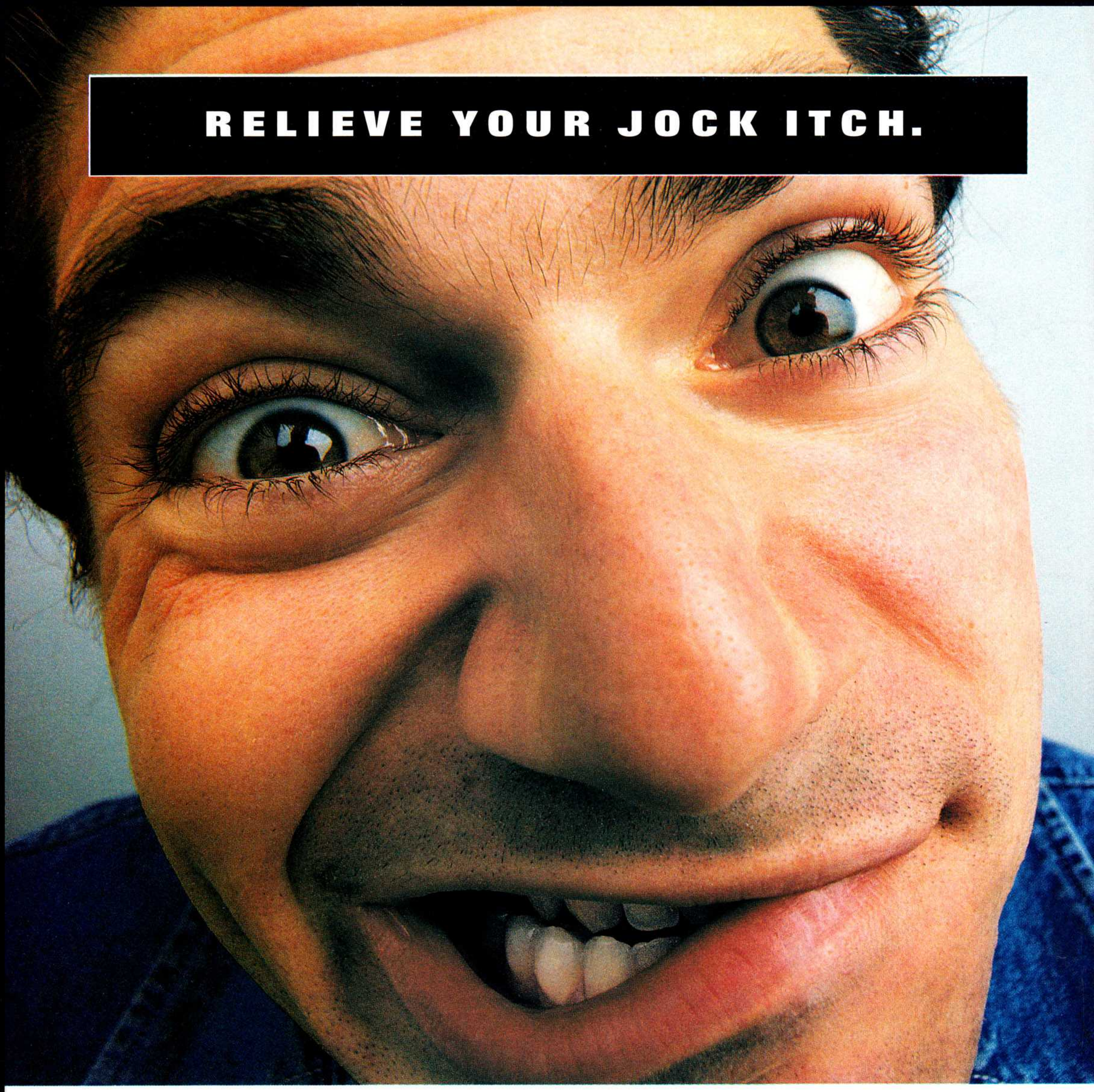

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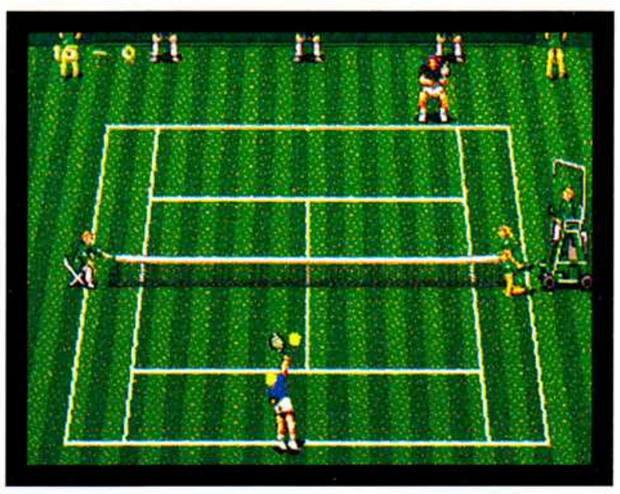

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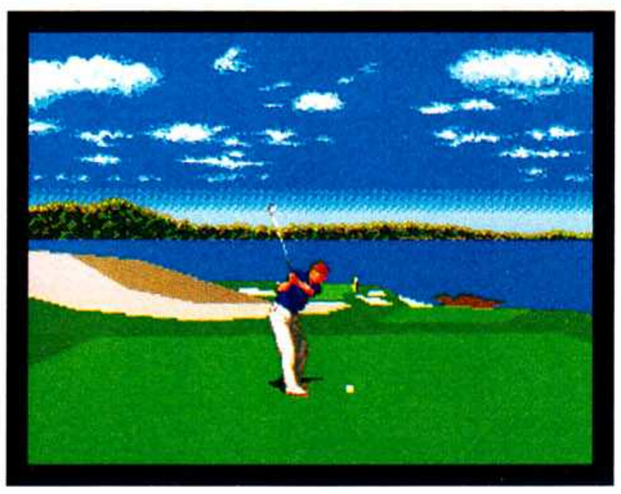

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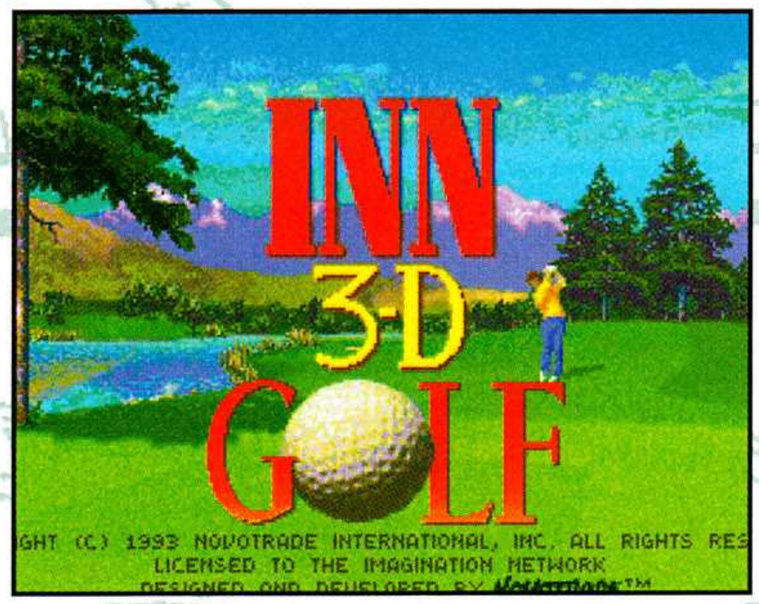
ON-LINE WITH IMAGINATION

Here's the latest twist on Sierra On-Line's On-Line Service

In 1991, California computer users were given a chance to try a brand new computer network designed and produced by Sierra On-Line employees and dubbed The Sierra Network (TSN.) Since that introduction, TSN achieved national status and went through a number of facelifts and expansions that made the network more exciting for users. New games, a new interface and a constant influx of new users kept the network interesting and fun. Last summer, TSN broke away from Sierra and became its own company, The ImagiNation Network (INN). The latest version of the software, Version 2.3, presents this new identity and a number of new features that cause the network to be more entertaining and infectious.

INN, for those unfamiliar with the national computer network, doesn't offer airline reservations, shareware downloads or stock quotes. INN's primary purpose is fun. There are many types of games, both classic and modern, to occupy the time of the users. From chess and bridge to roulette and golf, INN's members can play games with each other live across the country. Many other users talk in conference rooms, chat rooms or the network's many waiting rooms. Bulletin boards (BBS's) and electronic mail (E-mail) allow users to communicate with others if they don't get a chance to talk live. One of the most important features of INN is the FaceMaker program that allows users to put together a persona or "toon" of how they would like others to see them. Members can find their friends by their online names (handles) or toons. The collection of users and their personalities truly makes INN an online community in which love and friendships develop and users become quite familiar and friendly.



The Imagination Network's users can access a large variety of games, including a links challenge.

Users access INN's many features from a main map that represents the network graphically. The entire interface (except obviously the messages people write back and forth) is a mouse—driven point-and-click structure. From the main map, members can access their E-mail, SierraLand (the family area), CasinoLand (adult area with gambling games), MedievaLand (home to two enormously popular role-playing games) and the Clubhouse (classic games and BBSs). Additionally, users can click on a phone booth on the main map to find any of their friends if they know their handles. INN is logically structured so members can choose their brand of fun from the moment they log on.

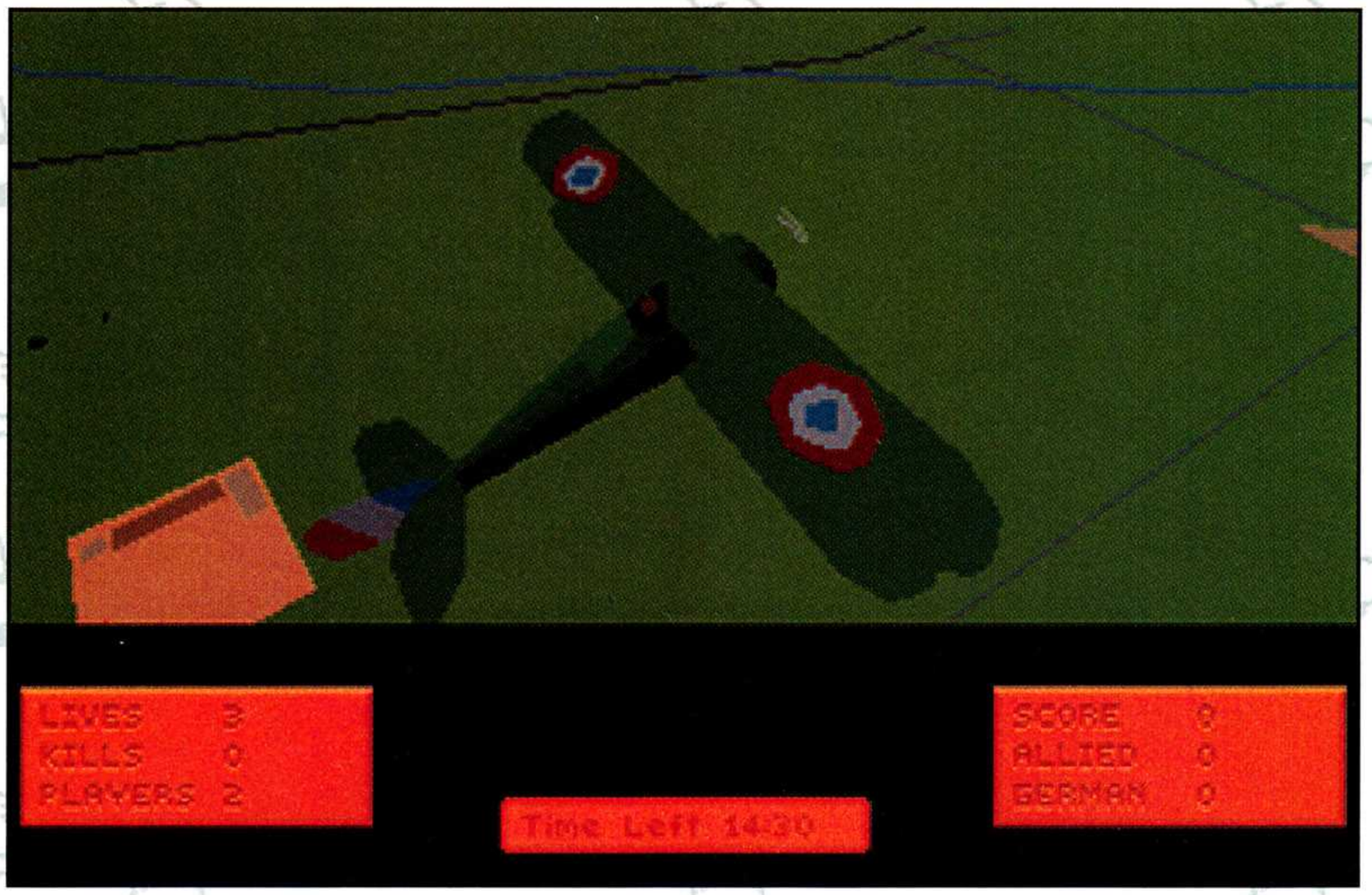
Version 2.3 of the network software upgrades a number of elements of each of the main areas. The most basic change was the name of CasinoLand. The area used to be called LarryLand to reflect the atmosphere of Sierra's popular game series that features the computer game anti-hero Leisure Suit Larry. When INN broke away from Sierra, they renamed the area to avoid the confusion that members might have who were unfamiliar with Larry's adventures. CasinoLand is meant strictly for adults where they can talk to other adults and play gambling games that include blackjack, poker, roulette and slots. They can also visit Lefty's Bar, a CasinoLand version of the Clubhouse's Chat Rooms that features some simple bar games.

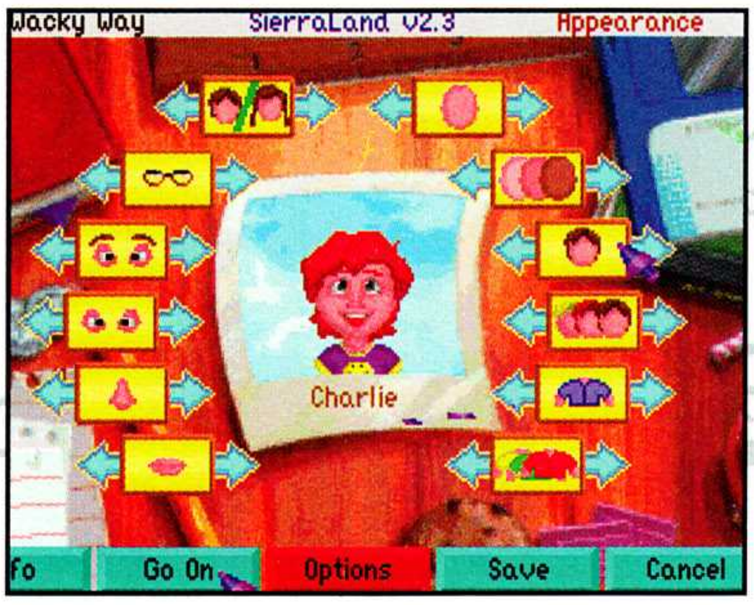
The old board game classic, Stratego, is recreated on the Imagination Network with some new twists.

MedievaLand is always buzzing with users—day or night—because of the two RPGs within the area, The Shadow of Yserbius and Fates of Twinion. The games are first-person perspective dungeon games in which users build up characters as they explore the passageways, fight monsters and go on quests. The RPGs are popular for a few different reasons. Players can form parties with other users rather than just play alone. Also, the system is open-ended so that players can continue to explore the labyrinths even after finishing the major quests. A myriad of monsters keep adventurers busy as they enjoy the dazzling graphics and various sound effects. Finally, the amount of depth in the games keeps users interested far into the night with the complex puzzles and tricky map layout. The Clubhouse had a number of its

games updated for Version 2.3. In addition to the original versions of games like chess, cribbage and Go, members can now find Spades and Euchre and updated editions of Bridge, Chess and Hearts. INN also redesigned the Chat Room; it looks a lot slicker now. Members can find all of their favorite BBSs under 2.3 and a few new waiting rooms for them to occupy while online.

The most changes to INN 2.3 were to SierraLand. In the past, members would go there to play mini-golf, Sneak A Tac (3D Tic-Tac-Toe) or Red Baron (a special online version of the popular dogfighting simulation). Version 2.3 upgrades Red Baron with more planes and better graphics. It also introduces three new major features: 3-D Golf, Stratego and NTN Trivia. These games alone will have new members and veterans in SierraLand more than anywhere else, except perhaps MedievaLand, over the next few months.





Users have the option of customizing their physical features by using a simple face-making puzzle.

The presence of Stratego on INN took a lot of effort, but the network's administration was finally able to strike a deal with Parker Brothers. For now, Stratego is the only one of the toy giant's board games INN users will be able to play. However, the success of Stratego might have further implications. Fans of this game should let INN and Parker Brothers know how happy they are with Stratego. Perhaps INN could develop online versions of other popular Parker Brothers titles.

3-D Golf is a technological triumph because it contains all of the stunning graphics of offline golf programs, but in a slick online version with fast redraw capabilities. 3-D Golf has all of the excitement of the other PC golf programs and more. Users can participate in online tournaments or just play a round solo without any impact to the response time of the network because the software for golf and all other INN games resides on the player's hard drive. Although elements of putting can stand some improvement, players will be able to jump right in and join a foursome the first time they try the game.

NTN Trivia set off a network-wide trivia craze when it debuted in November. INN managed to set up live hooks into the National Trivia Network (NTN) so that members can participate in trivia games with up to 12 people playing from terminals in restaurants, bars and hotels across America. This national connection is unique to INN. People who haven't decided on a network may choose INN for this feature alone. The questions are challenging and the game is set up so that the person who chooses the correct answer fastest gets the most points.

INN's success depends on the personalities and ideas of its members. The toons that users create online for themselves even take on different characteristics based on the section of the network in which they are used. SierraLand's toons are childlike, while CasinoLand's toons are exaggerated and depict adults. MedievaLand's personas are straight off the covers of fantasy novels. The Clubhouse's toons are probably the closest to the real appearance of the members. INN gives people the ability to be themselves through their persona or role-play on those nights when they feel like trying out a new identity.

Many popular card games, including Euchre, are just a few mouse clicks away on the new INN.

Trivia buffs will find plenty of challenge with the many questions and answers in the trivia game.

INN Version 2.3 really polishes all of the network's fine points and introduces a whole bunch more. New members can try out the network for free if they dial 1-800-IMAGIN-1 or send away for a membership kit. Most will uncover an instant addiction to the fun and people that they find in the on-line community. The personal touches make it a much more user-friendly network. Give INN a try and see why it has been dubbed "the happiest place in cyberspace."

- Russ Ceccola

HOME IMPROVEMENT

A look at Absolute's take on the hit sitcom.

Home Improvement is one of the highest-rated television shows each week. People enjoy Tim Allen's antics and humor as well as the wacky situations he and his partner get into on their hardware-based show, *Tool Time*. Absolute Entertainment recently secured the rights to produce a game based on *Home Improvement*. The result is a clever game combining fantasy and reality that fans of the sitcom will find amusing and true to their favorite characters. The game's designer, Dan Kitchen, recently spoke to **Electronic Games** to provide some background information about the upcoming title.

The origins of the game go back to Absolute's design of a Goofy game for the Genesis. After the Goofy game was completed, Disney suggested other properties of theirs for translation into video games, one of which was *Home Improvement*. At first, the sitcom was not a choice for a project. It was difficult to imagine a way that the show could become a game, but Kitchen and his design team came up with a plan.

Players must guide Tim through many treacherous soundstages with various enemies to conquer.

The result is a game in which the players guide Tim through five soundstages in search of the Turbo Tools that were lost right before *Tool Time* went on the air. Tim must find one of the Turbo Tools in each soundstage and make it back to his show before he angers the sponsor. Each soundstage has its own theme and challenges so that the end result is a game with a lot of variety.

Kitchen confided that "the *Tool Time* set and the setting of the house aren't necessarily fun, so it did take some creative thinking to place Tim in an environment that would be enjoyable for the player to explore. That's how we came up with the fantasy soundstages, places where make-believe could rule as opposed to the settings of his house or the show."

Each of the soundstages is radically different in look and feel so that players can enjoy the inherent humor of Tim up against such mechanical beasts as animated suits of armor, vampires and dinosaurs. Roughly, the themes of each soundstage are: monsters, science fiction, Indiana Jones-style ruins, dinosaurs and giant toys. The player has a large number of tools to use to survive each soundstage's dangers. Sledgehammers break through walls. Jackhammers chisel out floor slabs. Tim's tape measure acts as a grappling hook when necessary to swing across wide distances. Other tools include chainsaws and a nail gun.

Part of the wonderful fun of **Home Improvement** is discovering which tools are most effective against the enemies. It was a given that tools would be part of the game, but Kitchen explained that the design team set out to "use the tools in a fun, creative way." Five minutes with a nail gun or sledgehammer will prove this true.

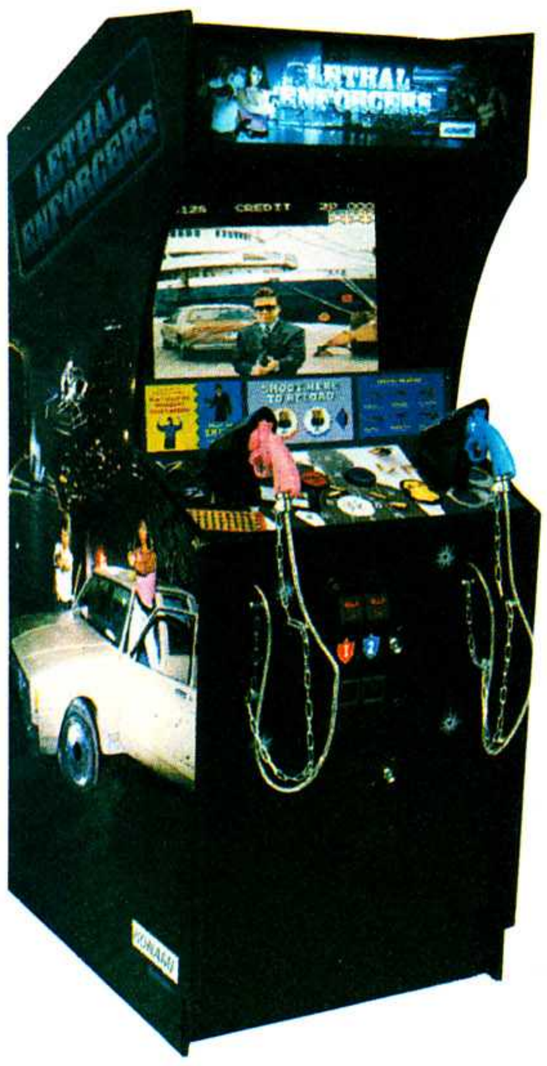
Home Improvement mostly consists of side-scrolling action over expansive soundstages, but the game will also feature digitized scenes from the show that act as set-up screens for each level. Absolute managed to cram some images of the stars of the sitcom, as well as a number of sound bites, into the cartridge so that fans will get more of a television feel from the product. Additionally, a small window will pop up with Tim's face to show his expressions as he encounters many of the game's situations.

Dinosaurs are easy prey for a Binford 2100 I-2 power-blaster. Use the right tool for the job!

Home Improvement will initially be available on the Genesis and Super NES in early 1994. It'll appeal to both fans of the sitcom as well as gamers looking for a challenging new product. Kitchen expects the game will be popular with children because "kids love tools, kids are on the show and Tim Allen is a very animated character."

Give any player a tool belt and watch the little kid in them appear!

—Russ Ceccola



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BRUTAL BEASTS BATTLE FOR THE BELT OF HEAVEN

EG previews Brutal: Paws of Fury

Gametek's maiden voyage into the Sega CD world is **Brutal: Paws of Fury**. This cartoon martial arts game thrives on subtle humor, as the animal characters take themselves seriously and embody important virtues.

The Deli Lama travels the world every four years seeking the greatest warriors. However, the belt of heaven can only be won if the victor not only possesses fighting prowess, but also has the warrior spirit.

This year the Deli Lama has sent invitations to eight contestants: Kung Fu Bunny, Rhei Rat, Kendo Coyote, Tai Cheetah, Prince Leon the Lion, Foxy Roxy, Penjat Panther, and Ivan Bear. Each participant embodies one aspect of the Eight Paths of Wisdom: Right Understanding, Right Speech, Right Resolve, Right Mindfulness, Right Effort, Right Livelihood, Right Meditation and Right Action as well as a different fighting style: relaxed paw, Thai Boxing, Kenjutsu, Tai Chi Chuan, Tan Ku (The Iron Rage), Penjat Silat, Chin Na and Soviet Military.

Each contestant is also being driven by his or her own personal demons and have their own reasons for wanting to win the Belt of Heaven from the Deli Lama, ranging from personal greed to revenge.

Brutal's graphics are very good. On the select screen, the player is treated to not only the color character graphic and a brief description (including height, weight and fighting style), but, on a background mesa, an animated silhouette performs the character's moves.

The fighters are standard anthropomorphic animated animals. The fight scenes look very good, with the combatants' bodies moving at exaggerated, cartoonish angles.

While the music tracks weren't available, they and the sound effects are being programmed by Doug Brandon, who did fantastic work on Disney's **Stunt Island**.

This is not your average kitty! The animal fighters use authentic moves and the plot line is intense!

The fighting is conducted using a unique play mechanic. Players do not start off with all the moves available to them. They must instead work up from a white belt to a black belt by defeating their opponents. Only after beating the other seven does the victor meet the Deli Lama in the dojo. With each new belt, the character earns new moves. There is also a password system which retains not only the belt level, but also the gamer's victories and losses.

Brutal features instant replay which permits players to watch the whole fight, frame by frame at a chosen speed. There is also a Tournament Option allowing up to eight gamers to play against each other. There will also be the capability for interactive play. **Brutal** supports the Pf Magic AT&T modem device, and plans to offer network features if the Sega Network becomes a reality.

Players can compete over modem lines via the Pf Magic AT&T modem device for more playability.

Gametek's first venture into the Sega CD world is an ambitious one, but if it meets the standards set by the developers the resulting product could kick some serious tail.

—Laurie Yates

What makes Brutal special?

Part of **Brutal**'s charm, according to programmer Dave Lincoln, is that the game doesn't take itself seriously. "The player is supposed to have a sense of humor about the game. The finishing moves are going to be as cartoonish as possible. For example, Ivan will run forward and bounce his opponents off from his belly.

Plus, we added a learning aspect to the game. **Brutal** has a belt system (white to black) so that as the player becomes better, and earns higher belts, so too does the opponent. The gamer will learn with the game, and has the opportunity to enter the Training Session Mode to improve his skills."

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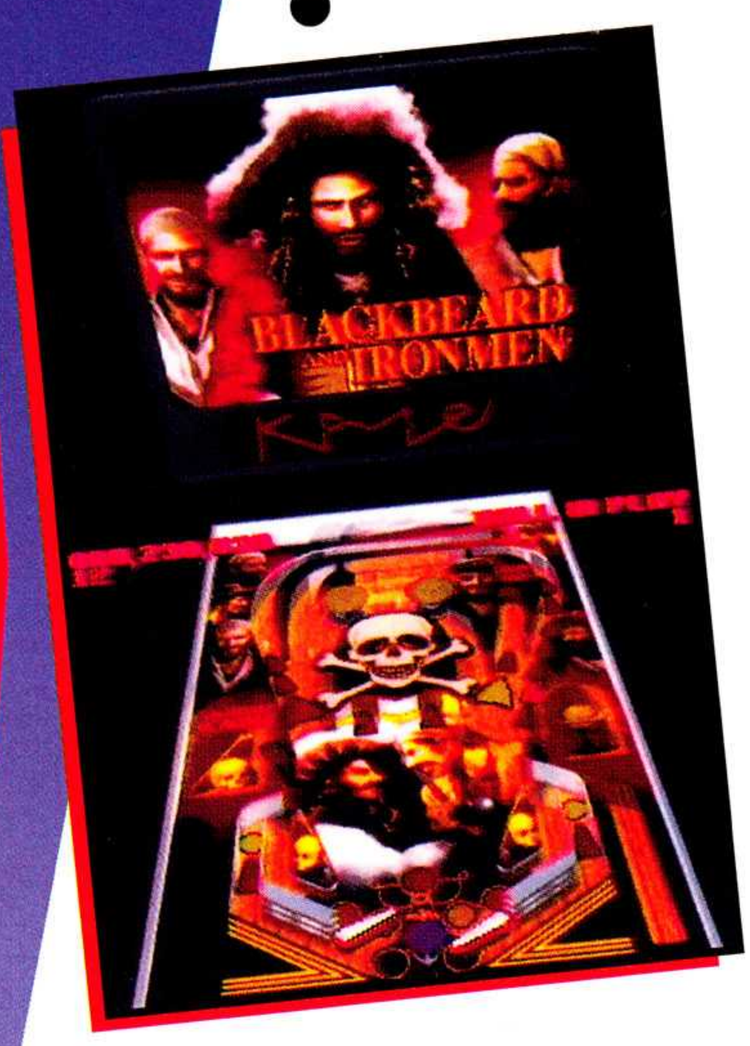

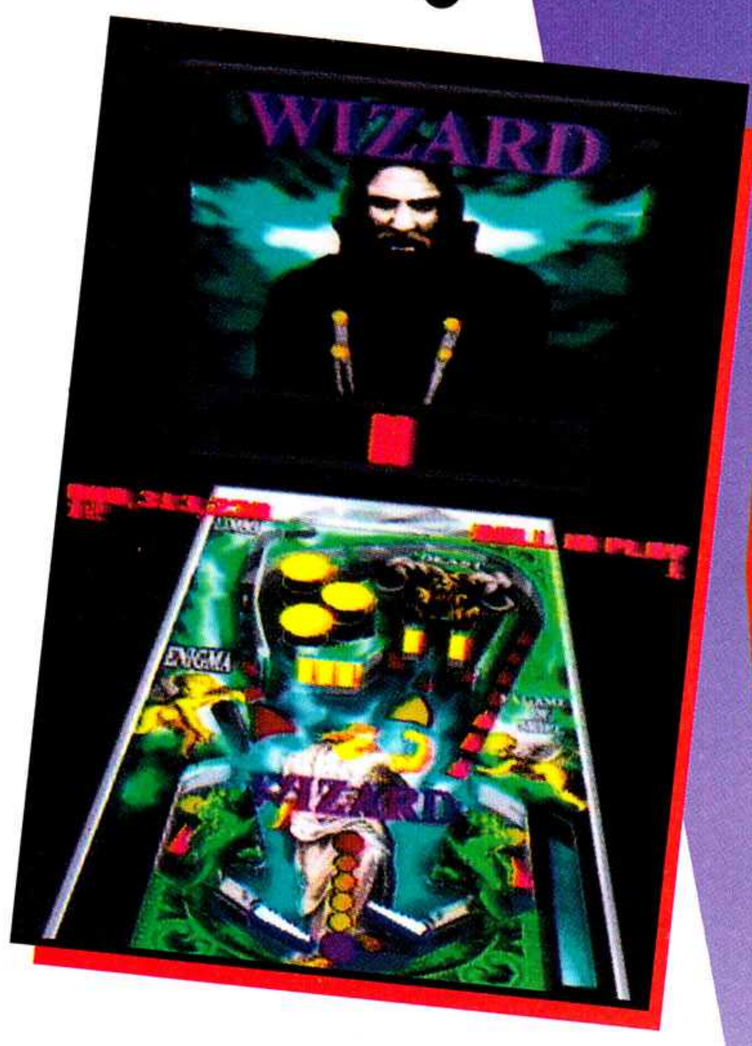

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PUZZLING IT OUT

EG continues its look at the games that appeal to the puzzle solvers among us.

Puzzle games are always popular, as they make for quick but captivating play. Herein, **EG** will expand upon the coverage contained in the January issue by examining three new products: **Take a Break Crosswords** and **Sid & Al's Incredible Toons**, both from Dynamix, as well as **Nanotank**, by Twin Dolphin.

Take a Break Crosswords, developed in conjunction with the experts at Dell Puzzles, features 750 large puzzles, about the equivalent of 15 years worth of *The New York Times* Sunday Editions.The puzzles are arranged in order of difficulty, from Apprentice to Fanatic, but the user can tackle them in any sequence desired. For those who cannot resist checking their answers before the puzzle is finished, an auto-check feature has also been included. When enabled, it will verify any new answer as soon as it is input, which also prevents players from getting stumped because of incorrect letter cues in intersecting lines.

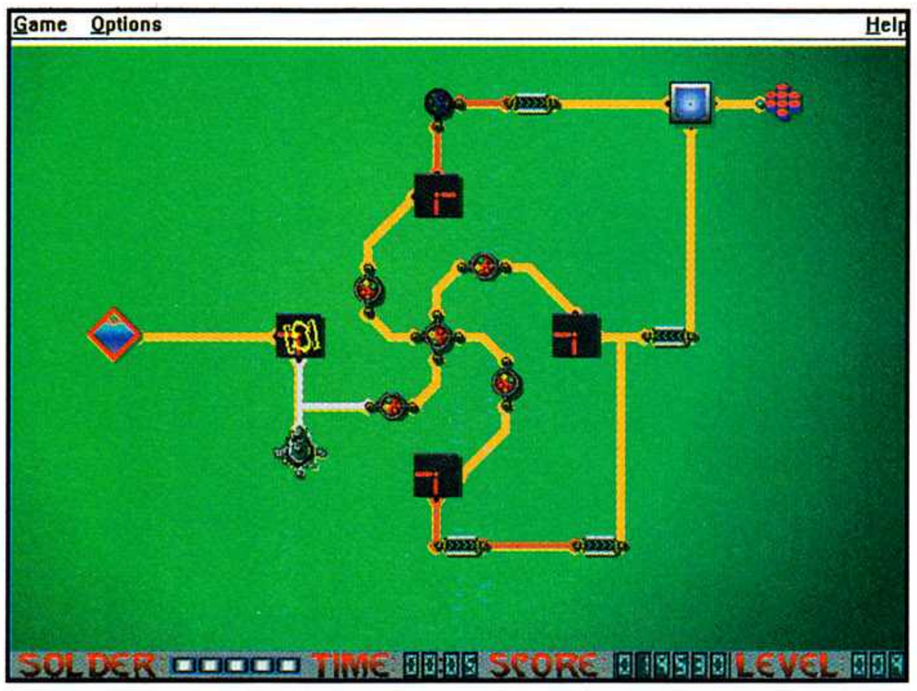
The program also features a "beat the clock" routine, in which players compete for bonus points by solving a puzzle below the minimum time specified in the program. Digitized sound effects and some limited animations have also been incorporated to jazz up the presentation. Finally, a print option allows users to dump any of the puzzles to their printer for puzzling on the go!

Sid & Al's Incredible Toons is one of the best sequels to ever hit the gaming market. Its predecessors, **The Incredible** (and **Even More Incredible**) **Machine**, were wildly popular variations of Rube Goldberg-type contraptions. Players are given a number of unique objects, each of which is capable of performing an action or having one performed on it, and a puzzle to solve. The objects must be arranged on screen on a free form palette such that, when the "machine" is set in motion, the desired effect is achieved.

Toons contains almost 100 puzzles and more than 75 animated "parts." It has four levels of difficulty, ranging from "Cake Walk" to "Loony Bin." This setting determines how many of the puzzle pieces will begin the problem in their proper arrangement, as well as how many red herrings the player will have in the pieces that remain. The time allotted for completion is also reduced at the higher levels of difficulty.

The action of the puzzles in **Toons** revolves around two central characters, Sid V. Mouse and Al E. Cat. Their love/hate relationship would equate well to that of Tom & Jerry, and the player will have the opportunity to explore all of the appropriate cartoon nuances of such a pairing, including mashing with anvils and oversized hammers, and so on. A tad violent? Perhaps, but not worthy of one of the new "ratings." **Toons** is a very funny game whose worth does not end when the provided puzzles are completed. A full editor permits users to design and save their own puzzles for swapping amongst friends or uploading to a BBS for users across the country to enjoy.

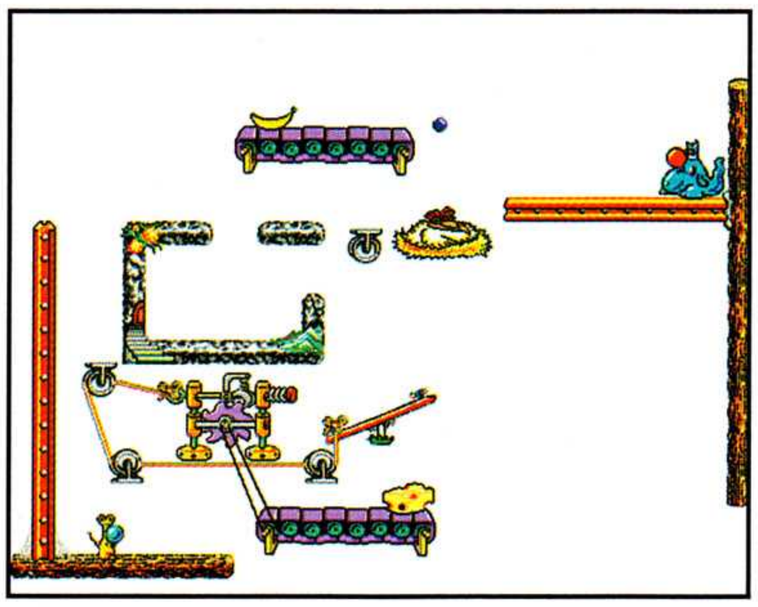
Nanotank, one of the premier offerings from fledgling software publisher Twin Dolphin, retains the distinction of being a Windows specific title. This is significant because, up to this point, there really haven't been many decent puzzle games to perplex Windows owners. **Nanotan**k will certainly fill that void, with over nine megabytes of mind-numbing madness. The game begins when space archeologists discover an ancient star ship, which once belonged to a now defunct race known as the Onoids. Their only legacy, it seems, is a deadly computer virus deep in the bowels of the ship. If unleashed, this virus would set mankind back thousands of years.



As the pilot of the Nanotank, a vehicle designed with nanotechnology (extreme miniaturization), the player must navigate through over 100 puzzles, whose microscopic sizes are in no way proportional to their difficulty. Each puzzle consists of an electronic circuit board that must be repaired, and every one of them is more difficult than the last.

The initial puzzles serve as a tutorial to the 19 different component types that are found in the circuitry of the puzzles. Although each component is not difficult to understand exclusive of the others, it is the myriad of combinations presented that keep the simulation challenging throughout. **Nanotank** is definitely the toughest puzzle game of those presented, but it retains enough of a light touch to keep it more fun than obtaining a degree in Electrical Engineering.

— Ed Dille



Incredible Toons has over 100 puzzles that must be built from a variety of comical, animated "parts."

Cao Cao

Nobunaga

Genghis Khan

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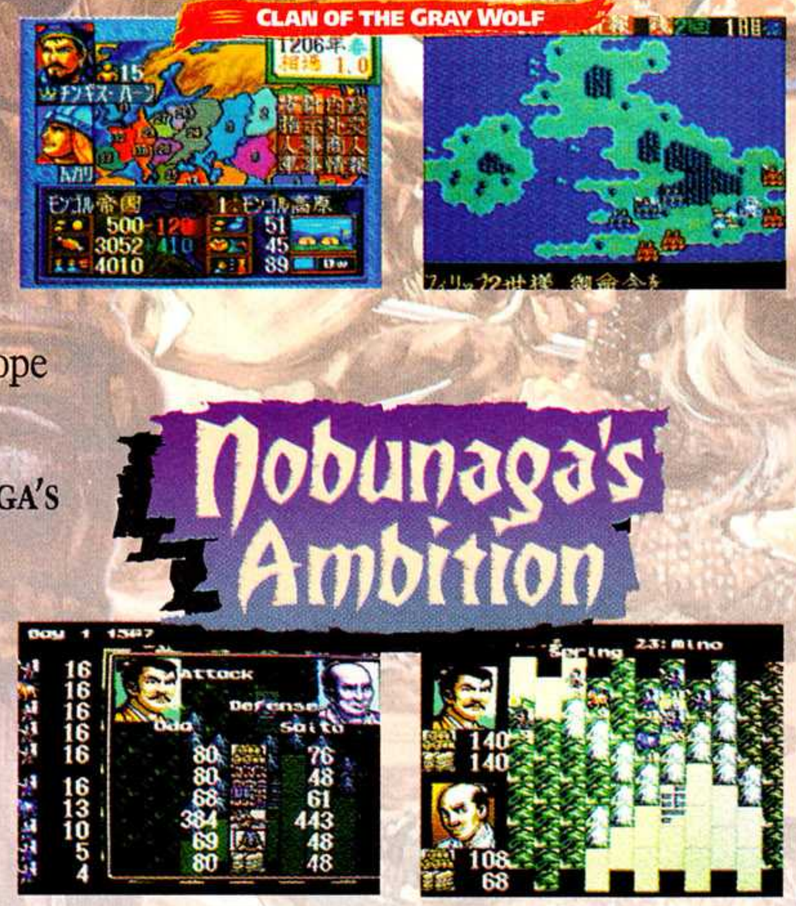
Sega Genesis screens shown



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VIDEO GAME GALLERY

PUBLISHER: EXTREME
SYSTEM: SNES
THEME: ACTION
MEGABITS: 4
PLAYERS: 1
LEVELS: 16
COMPLEXITY: AVERAGE

Remembering the Original

The original Choplifter was published by Broderbund for home computers in the early '80s, the most famous version appearing on the Apple II. The arcade-style contest blended several genres which were then popular among computer and arcade gamers.

Denny Thorley, Vice-President and General Manager of Extreme, said their team wanted to do a more enhanced version of the game, and this product certainly shows what dedication can do.

CHOPLIFTER 3

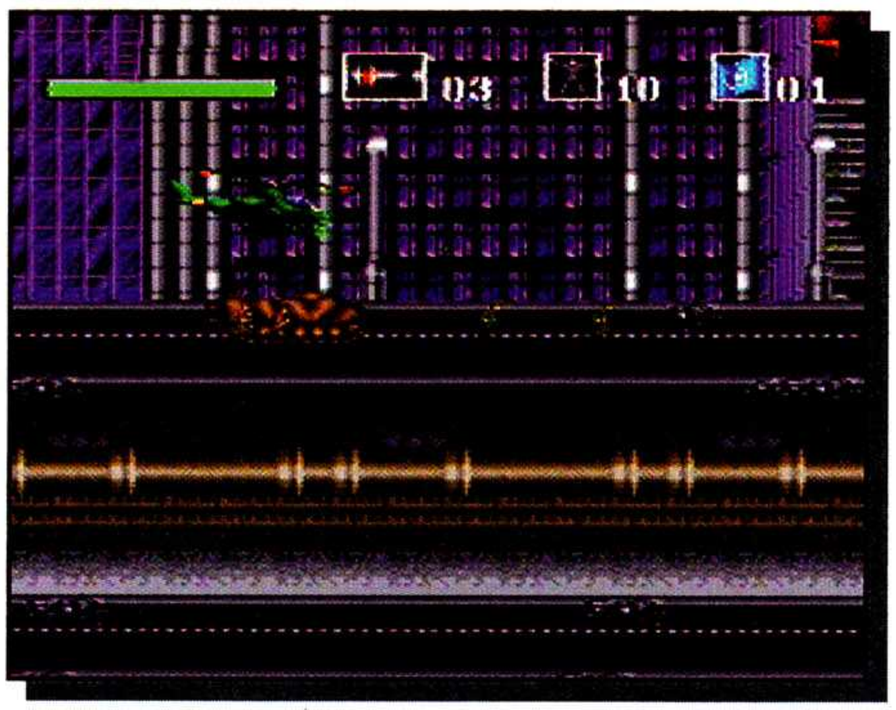
RESCUE HOSTAGES FROM TERRORISTS, AGAIN

Those veteran gamers out there who still remember the original **Choplifter** should feel pretty good about this third incarnation of the classic

helicopter rescue game. The object remains the same: Fly through a variety of scrolling combat scenarios, battle ground troops and avoid anti-aircraft fire while rescuing stranded comrades behind enemy lines. But best of all, it still has plenty of play-value, very little of which is eliminated by today's superior sound and graphics.

The player controls a combat helicopter which can be pointed left, right or straight-ahead (i.e., hovering), and can fire in an approximately 180 degree arc across the bottom of the screen. The chopper must be flown over hostile territory, acquiring special weapons and airlifting hostages along the way.

The game is broken up into four major scenarios, each containing four sub-missions. It seems a brutal terrorist faction of the apocryphal Magrehb guerrillas, known as the N.W.L., launched a surprise attack on four key Allied positions along the Magrehb border. Thousands were slaughtered, while the survivors are being held as human shields against possible U.N. intervention. In fact, the N.W.L. has given the U.N. until noon to remove its strongholds from Magrehb or the hostages will be executed. The player must take a combat/rescue chopper behind N.W.L. lines to each of 16 sectors, blow up any key buildings or structures in which hostages are being held, and land in order to rescue them. Problem: the chopper only holds 10 passengers, so quite a



bit of back-and-forth ferrying is required to get everyone home safely.

The different operations, which take place in the jungle, a desert, offshore and in a burned-out city, offer plenty of visual variety. There are also underground battle stations as

well as a constant stream of parachuting crates which, when hit by the gunfire, deliver up a wide range of special weapons.

While the action is good, there are a few quibbles with **Choplifter 3**, the most serious being the fact that Allied bullets only kill terrorists. While it's true that wars are now being fought with "smart" weapons, bullets have not yet reached a stage in their evolution where they can discern the difference between a terrorist and a hostage. And, since players don't have to worry about accidentally hitting a hostage, taking out ground troops is unrealistically simplified.

Another annoyance is the introduction of what can only be called Boss Weapons. Periodically, a huge tank or some other war machine rumbles into view and absorbs several megatons of firepower before going up in smoke. This is far too hokey a device for a simulation; bosses belong back in the platform games, not in realistic contests like **Choplifter 3**.

But the most serious thing missing from this third rev of **Choplifter** is the tension that the original game created within the player. In **Choplifter 3**, there always seems to be plenty of time to land and pick up hostages, for example, whereas in the original, from the moment the 'copter touched down until it soared back into the sky, the player was sweating bullets. Somehow, that small moment of human drama eludes this new edition.

—Bill Kunkel

GRAPHICS	SOUND	PLAYABILITY	REPLAY VALUE	OVERALL
91%	84%	90%	91%	90%

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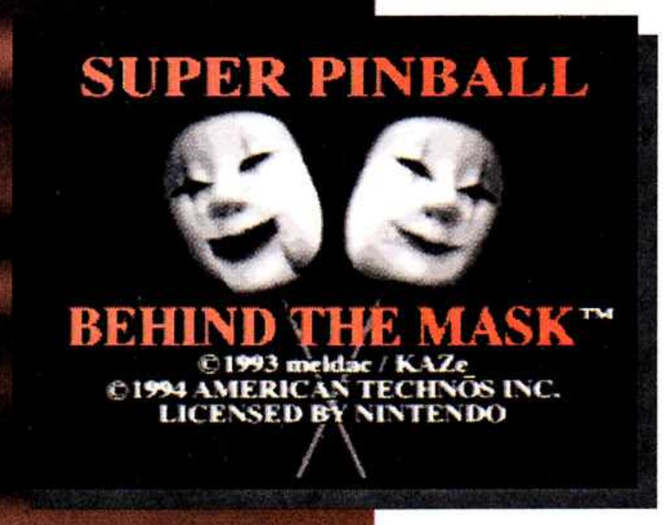
USA

Super Pinball: Behind the Mask
Pinball Comes Home for the SNES



Publisher: American Technos
System: SNES
Theme: Action
Megabits: 8
Players: 1-4
Levels: N/A
Complexity: Average

Super Pinball was on display at Winter CES, where a lot of excitement was generated from European buyers, especially the Germans, over the game's realistic approach. Its realistic style was determined by its Japanese programmers, who realized that with the resurgence of arcade pinball's popularity, both in the US and Europe, a true pinball simulation was necessary for the home market. They opted to keep the boards simple and is close to their arcade models as possible. So the boards are non-scrolling and the gamer's eyes can see the whole board and follow the ball.

A void in the SNES library has been filled by American Technos. **Super Pinball: Behind the Mask** offers fans of electronic pinball several different playfields to master in an attempt to defeat the evil Wizard, star heel at the Wizard Amusement Park.

Super Pinball has three board layouts: Jolly Joker, Blackbeard and Ironmen and Wizard. While the Joker and Wizard boards share an obvious template, the Blackbeard/Ironmen playfield offers an interesting layout departure, and is the most playable of the trio.

All three boards provide a variety of targets. In addition to either two or three bumpers, a row of drop targets and a couple of kickbacks. Plus, there is a skill shot feature and a pair of special lanes. The skill shot permits the gamer to earn one to three million points if the ball is launched while the eyes are lit on the center mask. The far left lane (called variously Jack in the Box, Blackbeard's Cave or Enigma) rewards the player with a randomized special favor, ranging from additional points to an extra ball. The Mystery Lane also provides freebies, but allows the player to make a limited decision using the flippers as a selection device.

A multi-ball feature is available on all the boards, which gives the flipper fan a chance at the Jackpot. If the gamer is good enough and can shoot the balls in the prescribed order and direction, it's possible to acquire over 40 million points.

The graphics are a mixed bag. On the one hand, **Super Pinball** presents an almost digitized reproduction of a series of classic-style pins; on the other, instead of offering the traditional topdown, vertically-scrolling presentation, American Technos opted to cram the entire board onto a single screen. The results are visually cramped and limit the potential variables which make electronic pinball a unique experience from the real thing.

The background music, meanwhile, does nothing to enhance the play experience. Pinball is a frenetic, high-speed experience, and mellow synthesized lounge music simply does not capture the pace and feel of the game. The voiceovers of "get ready," in addition to being unnecessary, are very difficult to understand.

Super Pinball has a number of solid features including Tilt and Freeze, which gives the shooter a new ball if the initial ball is lost immediately after shooting. One to four players can take turns manning the flippers, and there are two different play modes. In Competition Mode, players compete against each other for the highest score, while Conquest Mode challenges a single gamer to defeat all three playfields in order to reach the game ending sequence in which the Wizard goes up in smoke.

Super Pinball is not without its share of annoyances, however. For example, in capturing the realistic feel of a pin machine, the messages which traditionally appear on a pin's backboard now show up in a horizontal black strip running across the center of the game screen. While in the arcade the gamer can ignore the intrusion until the ball is out of play, in **Super Pinball**, the game play halts until the message is complete.

Worse, however, is the game's lack of ambition; where are the special features, the multi-levels and additional flipper sets?

Super Pinball performs a valuable service in bringing a pinball sim to SNES owners; it's just too bad that the design didn't have a little more scope. Hopefully, this design team will take a little more time in determining the scope in their next effort.

—Laurie Yates

Graphics	Sound	Playability	Replay Value	Overall
78%	69%	73%	71%	74%

PRINCE OF PERSIA

THE LEGEND IS RETOLD FOR THE GENESIS

The translation to the Genesis platform has been successfully carried off at last. It took a while, though this is nothing new for the peripatetic **Prince of Persia**, which has a history of moving from platform to platform, but taking its time about

it. That's good; it means the programmers in charge of porting over the game have been taking the time to make sure it lives up to its predecessors.

The natural fluidity of movement, the signature of Jordan Mechner's now-classic game, has been retained and appears startling—not to mention refreshing—to the eye used to even the smoothest cartoon stylings on the console platform.

This does not make it any easier to play, nor will the strategy guide books out for previously released versions be of any step-by-step type help. Although Tengen based it on the PC version, it did not exactly recreate it level-by-level. Thus, while basic storyline and the nature and style of the puzzles, traps and enemies all pretty much remain intact, the experienced player will find it necessary to re-learn portions of the game.

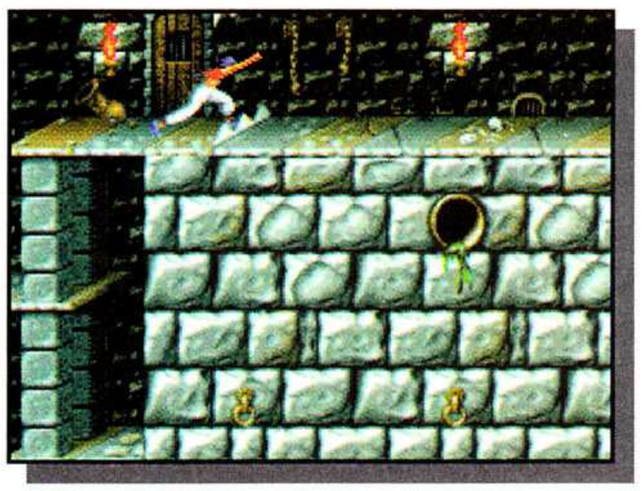
The story is the now-clichéd action-adventure quest to rescue a princess. The background tale is told and the mood set, in a cycle of several beautifully illustrated scenes if, when the cartridge is inserted and the console switched on, the controller is left alone (there is no demo of the play-action). The grand vizier, Jaffar (were *all* evil wizards in those ancient Arabian nights and days named Jaffar?) has seized power while the sultan is away, imprisoned the hero and given the princess an hour to consent to marry him or die.

As the game begins, Jaffar is seen turning over a huge hourglass in the tower chamber where he has imprisoned the princess. Then the scene shifts to our hero in the prison—and a message line across the bottom of the screen starts to proclaim the diminishing time.

The unnamed prince (actually, he's not a prince yet, nor will he be until he succeeds in his quest) now begins his urgent mission. He is not in an enclosed cell; there are

passageways, pitfalls and traps, but there is a way, perhaps more than one, to reach the princess. He is, in fact, at the starting position of a diabolical maze.

He is vulnerable. His life can withstand a certain degree of damage, but if he dies at the hands of palace guards, walking skeletons and other



enemies, or yields to various other unpleasant and deadly traps (falling on spikes, crushed under blocks of stone, etc.), he must start over from the beginning. But the hourglass is not reset, and he has a long, long way to go.

The learning curve is not terribly steep. There are several simple moves the prince can make, dependent on two buttons and the direction pad, and they quickly become second nature: running, jumping, cautious steps, climbing and, when it becomes necessary to fight, the thrust and parry with the sword. (He doesn't start out with a sword, however, and finding that first one can be a bear for the beginner.)

There are 12 levels, but they basically compose three sections to the maze: the dungeon, the main building of the palace and the tower. It will be rare to go more than a screen-length or so without encountering a puzzle or an enemy, or both. There are, for instance, times when it's necessary to get the enemy to trip a trap so that the hero may proceed unmolested.

No need to be discouraged at the prospect of having to start the game over from the beginning or dying three-quarters of the way through—there are passwords at each level.

Prince of Persia is a great play, and well worth the effort for the dedicated puzzler as well as skilled practitioners of the highest art of platform video gaming. Consider it a fantastic video game carpet ride with lots of fun thrown in.

— Ross Chamberlain

PUBLISHER: TENGEN
SYSTEM: GENESIS
THEME: PUZZLE/ADVENTURE
MEGABITS: 8
PLAYERS: 1
LEVELS: 12
COMPLEXITY: AVERAGE

A chat with Jordan Mechner:

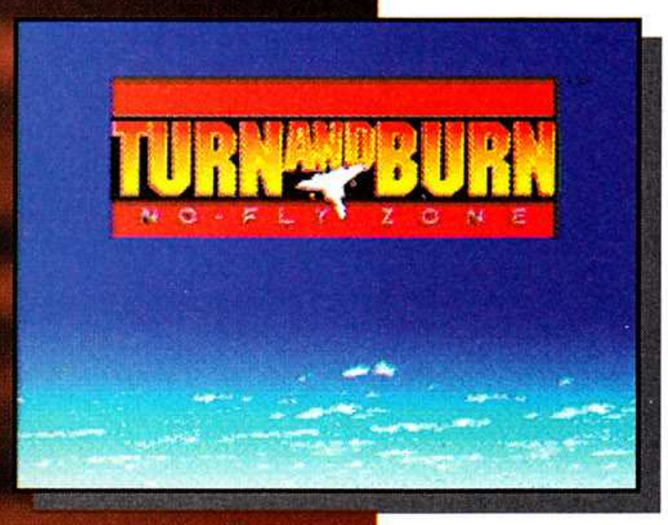
"Part of the impetus was to create a character whom the player could identify with. When he fell, you could feel the weight; when he climbs you see the stretch and struggle of his movements."
EG: "I almost feel guilty when he dies."
J.M. "Exactly! It makes the game more fun to watch—and you hear someone who's watching gasp when he falls on the spikes.

"My intention was that people would get the hang of it easily, yet build on skills development as it gets more difficult later on. But frustrated players should know there's always one clue to every puzzle."

GRAPHICS	SOUND	PLAYABILITY	REPLAY VALUE	OVERALL
90%	83%	88%	80%	87%

Turn & Burn: No Fly Zone

It's not just a game, it's an adventure



Publisher: Absolute
System: SNES
Theme: Flight Sim
Megabits: 16
Players: 1-2
Levels: 16
Complexity: Average

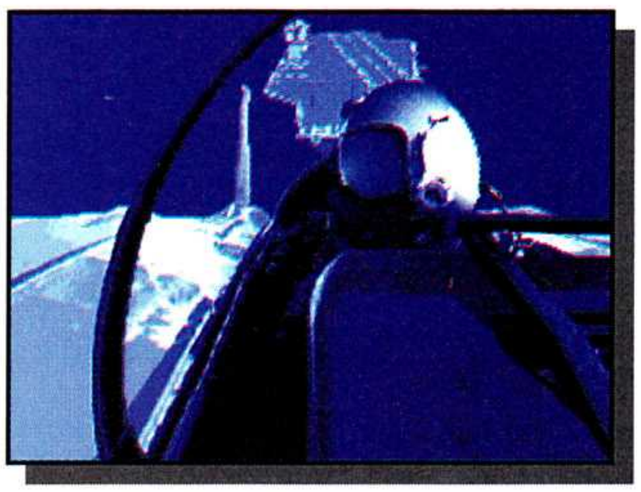
Dan Kitchen, Executive Vice President of Creative Development:

"We knew that without the special FX chip that the SNES processor wouldn't be able to update the screen as fast as the game required; therefore, the player wouldn't have the feeling of flight and speed. This would have ruined the illusion of sitting in the cockpit, so we did digitized graphics.

"To achieve this look, we received non-classified photos from F-14 cockpits. After digitizing the photos, we utilized the SNES' large color palette and were then able to make what the pilot would really experience."

Absolute Entertainment continues its line of realistic military simulations with **Turn and Burn: No Fly Zone**, an air combat game with the strongest dogfight sequences available on the SNES.

Set in the Mediterranean Area of Operations, the President has been forced (due to recent rampant political and military instability) to declare the air space a No Fly Zone, effectively closing the area off to all air traffic. To prevent further deterioration, the player, as a naval aviator, is placed inside a Tomcat by the Department of the Navy and ordered to neutralize all aircraft violating the forbidden airspace.



The nicely-rendered Heads-Up Display (HUD) offers a number of painted-on gauges. There is a speedometer, Horizontal Situation Display, lock-on indicators and a cockpit computer display (CCD) among the various live meters. The primary feedback is generated by the CCD, which displays not only critical and non-critical flight information, but also issues warning messages regarding enemy activity and establishes flight parameters. The Tomcat's automatic flight control system automatically monitors altitude, speed, fuel, compass heading, angle of attack, etc., while the navigational computer permits the pilot to home in on radar signatures and radio beacons.

Since combat ability is crucial, the player not only has the Vulcan 20mm cannon at his disposal, but also three classes of missiles: Sidewinder, Sparrow and Phoenix. However, the pilot will also need to use electronic countermeasures and fly evasively. In fact, the more erratic and extreme, the better the chance of success.

The graphics in **Turn and Burn** are very successful within the game's limited scope. The pilot has access to multiple viewpoints, day and night take-offs and landings from aircraft carriers, animated ejection sequences and weapon close-ups. The clouds are beautifully

realized, especially when compared to the usual block-like polygon clouds which fill the skies in most flight sims. Be warned, though, the Mode 7 rotation can be too realistic while the novice player is earning his wings and performing barrel rolls.

The problem is the game's limited visual horizons. Most of the action takes place over water, which may prove too static for some video game fans who are used to a greater range of visual stimuli. And while the dogfight sequences are superb, anyone who has played MicroProse's **Super Strike Eagle** will miss those incredible Mode-7 attacks on a variety of ground targets. The flight simulation itself is just a bit too smooth; there aren't any of those little jerks, shudders, and G-Force rattles that add so much to a flight sim's realism.

The background music, a low-key military-like theme by Mark Van Hecke perfectly underscores the on-screen action without deafening the gamer. The first-rate sound effects also enhance the realism of the game, especially the "ping" of bullets against the hull of the enemy aircraft.

Turn and Burn presents players with two skill modes: Novice and Ace. The Novice Mode permits rookies to fine tune their skills, while Ace plunks the flying expert into the heat of the simulation. While this is basically a first person simulation, a second player may join in as a co-pilot and man the F-14's weapon and computer systems. At the completion of each level, the player is given a code, permitting game play to resume with the aborted mission.

It doesn't offer much land-based action, and the pace may be a little slow for impatient twitch gamers, but **Turn and Burn** is a fine simulation highlighted by solid sound and graphics that really deliver an authentic feel.

—Laurie Yates

Graphics	Sound	Playability	Replay Value	Overall
88%	86%	82%	82%	85%

SIDE POCKET
PLAYING POOL WITH POWER-UPS

Side Pocket, which has long provided the clinks of gliding balls on green felt and the resulting "thunk" of success on the Genesis, finally makes the break to the SNES.

Side Pocket uses a topdown perspective for the table, with a perforated line connecting the cueball to the next suggested shot. In addition to keeping track of the order of the balls, this dashed line also gives the player the estimated angles, if the cueball's path is not blocked.

The shooter also determines the force of each shot using the bar gauge at the top of the screen; and can control the "english," the point where the cue hits the ball, using a crosshairs icon on a display ball at the top of the screen.

The game play options

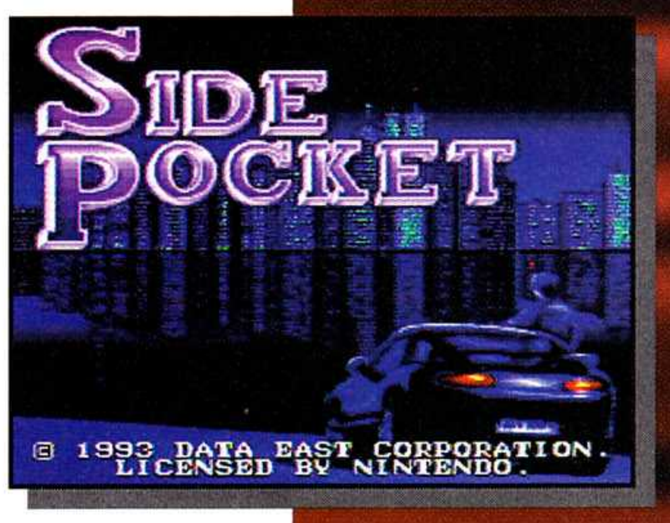
include one- and two-player pocket games, two player nine ball game, trick game and jukebox. The pocket games are contests that lead the video Minnesota Fats wannabes across the country trying to reach the preset point tally for each city. Some of the video game "improvements" over the real-life experience include bonus points for sinking balls consecutively and/or in numerical order; bonus pockets which award extra points if a ball is sunk while the pocket is highlighted; and a super ball, which careens wildly over the table if the cueball makes contact.

The two-player nine ball game is an alternating game which follows the formalized rules of nine ball, including fouls and penalties. Trick Game gives the hustler a chance to show his stuff with 19 different trick shots, each with a unique solution involving not only alignment and power, but also the english.

There are 22 music selections, quite a few more than the Genesis version offered. The jazz and fusion music establishes the mood and setting of a darkened, smoky lounge. However, if the player can't find an appealing option, the music can be toggled off. The vocal cues, while unnecessary, are clearly pronounced. The sound of the balls breaking when the player pans through the options on the Menu Screen is a nice audio touch. The sound effects, from the breaking "whack" to the game ending "nick" are very realistically-rendered.

The graphics, including the animated winks, are very consistent to the Genesis standard. The animations are smooth and overall very realistic. The hand icon, for placing the ball, does seem out of place and even cartoonish against the felt. The SNES' texturing abilities provide a nice range of shadowing and depth-increasing to the layout.

Side Pocket is a very playable simulation. Iguana not only maintained the standards set in the Genesis version for 16-Bit simulated pool, but they did quite a bit of enhancement. The physics of the ball movements are accurately rendered and the "extras" make the game fun whether the player is a novice or a shark. Also, as the gamer hones his skills, the Trick shots become a test of prowess, instead of an insurmountable challenge. As with any sports simulation, **Side Pocket** has a high replay rate for two reasons: the gamer is constantly improving; and the game is never the same twice.



Side Pocket is a nice solid pool simulation that deserves a spot in every SNES library. Now, if Data East could just capture American eight-ball in as classy a simulation as it did the European nine-ball, they could have the pool market racked up. Perhaps just such a project is in the wings, just waiting to be released to all of us easy-chair pool sharks.

—Laurie Yates

PUBLISHER: DATA EAST
SYSTEM: SNES
THEME: SPORTS
MEGABITS: 8
PLAYERS: 1-2
LEVELS: 5
COMPLEXITY: AVERAGE

Side Pocket History:

Side Pocket first appeared on the NES. In 1992, the Genesis showed the simulation in 16-Bit glory, with enhanced graphics and sounds. Soon the Game Gear will take nine ball on the road. The ironic part of this is that four different design houses worked on each SKU.

The similarities between the SNES and Genesis versions are numerous. The main differences are in the graphics and sound. The smoother animation and the increased music selection makes an already great Genesis game a true SNES winner.

A sequel is in the works, so keep those cues handy!

GRAPHICS	SOUND	PLAYABILITY	REPLAY VALUE	OVERALL
86%	88%	90%	93%	90%

MEGA TURRICAN
REPRISE: MAN VERSUS MACHINE

PUBLISHER: DATA EAST
SYSTEM: GENESIS
THEME: ACTION
MEGABITS: 8
PLAYERS: 1
LEVELS: 15
COMPLEXITY: AVERAGE

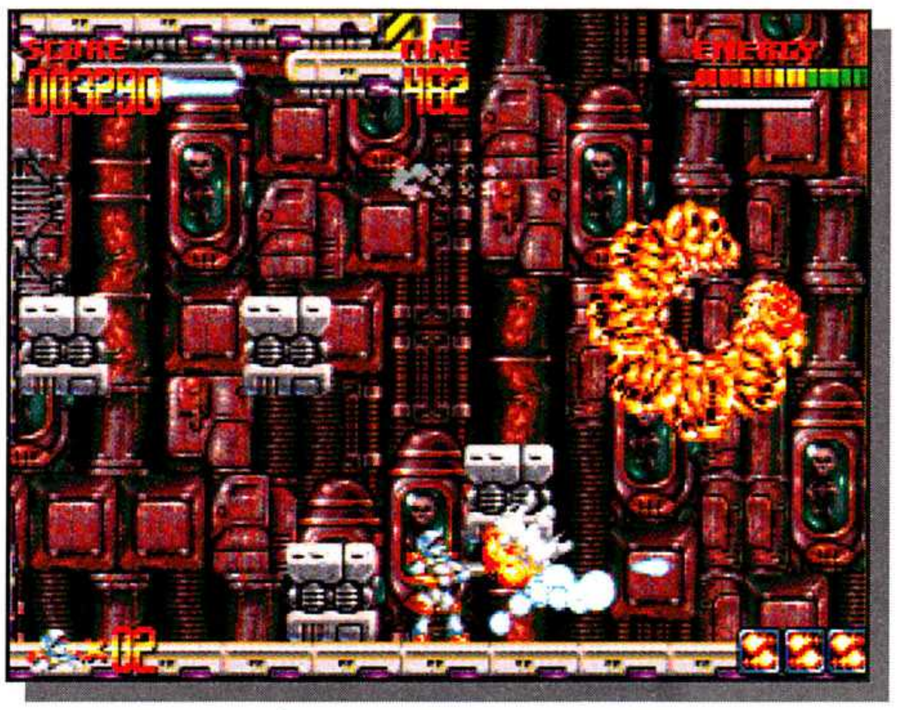
David Hoffman, New Product Planning, talks about Mega Turrican's secrets.

"Mega Turrican is most comparable to the SNES' Super Turrican. We [Data East] knew we had to do an even better game for the Genesis. With the extra megs, we added levels, digitized speech and gave McGuire the plasma rope.

"Even more important is the secret level. If the player reaches a certain score, and kills an enemy with a certain weapon, a new playfield will open. We wanted to raise the challenge of the game and encourage the gamer to find hidden objects. This way, it's a competition."

Platform game heroes never die; they just find new territory to scroll through.

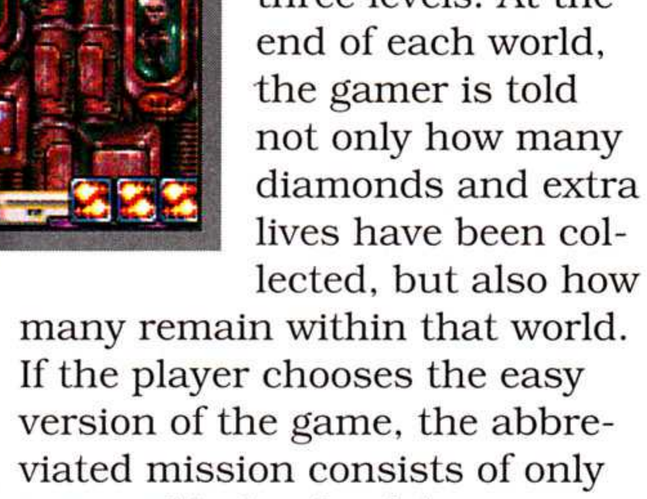
Bren McGuire, United Planets Freedom Forces leader, returns to twitch game territory in Data East's new platform shooter, **Mega Turrican**. Years earlier, McGuire was the sole survivor of the starship *Avalon 1* when the evil "Machine" killed his shipmates in an attempt to control the galaxy. After seeking revenge and destroying the enemy, the last thing McGuire expected was the return of the dark forces. But he failed to reckon with the forces of video game marketing; they're back, and up to their old tricks. So once again it's up to McGuire to put on the super-suit, rescue the girl and save the universe.



As fans of the series know, the player-character is far from empty handed in his war against the Evil Machine; he comes equipped with a turrican assault suit, exoskeletal battle armor equipped with multiple weapon capabilities and a plasma rope to reach otherwise inaccessible plateaus. McGuire also encounters three types of weapon power-ups during the course of the game: Multiples, which fire his gun several times in succession; Laser converts the gun to a laser beam; and Rebound, which permits regular fire to careen off walls, taking out enemies with a nasty ricochet.

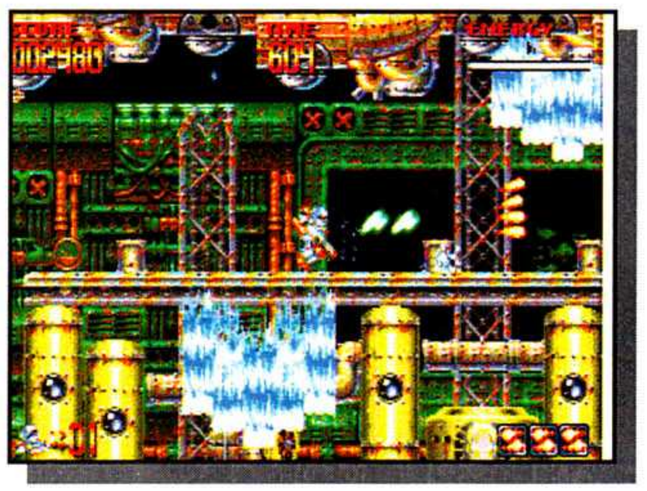
Other, non-weapon power-ups include health hearts, diamond points, smart bombs, shields and homing missiles. McGuire can also become an energy wheel, which makes him almost invulnerable as he rolls along the ground.

Mega Turrican is comprised of five worlds, each having three levels. At the end of each world, the gamer is told not only how many diamonds and extra lives have been collected, but also how many remain within that world. If the player chooses the easy version of the game, the abbreviated mission consists of only two worlds (six levels).



The game plays a lot better with a six-button controller, which **Mega Turrican** automatically detects, even if it's inserted during a game. The replay value is unusually high and there are quite a few Easter Eggs to locate, including hidden lives, diamonds, power-ups and hidden passages.

Mega Turrican's graphics are well produced and nicely varied, with each level given a different look, feel, and challenge. There are underwater sequences, factory landscapes and scenes set in dungeons. Developers Factor 5 also produced some neat, SNES-style special effects, such as real time rotation and 3-D zoom, as well as a series of huge boss sprites. On the down side, the Genesis' limited palette does cause the player-character to occasionally disappear against the backgrounds.



The high-tech music tracks, meanwhile, are nicely varied and help pace the game with some 30 different themes to accompany the diver's environments.

Mega Turrican can stand proudly alongside the most memorable entries in this popular series, which repeatedly pits the stamina and spirit of man against the cold evil of machines. And who knows, maybe this time the Evil Machine will stay unplugged.

—Laurie Yates

GRAPHICS	SOUND	PLAYABILITY	REPLAY VALUE	OVERALL
85%	81%	92%	90%	87%

Championship World Class Soccer
Dual display captures the action!

Gamers must feel like shell-shocked goalies, there've been so many new soccer video games in the last six months. And just when you think you've seen the best, the ultimate, another terrific one like this comes along to make the consumer's buying decision ever tougher.

Championship World Class Soccer has a roster of 32 international teams, selected from a flag-festooned option screen. As the host of the 1994 World Cup, the U.S. team is included. A solitaire gamer can choose either exhibition or tournament, while two humans also have the option of going head to head in a showdown match. A password system carries a tournament over to the next session.

If you've always had an irrational desire to play arcade soccer in German, French or Spanish, this is definitely the cartridge you've been awaiting. This is obviously part of some Accolade worldwide marketing scheme, but more pertinent options are also available, including length of half (15, 30 or 45 minutes), fouls and the offsides rule.

After team selection comes more choices. A menu chooses among four formations and three levels of goalie control. Automatic control turns over

the netminder to the machine, while semi-automatic reverts to manual any time the goalie gains possession of the ball. Under manual control, the player can dive, catch or deflect shots and has several different ways to put the ball into play.

Coaches follow the action on an omni-directional scrolling pitch, rendered in adjusted overhead perspective. The diagonal orientation, found on several other soccer titles this year, seems particularly appropriate for presenting the unpredictable, seesaw action.

The players are the thing in the graphics department. Because **Championship World Class Soccer** gets so close to the play, the athletes have to look right and move realistically, or the believability of the simulation disintegrates. Park Place, the development house responsible for this game, obviously put a lot of work into artwork and animation. The

sprites aren't enormous, but they run naturally and the booters are fairly detailed. The extra effort paid off handsomely in enhanced realism.

Ball-hawking simulations like this sometimes make it impossible for gamers to track the overall situation. **Championship World Class Soccer** meets this challenge with a supplementary display. It shows the entire pitch from angle side perspective with every player's position clearly indicated. This radar screen fills the upper right corner of the screen. It's attractive as well as readable, too.

The developer didn't skimp on frills. A pre-match shows a sports analyst, who reads a summary of the upcoming match. There's also an introduction incorporating a large digitized image of a soccer stadium, and an Instant Replay Mode.

The control system is a three-tiered structure: player controlling the ball, player without ball and loose ball. Pressing the A button triggers a shot on goal in the first situation, orders a slide tackle in the second, and causes the man to bicycle kick or head the ball in the third. Other controls work similarly, so there's a lot more you can do than just nudge the ball around by bumping into it.

Crowd noise, grunts of exertion and the ball sound are the main audio after the opening kick. The opening music is listenable, but not remarkable.

The documentation is praiseworthy. It attempts to fill the knowledge gap with detailed, lucid explanations of the game, the sport of soccer, and the teams involved in the competition. The 28-page manual is valuable reading even for those in the habit of just plugging in a new cartridge and figuring it out during play. The broad outlines are a snap to learn, but some of the nuances explicated in the rulebook will gentle the learning curve. The section on soccer rules and the glossary are just what the first-timer needs.

The docs also profile each of the 32 teams. Most Americans don't follow international soccer very closely, so this primer helps turn largely anonymous teams into known quantities for yankee gamers.

There's still no automatic choice for those who want a lively soccer sim, but **Championship World Class Soccer** merits consideration.

—Arnie Katz

Publisher: Acclaim
System: SNES
Theme: Sports
Megabits: N/A
Players: 1-2
Levels: N/A
Complexity: Average

It's a matter of perspective. Park Place's decision to use a primary and secondary display in Championship World Class Soccer is an interesting answer to a problem that lies at the center of sports game design: how to show the field during play.

Games such as NFL '94 Starring Joe Montana sacrifice the overview to get up close and personal. In a sport like soccer, where teamwork is the decisive factor, a close-up without an overview of the pitch would be ruinous, because it would make it next to impossible to bring all booters into the action. This game addresses this problem with a unique solution.

Graphics	Sound	Playability	Replay Value	Overall
92%	83%	91%	94%	91%

SOFTWARE GALLERY

SAM & MAX HIT THE ROAD
RIB-TICKLING POLICE POWER IS HERE!

PUBLISHER: LUCASARTS
DESIGNERS: CLARK, STEMMLE, PURCELL, MICHAUD
SYSTEM: MS-DOS
THEME: ADVENTURE
HD SPACE: 12 MB
PLAYERS: 1
COMPLEXITY: AVERAGE

Interview with Designer Sean Clark

Sean Clark was able to impart his own sense of humor into a product that got its origins in the cartoon genré, but he and his co-designers had Steve Purcell's comic books and strips available for inspiration. "We kept Steve involved throughout the whole project so that we had the flavor and foundation correct. We wanted more of an edge than just slapstick humor." The original list of roadside attractions was much longer than the ones that made it into the game.

Sam and Max, known together as the Freelance Police, are the products of the wacky, twisted mind of Steve Purcell. They have appeared in their own comic books as well as the LucasFilm Fan Club magazine and other LucasFilm publications, irreverently taking the law into their own hands and using just the slightest bit of force when only absolutely necessary (Yeah, right!). It was only a natural progression that LucasArts would give this pair their own game. **Sam & Max Hit the Road** is a cross-country adventure in which the dog and rabbit duo must roam the nation in search of a missing side-show freak.

Bruno the Bigfoot and his girlfriend Trixie the Giraffe-Necked Woman from Scranton have disappeared from the local carnival. It's up to Sam, the fedora-wearing canine, and Max, his spastic bunny buddy, to find the pair and solve the mystery of their flight.

Their journey takes them to a collection of roadside attractions out of a drug-induced dream. For example, the Mount Rushmore Prehistoric Bungee Cavalcade is where enthusiasts bungee jump from the stone presidents' nostrils. Other attractions include the World's Largest Ball of Twine, the Tar Pit Slide and the Celebrity Vegetable Museum.

Hit the Road uses a different type of interface than previous LucasArts games. The game's graphics take up the entire screen and the interface only pops up when players click the right mouse button. This button cycles through the various command icons and inventory icon. Use the left mouse button to click on the object or person on which the command will operate. In the case of dialogue, players have the choice of questions, declarations or non-sequiturs.

The absence of an on-screen interface may confuse some players, but this technique works quite well for **Hit the Road** because the animation and cartoon art are such an important aspect of the game. The less that the interface takes away from the experience the better.

The humor in **Hit the Road** is absolutely infectious. The antics of the duo, particularly Max, come alive in the limitless world of cartoon graphics. Max is such a hyperactive character that he will induce the players to bounce off the walls too.

Players who search carefully will also find a number of mini-games within **Hit the Road**'s environment. Six games provide some entertaining diversions to the puzzles and mystery of the main adventure. Hiway Surfin pits Max against a series of signs he must jump, while Dress-Up Book is an activity that doll fans will enjoy. The best is Wak-A-Rat, a variation on that carnival midway test of skill and an actual puzzle in the game. If the adventure itself doesn't amuse the players (a doubtful proposition), the mini-games will.

Hit the Road's graphics capture the spirit of Purcell's original cartoons. It certainly helps that Purcell worked on the design team and advised the artists. Cartoon graphics fit the nature of the game and the roadside attractions. The sound effects and music also emphasize its goofy aspects. When the CD-ROM full talkie version of **Hit the Road** is available, players will be able to fully enjoy Sam & Max at their best. Until then, the disk version of **Hit the Road** will satisfy LucasArts fans and introduce the popular pair of animal detectives to adventure-lovers. You'll never look at a dog or rabbit the same again!

— Russ Ceccola

GRAPHICS	SOUND	PLAYABILITY	REPLAY VALUE	OVERALL
90%	85%	85%	80%	85%

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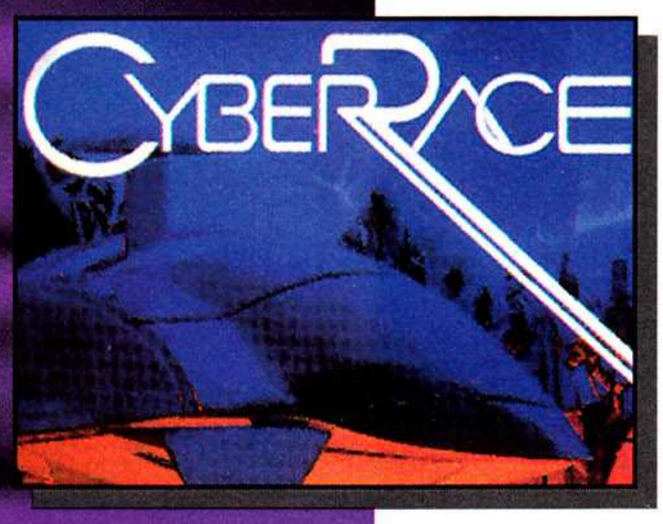

PUBLISHER: CYBERDREAMS
DESIGNERS: P. KETCHUM, R. & J. KLUG
SYSTEM: MS-DOS
THEME: COMBAT/RACING
HD REQ.: 28 MB
PLAYERS: 1
COMPLEXITY: AVERAGE

Interview with Syd Mead

"The idea for CyberRace started with Patrick Ketchum's fascination with an illustration I prepared for an international sports festival," says Mead. "The picture was of ... an enormous network of expressways, with viewing galleries and a closeup of the pit areas. The shape of the racers' sleds came from the notion of very high speed vehicles with moveable panels that would keep the laminar flow of air over the vehicles to a minimum.

"My favorite scenes are the double frame pan background shots."

In the distant future, Earth is only one of many inhabited planets. And the intelligent anthropoid human is only one of dozens of known sentient races who are constantly at war with one another for control of the known universe. During one of these wars, a Kaladasian Dreadnought sought to make a Terran light battle cruiser pay dearly for a raid on a Kaladasian outpost. In the pursuit of the Terran ship, a stray Kaladasian graviton beam weapon caused a small sun to nova, engulfing all of its planets. The injured star then collapsed back on itself, forming a black hole which sucked into its void everything in the vicinity. The galactic community, horrified by the latest atrocity, forced the wars to an end, replacing them with the CyberRace.

CyberRace combines a race with combat in a test of skill, strategy and technology. The player, as Clay Shaw, is forced to represent the technocratic politicians of the Terran Empire who have kidnapped his beloved Alyssia. Late in the race, the Eidolon, a super-intelligent race of beings, emerge from the black hole, promising that the winner of **CyberRace** will be their ally and ruler of the galaxy. Race well, bring the Terran Empire to power and glory, plus release the love of your life from captivity, torture and possible death.

Like Nova Logic's Comanche products, **CyberRace** uses the three dimensional Voxel graphics landscapes and the 386 Virtual Mode of the more powerful main processor chip of the IBM computer. Voxel graphics are based on Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), used in the Computer Aided Tomography (CAT) scans used by physicians. Cyberdreams uses four Voxel generated planets with two Cyber tracks per planet for a total of eight different racetracks. One final competition is the demolition elimination, in which there is no track and the victor is the only one left with a functional sled.

Syd Mead and the Cyberdreams staff produced beautiful and functional designs for the sleds, the Voxel worlds, the Terran and Kaladasian war ships and the body types and cultures for 11 races of people. The sleds fly along at impossible speeds, made possible by the automated altitude control device that keeps the sled close to, but not touching the ground. Even when driving straight into vertical surfaces at top speed, the sled merely jumps to a higher altitude rather than collide.

When flying the sled, the first priority is the race. The player, as Shaw, must complete the required number of circuits before anyone else to win, save in the elimination type race, where disabling Mugyor, the Kaladasian Lord turned racer, wins the race. Stay between the two rows of holographic projections that define the track to win, leaving it only to avoid mines and missiles. The sled is equipped with a variety of defensive, offensive and guidance devices, depending on Shaw's financial ability to purchase these accessories, either at the black market **CyberRace** cantina or in the equipment options game phase. Equipment choices include armor, shields, autopilot, guided attack system (GAS), mines, beam weapons and various dumb fire and guided missiles. The cockpit shows status of these and other attributes of the sled.

Like **Wing Commander**, **CyberRace** has a non-linear, animated, adventure plot line that accompanies and complements the action sequences. The plot line has nine levels of depth, meaning that Clay needs to lose nine races in a row to lose the game, or six races in a row to win it. As situations change so may conversations among Dobbs, the terran technocrat, Alyssia, Clay, Nardo, Clay's pit chief, a newscaster and a reporter.

CyberRace is an exciting race-combat combination that is augmented with an interesting, though sometimes melodramatic, plot. The game is technically excellent, with beautiful video capture animation, wonderful originally composed music score, and excellent sound effects, but it lacks depth of characterization and situational development in the animated sequences. The ending has Mugyor kidnapping Alyssia and fleeing through the black hole in a dreadnought with Clay and the Eidolons in hot pursuit, setting up the sequel.

—Al Giovetti

GRAPHICS	SOUND	PLAYABILITY	REPLAY VALUE	OVERALL
84%	78%	83%	79%	84%

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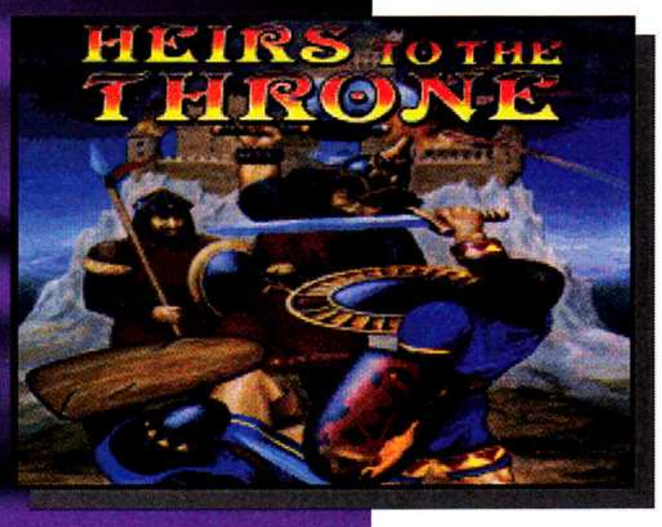
HEIRS TO THE THRONE

CAN YOU CLAIM THE POWERFUL KINGDOM?



PUBLISHER: QQP
DESIGN: GERMAN DESIGN GROUP
SYSTEM: MS-DOS
THEME: STRATEGY
HD REQ: 2.5 MB
PLAYERS: 1
COMPLEXITY: AVERAGE

Getting Set Up

Heirs to the Throne is probably the most configurable wargame on the market. With six pages of over 30 presets, this is less a single game than a group of games sharing some common rules. Almost every factor in the game is adjustable. With some experimentation, anything from an easy, 30 minute time-waster, to a multi-hour tactically challenging campaign can be easily created and long-enjoyed.

This type of high quality programming makes a single game readily playable by young and old, or NIMITZ and neophyte alike.

Stealthily, the assassin moves from shadow to shadow. He waits for the perfect moment. Then, in a flurry of steel and blood, he strikes. The king is dead, and **Heirs to the Throne** begins. Since the king's brother is off at the crusades, the death sends the barons of the realm into a feeding frenzy: each attempting to claim the throne through brute force.

The player is one of those barons. Not only must the other power-hungry nobles be defeated, but also the royalists, who await the return of the rightful king. **Heirs** pulls away from the pack in this respect, as most games go to great lengths to justify the good in the carnage the player creates. No such pretense here; the player is a blood-sucking opportunist, seeking to usurp the reign that has brought years of peace and prosperity to the realm.

In its simplest form, **Heirs** is straight power combat. The player gets a castle and starts conquering the many regions of the map. In each conquered region, income-producing villages can be founded and fortifications may be built. Combat is resolved mostly by brute force, though there is some tactical finesse via fortifications, as well as a small random factor. Truthfully, if this were the extent of the product, it would not be worth the effort.

Fortunately, the simple form is just the tip of the iceberg. **Heirs To The Throne** is extremely configurable. And the presets are not just slight nuances of the base model; some of them drastically modify game play. With the right

settings, **Heirs** becomes a truly challenging tactical game. Catapults, logistical constraints, production and combat modifiers, configurable troop types and even the attitudes of the royalists can be manipulated at will. Additionally, another option brings the rightful heir back late in the game, and he just happens to be bringing a big army with him. At this level of play, most generals lose more armies to starvation than combat, and the most resolute warriors will have difficulty.

Another point in the game's favor, purely from a wargamer's point of view, is the inclusion of the attack modification factors the program uses when the terrain types, fortifications and troop types options are activated. These formulas are somewhat complex, but allow the player to exactly calculate his/her attack and defense strength. For people who don't like wargames or calculations don't panic: it doesn't take too long to get a good feel for the relative strength of the troops.

There are, however, some weak points to this product. The graphics are unimpressive, and the music fails to compensate for the lack of visuals. In an era of increasing audio-visual sophistication, this game feels slightly dated. Far worse, however, is the game manual, which leaves out some of the important details of the rules; the player is forced to learn them the hard way, through tedious experimentation.

This is not the fault of QQP, who contracted this game with a company known as the German Design Group. Due to contractual obligations, QQP was forced to accept a direct conversion of their manual, and you might say that a lot was lost in the translation. Normally, this would be a minor point but, due to the importance of the previously mentioned presets, the omissions from the manual do damage the game.

If the player is willing to invest a few hours to find good

configurations and puzzle out the rules, a very playable game can be made out of the raw materials **Heirs** provides. However, in a vastly competitive market with plenty of good strategy software available to the consumer, many gamers might not want to make the added effort that will be necessary to discover this game's strong points.

—Ed Dille

GRAPHICS	SOUND	PLAYABILITY	REPLAY VALUE	OVERALL
65%	70%	80%	85%	75%

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Command Adventures: Starship

Select a path to universal conquest.

Publisher: Merit Software
Designer: Tom Lima
System: MS-DOS
Theme: Strategy
HD Req.: 26 MB
Players: 1
Complexity: Average

Space conquest games are frequent releases in the software market. Until technology permits humans to actually fly in outer space and trade or fight with other civilizations, game companies will continue to look to the future for source material. Elite was one of the first games of this nature many years ago. It combined the mystery of space flight simulation with the strategy and tactics of trading and world building.

Most recently, Origin's Privateer combined Wing Commander flight simulator technology with commerce and conquest themes. Merit's new game takes a fresh approach to space conquest. It uses detailed graphics and impressive sound effects and music to emphasize the exciting action both in outer space and on planets. With continuing advances is computer game technology, gamers can hope to see additional releases of titles like this one, each more impressive as time goes by.

Command Adventures: Starship is infinitely replayable because players design and outfit their ships and choose their course through the game's universe. There are 50 planets and a number of starbases in the main map, all of which the player must uncover in the course of the game. At the outset, only the initial starbase and its surrounding space are visible.

The player takes the role of a starship commander who must conquer all 50 planets and make the universe safe for space travel. This is a massive effort that will take many trials before success.

Game play shifts between two major arenas — ground combat and space combat. The interfaces for these screens and the setup screens are intuitive, but **Starship** has a steep learning curve. Many players may get frustrated in their first space battle because they run out of weapons and can't return to the bridge of their vessels. Perseverance, multiple weapons and easier combat choices make a big difference in advancement in the game. It will take a few games to understand exactly how to outfit a starship with a shield, engine and weapons in order to succeed in combat and keep costs low.

The designers really should have supplied more than 2 million credits for initial purchases. This amount buys just enough equipment and crew members to survive a couple battles and conquer a planet. The weapons and revenues generated from these first few conquests will be enough to upgrade the starship and start off the pattern of combat-upgrade-combat. **Starship** is like other strategy games (notably **Syndicate**) in which players get stronger gradually, but at a reasonable pace.

The game begins on a starbase. There the fledgling commander must choose a vessel, add a shield and engine, arm it with weapons and hire and outfit six crew members. From the bridge of the starship, the commander selects a planet, starbase or open area of space as a destination. The action then switches to an overhead combat view.

Both surface and space combat have a similar feel. The object of space combat is to cycle through ship weapons to destroy alien vessels while maintaining a decent speed and shield strength. Action is smooth and fast, so players must have full command of the

interface. Some experimentation is necessary.

Surface combat is different because an away team must take over all areas of the map and also set up an isolation grid that fully establishes ownership of the planet. It is easy to scroll around the maps of the planets' surfaces and find all of the enemies. The player must dispatch his away team members to different parts of the surface to pick up additional weapons for survival and dispatch the aliens. The ground combat is more interesting than space combat or boarding alien ships because the surface graphics reflect the environment of the planet, from arid to frozen.

Indeed, the graphics, sound effects and music contribute a great deal to the enjoyment of **Starship**. Various animations interrupt the action to represent navigation, planet landings, etc. The interface screens and combat screens are highly detailed and reflect the expanse of the game—which might explain the 26 MB **Starship** requires on a hard drive.

The music is especially noteworthy. Hamilton Altstatt, who dubs himself "The Thin Man," contributed a sometimes ethereal, always entertaining score that enhances game play more than it intrudes.

Starship is an enormous game the type of which gamers have never seen before from Merit Software. The variety of elements (12 civilizations, 36 starship weapons, etc.) offers a lot of diversity and personalization from the start. **Starship** is completely open-ended so that the player might choose any commander, crew and weapons and have a good chance to succeed.

The copy protection uses that hard-to-read brown no-copy paper, but that and the steep learning curve are the only real drawbacks. **Starship** has a lot of depth and enjoyment to entertain fans and newcomers to the genre. Are you ready to take command?

— Russ Ceccola

Graphics	Sound	Playability	Replay Value	Overall
85%	85%	80%	90%	85%

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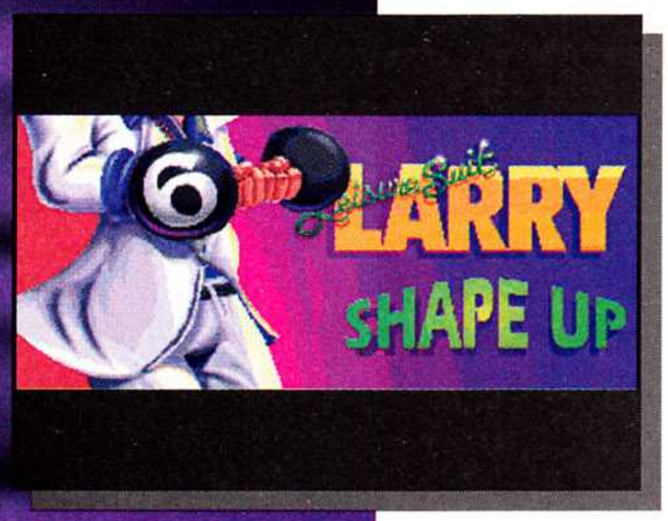
Leisure Suit Larry 6

Boldly goes where no sleaze has gone...



Publisher:
Sierra On-Line
Designer: Al Lowe
System: MS-DOS
Theme: Puzzle
RAM Req.: DOS/640K
Windows/2 MB
HD Req: 10 MB
Players: 1
Complexity: Intricate

Chatting with Al Lowe

The creator of the Leisure Suit Larry series, as refreshingly witty and casual as the games he creates, says that Shape Up or Slip Out was planned as a CD-ROM game. "It's the first Larry game with Super VGA graphics, full speech and a slick new windows interface unlike any adventure game you've ever seen before! Unfortunately ... not enough game players own CD-ROM drives yet, so we're going to release the low-res version first."

He also advises floundering players to look everywhere and touch everything, and not to be shy with the zipper.

Yes, that Polyester Potentate, that Double-knit Disco King, Leisure Suit Larry, is back in another rollicking adventure. This time, Larry has won second prize on the smash hit show, *Stallions*, and will spend two fun-filled weeks at the fabulous La Costa Lotta Spa. Here's a big surprise: This is a very funny game. (I wish I had a dollar for every time I heard that!)

Like its predecessors, **Shape Up or Slip Out** is a puzzle game. Reports are it's as complex as **LSL3**, but harder than **LSL5**. For those who are not followers of the guru of garishness, this translates to a player's need for ingenuity, intrusiveness and absolutely no manners at all.

In his search through the La Costa Lotta Spa for the ultimate experience, Larry is asked by any number of gorgeous women for special favors, ranging from fixing broken equipment to locating a party dress. If he is able to fulfill the ladies' wishes, he is rewarded—but not the way he expects, and often with hysterical results. Finding what Larry needs to carry out these requests requires the player to sift through trash cans, snoop around unauthorized areas, chat with strangers (some of the worst pick-up lines ever written) and steal from the hotel and its employees. The ruder and more resourceful the player is, the more likely he is to win the game.

A hint book is highly recommended, and asking for help on Sierra's tip line or one of the on-line services is not a bad idea either.

The male pronoun is appropriate here, for **Shape Up or Slip Out** is definitely skewed toward players of the masculine persuasion. This is not a game for feminists who offend easily. Big breasted babes abound, and the dialog is brimming with sexist innuendo—but that's okay, because Larry is nothing if not a world class chauvinist. It's part of his charm.

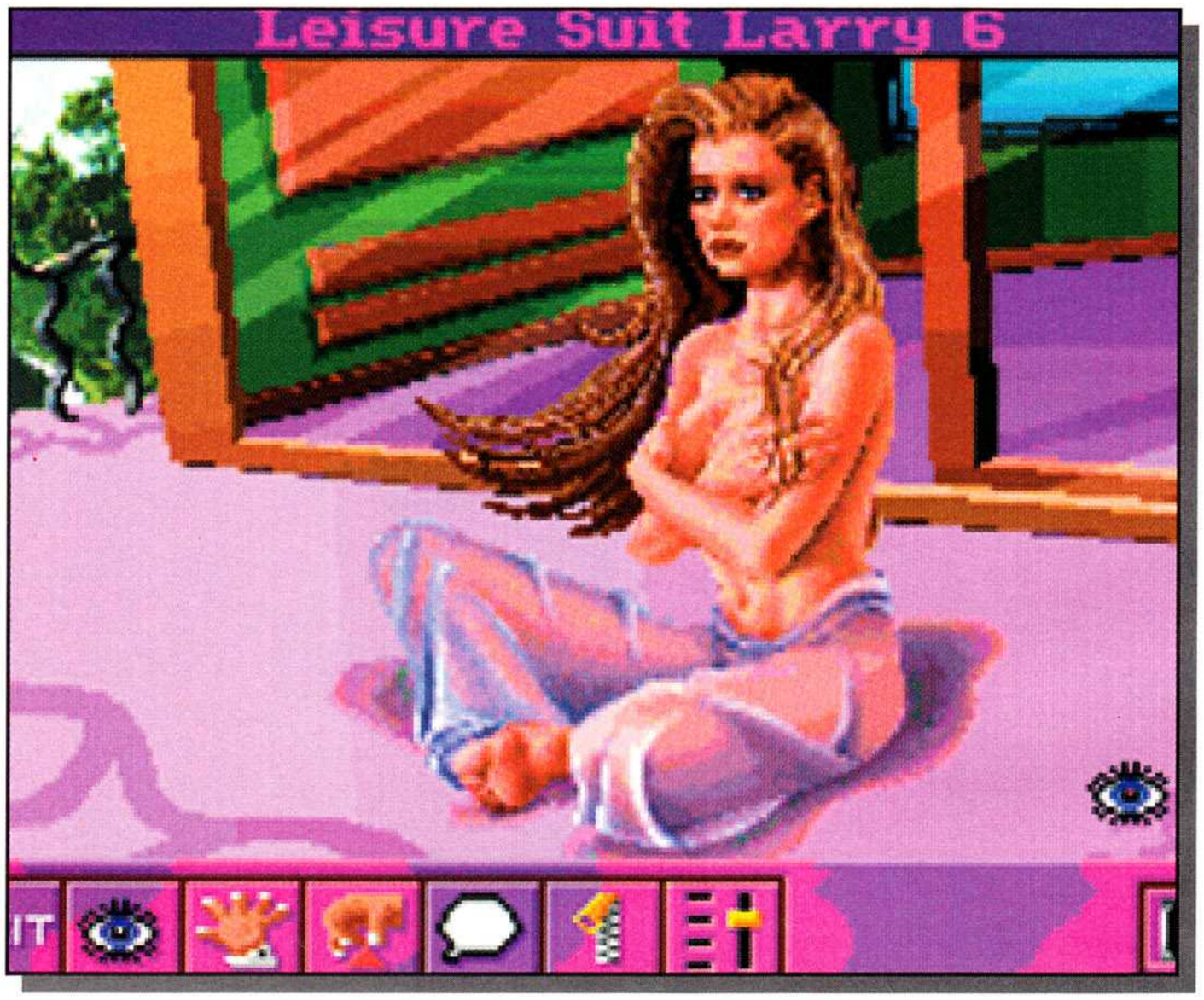
The sound in this game is excellent—the music is appropriately bland and resort-ish, with different melodies in different areas but no music at all where it's not supposed to be (and this is refreshing!). Out on the resort grounds, for example, the player will hear birdsong in the gardens, and surf down on the beach. The various sound effects are great, with some lagniappe thrown in: bodily function keys (the extra F-keys) that are sure to elicit a giggle or two.

The graphics are a little blocky (depending, of course, on your video resolution) until a close-up is activated; then whatever goddess Larry is focussing on appears in all her erotic glory.

Game play requires a mouse. Period. Or, as Al Lowe says, "Don't gripe. Don't whine. If you don't have a mouse, just go buy one!"

As the latest in an illustrious line, **Shape Up or Slip Out** is a real winner. Players will find it irreverent, hilarious, frustrating and infuriating. And more thrilling than a high colonic.

— Sara Slaymaker



Graphics	Sound	Playability	Replay Value	Overall
85%	95%	95%	83%	92%

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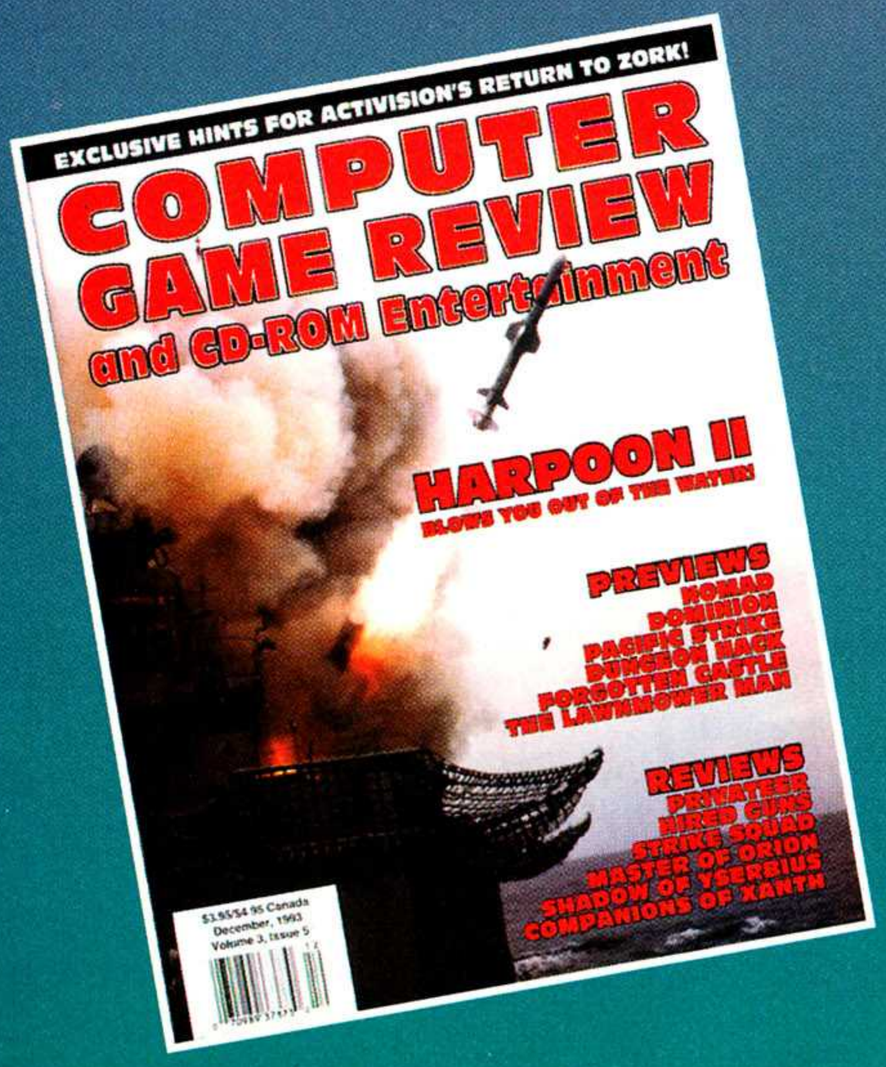

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Unnatural Selection
SimLife with an Attitude

Publisher: Maxis
Producers: Simmons, Fortier, Fokos
System: MS-DOS
Theme: Strategy/ Simulation
HD Space: 13 MB
Players: 1
Complexity: Average

Seeing is Believing

Getting into the spirit of a game is sometimes difficult, but Maxis has made this a step easier by shooting a short movie aboard the *U.S.S. Bonhomme Richard*, using both claymation and live actors. This film is exceptionally well done, and draws the player into the game by creating a real environment. Col. Griggs showing up on the screen demanding action has more impact than any simple text message ever could. This kind of commitment to making a real environment sets UNS apart from other strategy titles.

Dr. Jackson and his team have made a breakthrough of epic proportions: genetically tailored life. Being good scientists, they intend to use their new beasties, the Theroids, to end world hunger. Unfortunately, Ingrid Skinner steals the technology, apparently bent on ruling the world.

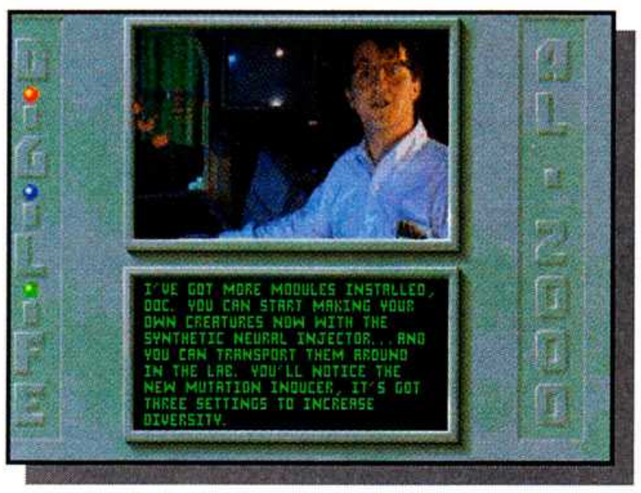
To counter her, the peace-loving Dr. Jackson and his faithful assistant Andy Andrews are recruited by Colonel Griggs, a hardcore warhawk with killing in mind. The Colonel moves their lab onto his aircraft

carrier and sets sail for the first of nine islands where evil Theroids are being bred for world control.

The end of the world approaches with every tick of the time clock, and the player's job is to breed mutant Theroids capable of fighting the enemy to the death. The breeding process is the most important part of the game; the best tactical toe and heel work isn't going to win a battle without good troops. This is where **Unnatural Selection** makes its strongest showing.

Using the Digi-life 2000 computer installed on the carrier, the theroids are carefully mutated and culled in order to maximize their various traits. There are a number of traits: fighting, speed, vision, strength, stamina, eat, mate and momentum, but there is no direct control over the latter. Finding the right balance between these traits is the key to success. Each combination of traits makes the creature act differently, and it isn't hard to breed Theroids that act completely unlike one's original intent when they get out of the cushy lab and into the real war. Also, viruses can decimate a population if mutation is pushed too far without culling out the sick creatures.

There never seems to be enough time to perfect the Theroid warriors before Griggs shows up announcing the next battle. This is where the game gives veterans that extra challenge: Breeding the perfect beasties in 30 minutes of compressed evolution versus the six



days it took God to do the job. Once that segment elapses, the tactical situation deteriorates even further. There are only six helicopters to deliver creatures for combat, and Theroids aren't the only things to be delivered. Specially laced food that can drive Theroids into a rage or make them reproduce faster is also available in limited amounts, as well as decoys and noise makers that affect the movements of the creatures.

This is **SimLife** goes to war, and it maximizes the strengths of **SL**, while simplifying the breeding process, and also provides a coherent goal for the player's efforts. For those who just want to play with the simulation engine, there is an Experimental Mode without the time limits or scenarios of the real game. This is fine, but those who choose to limit themselves in this manner will be missing out on some challenging action.

Maxis has also gone all out with the bells and whistles for this title. **UNS**'s soundtrack is head and shoulders above the average game compositions, and it incorporates a lot of digitized sound effects and MIDI speech routines.

Another nice touch is the zoom view of the Theroids. While this feature has nothing to do with the actual business of breeding, it allows you to watch some excellent animation of individual Theroids as they eat, mate, fight and, eventually, die. This simple feature supports the suspension of disbelief more than any other aspect of the game, as the creatures seem to leap off the screen, as opposed to being just a conglomerate of pixels.

Unnatural Selection is a strong showing from Maxis, particularly for those of us who were getting tired of the equivalent of computer fishbowls. This game gives us what we're looking for. For those who enjoy strategy games, this is a perfectly natural selection.

— Ed Dille

Graphics	Sound	Playability	Replay Value	Overall
90%	95%	89%	80%	90%

Isle of the Dead

Get your ghoulish giggles here

The good news is Jake Dunbar's plane has crashed on a remote island and all the passengers have died. Yes, that's the GOOD news. Because the bad news is that the island is full of the living dead, and they have a taste for Jake Dunbar.

In the opening scene from **Isle of the Dead**, the player is looking through the eyes of Jake as he regains consciousness on the beach. It doesn't take long to find the mangled remains of the other passengers and start wandering around the island, looking for help. But help isn't what Jake finds. Instead, he is greeted by legions of George Romero cast-offs, at which point he begins searching even more frantically, this time for the gun that was in the cockpit of the airplane.

There are two levels to this game, the first is a simple arcade romp trying to kill the zombies before they kill Jake. The other is a mystery. Why are the zombies here in the first place? As Jake circumnavigates the island he finds out things weren't always this way, and it just might be possible to destroy the undead and get back to civilization.

But getting all that done is a tough task. The island is broken up into sections, which Jake reaches by hacking through vegetation using a machete, and each section is populated by a variety of dead nasties that must be dealt with individually. Unfortunately, there is only a limited amount of ammunition on the island (don't ask why the zombies would scatter 12-gauge ammo around the island, just go with it) and every time Jake leaves an area the zombies regenerate, but the ammo doesn't. Hence, too many wrong turns in solving the puzzle burn off ammunition, often to the point that Jake is reduced to using his trusty machete to survive.

The arcade portion of the game plays amazingly like **Wolfenstein**. The 3-D engine looks almost exactly the same: A character's-eye view with the weapon the character is using in the foreground center, but **Isle** offers more depth, with the ability to talk to characters, use and store various pieces of equipment and change weapons depending on circumstances.

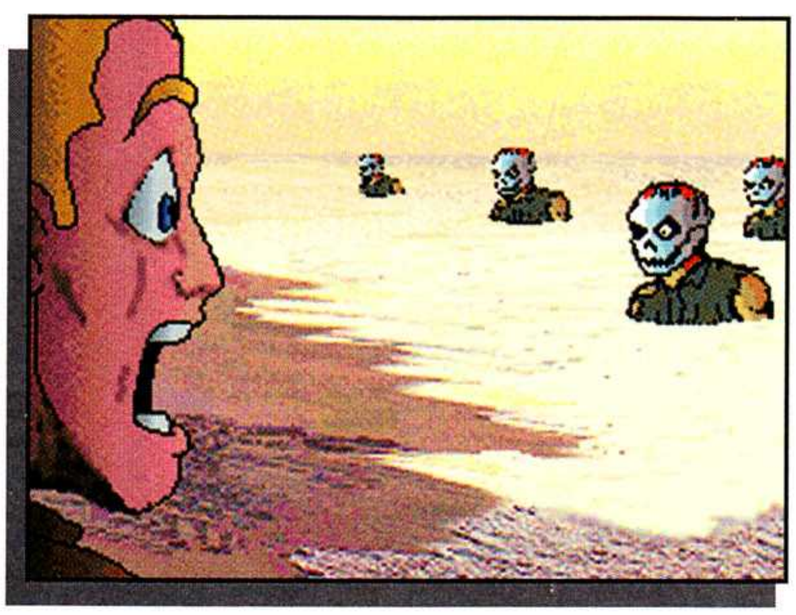
Unfortunately, however, there are also a few inexplicable quirks to the game. One is that the sections go, basically, from easier to harder around the island. This would seem appropriate except that the game starts with Jake on the hard end of the island, sans his trusty shotgun, which is pretty much the whole island away. As a result, the player who can't figure out exactly the right path to take (without any clues, no less) must complete some of the hardest fight sequences in the game armed only with the machete. Further, the player must then re-enter these areas again to solve the game, and, as noted, they're repopulated in the interim.

Additionally, performing the tasks required to get off the island is difficult, to say the least. The characters give very little information sometimes, and the player can expect to spend many hours guiding Jake around the monster-infested wilderness trying to determine exactly what it is he is supposed to do.

These quirks are offset somewhat by the liberal humor spread through the game. **Isle of the Dead** doesn't intend to be taken too seriously. Instead it's a light hearted romp through a zombie-infested island, complete with mad scientists, beautiful women and one-liners galore.

For players who enjoy fast paced, albeit somewhat repetitive, action and some cerebral work thrown in for good measure, **Isle of the Dead** is anything but a dead play.

— Ed Dille



Publisher: Merit Software
Designer: A. Sean Glaspell
System: MS-DOS
Theme: Action/Adventure
HD Req.: 14 MB
Int. Mem.: 2 MB RAM
Players: 1
Complexity: Average

Interview with: Bryan Kelsch, Programmer

Our original intention was to just program a hack and slash game, but one of the things I have always disliked is a game without reasons for what you do. So as we programmed we kept adding more and more hooks and scripting until we ended up with a good hack and slash game, but with a strong plot. The intent was to present a fast-paced action game that also gave the feel of the pulp horror comics and we felt we could reinforce that even further by adding a mini-comic with the game.

Graphics	Sound	Playability	Replay Value	Overall
85%	86%	85%	78%	84%

MULTIMEDIA GALLERY

PUBLISHER: NEW WORLD COMPUTING
SYSTEM: PC CD-ROM
THEME: RPG
PLAYERS: 1
LEVELS: N/A
COMPLEXITY: INTRICATE

QUESTION: WHEN DOES 1+1=3?
ANSWER: WORLD OF XEEN.

WORLD OF XEEN IS A UNIQUE GAME THAT IS REALLY THE EMBODIMENT OF TWO SEPARATE GAMES, CLOUDS OF XEEN AND DARKSIDE OF XEEN. THE UNIQUENESS OF THESE GAMES STEMS FROM THE ABILITY TO INSTALL BOTH OF THEM IN A COMMON FOLDER ON THE HARD-DRIVE AND CREATE A SEPARATE, SINGLE GAME CALLED WORLD OF XEEN. THIS GAME ENCOMPASSES BOTH CLOUDS AND DARKSIDE AND OPENS UP A NEW QUEST WITH AREAS UNAVAILABLE IN THE SINGLE VERSIONS OF THE GAMES. WHILE CONSUMING A GREAT DEAL OF HARD DRIVE SPACE, THIS ALLOWS DEDICATED GAMERS TO GET MUCH MORE FOR THE MONEY.

WORLD OF XEEN

JOURNEY INTO HUGE WORLDS OF EXCITEMENT.

Dedicated role-players rejoice! Now there is a CD RPG that is much more than your average shovelware. New World Computing has taken their **Xeen** series of games (Clouds and Darkside) and have placed them on two CDs filled with action and adventure. In addition to the original two games, **World of Xeen** includes a third game with a third ending. This is the same one that is available to owners of the disk-based versions if they install both games in a common folder on their hard drive.

What is not available to the owners of the disk-based games, however, is the soundtrack containing full voice for all characters that the player/characters interact with. This is the reason for the two CDs. There is far too much voice here for just one.

The game itself is wonderful. The player leads a band of six characters on a multitude of quests around the land and the Darkside of Xeen. It should be understood that the Darkside of Xeen is sort of an anti-Xeen. It is another world that can be accessed from Xeen proper.

Both worlds are loaded with towns, caves, dungeons, castles, sewers and sprawling outdoor areas to explore. While there are three major quests, there are literally dozens of minor quests allowing the characters to gain experience, money and important items.

Throughout the game there are tons of NPCs to interact with, some giving out special information or asking the heroes to undertake a quest for them. There are hundreds of items to find and use, over fifty magic spells to learn, and many abilities for the characters to master. While each character has a primary profession (Fighter, Ranger, Cleric, Paladin, Robber, etc.) it is the secondary abilities like cartography, swimming, mountaineering and crusading that allow the characters to progress through the game.

The game is played from a first-person perspective. Players start out with six characters, and though the characters may be dismissed and changed for other characters at any time, it is advised that the same party is kept throughout. If a new character is brought in mid-way through the game, chances are he will have difficulty surviving. Players may create their own characters or use the premade party that comes with the game. While it may be possible to create characters better than the premade party—and it is certainly nice to be able to personalize your characters—it should be noted that the party that comes with the game is well balanced and work nicely.

Graphically the game is beautiful. The monsters are well drawn and animated. The backgrounds are varied and wonderfully painted, and the full-screen cut scenes are spectacular.

The sound effects and music are very well done and the voices are excellent albeit a little overacted.

The game plays smoothly and all of the functions are easy to control either through the keyboard or the mouse. The interface is graphically oriented, with buttons to push for all necessary functions. The layout is logical and easy to navigate. Still, it is somewhat easier to function with the keyboard rather than the mouse, once you get used to the hot-keys.

This game presents an enormous value for seasoned role-players and novices alike. While the game is quite long and complex it is not too hard to learn. I do recommend that those gamers who have not been seasoned in the ways of the RPG pick up the hint-books for the game. Both the **Clouds** and **Darkside** books are necessary to complete the task. (The latter contains the hints and maps for the **World of Xeen** quest.)

At just 50 dollars, **World of Xeen** is a must for any RPG fan with a CD-ROM. Definitely the best RPG value available.

— Marc Camron

GRAPHICS	SOUND	PLAYABILITY	REPLAY VALUE	OVERALL
93%	94%	96%	83%	95%

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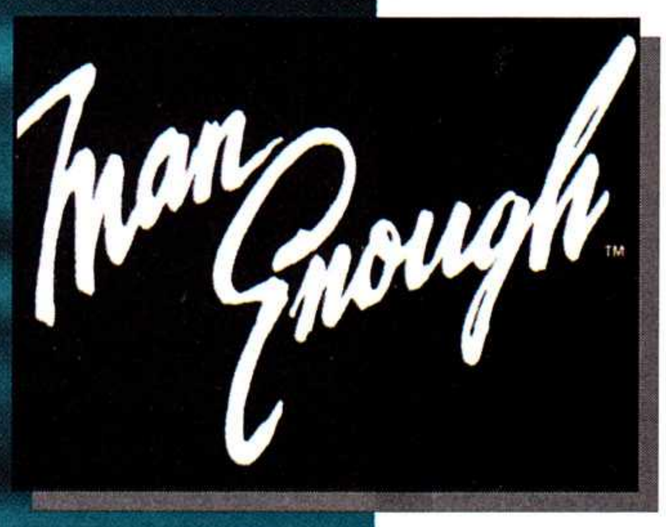
HEGC8

MAN ENOUGH

USE SLICK TALK TO GIVE WHAT SHE WANTS



PUBLISHER: TSUNAMI
DESIGNER: KEVIN FOSTER
SYSTEM: PC CD-ROM
THEME: DATING SIM
HD REQ: 1 MB
PLAYERS: 1
COMPLEXITY: SIMPLE

Interview with Designer Kevin Foster and Producer Don Soper

Man Enough will raise the eyebrows of many players because of the flattering way Tsunami presented the women and the wittiness of their responses. Foster said that "it's much more appealing and clever to stress the witty repartee" of dating than the sexual aspect. Indeed, Man Enough would not have the same charm if adult language and situations replaced the PG-13 language and scenes.

The ultimate date, Tonia Keyser, brings a lot of class to the project with her girl-next-door looks and advice."

Flirting is an art that some men and women never master, while others roll the right lines off their tongues without even thinking. Those fun-loving folk who frequent nightclubs and pick-up bars have all met the stereotypical lounge lizards and stand-offish women that populate these places.

Imagine safe repartee with a woman you might meet in a place like that in which you can try all methods to see what works. That is the approach of **Man Enough**, a dating simulation in which the player must impress a group of women he meets through a dating agency over the course of a few dates. Potential studs have to prove that they're man enough for each of the women's special needs, or else face the consequences of a bitter rejection.

On the surface, **Man Enough** is one of the simplest games to control. Players progress from scene to scene when they choose the correct comments to elicit favorable responses from the current object of their affections. If they don't choose too many bad lines, they survive the encounter and go to the next scene.

There are three choices in each turn, only one of which pleases the woman. A scene may involve anywhere from five to 20 dialogue choices before the player convinces the woman that he's worth another meeting. If the player manages to have a successful date with each of the five profiled women, he earns the ultimate dream date with Jeri, the owner and operator of Man Enough dating service.

The unique aspect of **Man Enough** is the use of numerous video clips and digitized stills to represent the responses of the women and the sequence of events of the dates. The ladies' facial expressions change with each dialogue choice and their voices reflect their satisfaction. When the women purr their lines, they're happy. When they shout, the player's comment was definitely a mistake.

The video clips also emphasize the first-person point of view during the action sequences of the game, like paintball and skydiving, to draw the player further into the simulated dating experience.

The women are varied enough so that the player has to take a different approach with each one. Profile sheets describe each of the potential dates. Players must charm: Blair the rich girl, Erin the lawyer, Fawn the account executive, Quinn the TV anchorwoman and Kellie the psychologist. All five models are attractive women with a wide range of facial expressions and seductive voices. Jeri is especially notable because Tonia Keyser, Miss California/World, plays her role and a video clip accompanies every one of her responses.

Man Enough has about an hour of video clips, over 1400 color stills and over 5000 lines of spoken dialogue. It's no wonder that the program takes up two CDs. The video, audio and stills provide a unique experience for the man who thinks he can hold his own with any woman.

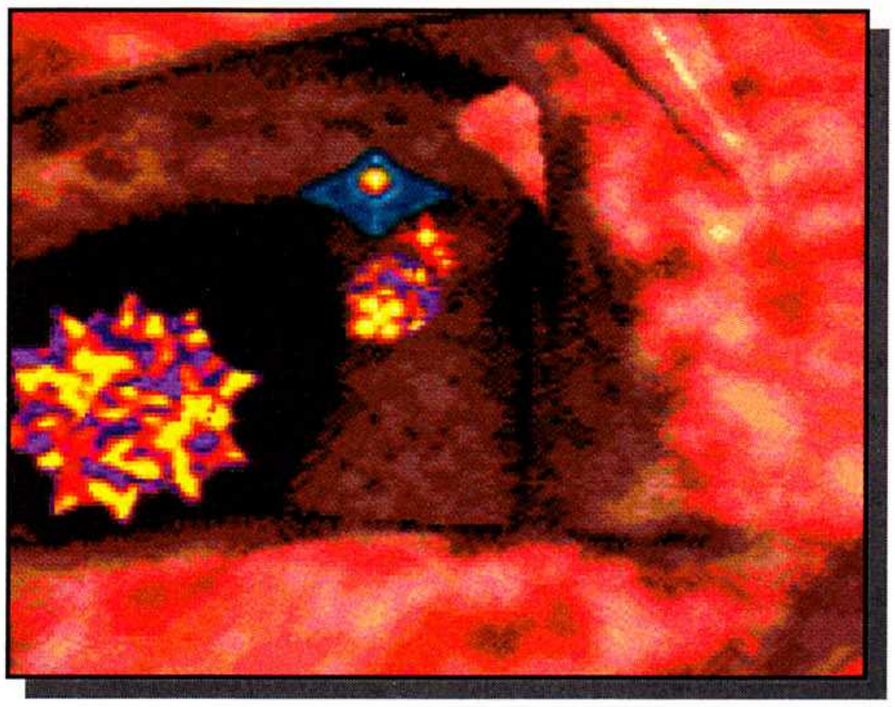
Experienced gamers might fly through **Man Enough** and miss the whole point entirely. The game is meant to be a lighthearted celebration of flirting using state-of-the-art video and audio techniques for home computer CD-ROM drives. The game may lack enough meat for fans of more in-depth CD adventure games and other titles, but it contains enough interesting entertainment to amuse the casual gamer for a few solid hours.

Although replay value is low, once someone knows the correct responses, it may be fun to go back and watch the women respond to the worst lines ever written! Wait a minute, I think I might have used that one ...

— Russ Ceccola

GRAPHICS	SOUND	PLAYABILITY	REPLAY VALUE	OVERALL
90%	90%	80%	70%	80%

MICROCOSM
TAKE THE JOURNEY WITHIN



Microcosm comes out of the chute with a full-motion video sequence that looks like outtakes from *Blade Runner* meets *The Empire Strikes Back*. The product of Psygnosis' vaunted Fractal Engine technology wedded to the latest in retina-thrashing opticals from Silicon Graphics, the cinematic sequences are guaranteed to blow away Sega CD gamers. In fact, with its letterboxed display, sophisticated plot line, and superb, movie-quality sound effects and score (by keyboard legend Rick Wakeman), **Microcosm**'s biggest problem is making its game content look

impressive next to all those gorgeous cut scenes.

In some ways, the program's massive plot machinations and elegant, non-interactive set pieces don't always serve its overall gaming dynamic. The documentation includes a prolix introduction which comprises a foreword, four chapters, and 17 pages that few video gamers will ever read. All of this to set up a plot that is basically a rehash of the film *Fantastic Voyage*, in which a crew of specialists was shrunk down to microscopic size and injected into the body of the President in order to perform otherwise impossible delicate surgical maneuvers.

Microcosm adds a lot of space metal and a plethora of attacking agents and power-ups to the stew, along with good and evil CEOs (evil CEOs are suddenly playing lead heel in several electronic games). The year is 2051, and internecine politics threaten the life of Cybertech's Good CEO. The player, cast as an elite Cybertech agent, is miniaturized and injected into the Cephalic vein—the first of five body areas that must be cleared of invaders. This quest in vein is conducted from within a tiny rescue pod, armed with twin impulse laser cannons for dusting the gallery of invasive micro-droids introduced into the body by the Evil CEO. The pod, which is viewed in faux first-person perspective, is also used in level three, which is set in the Superior Vena Cava and Heart. In levels two (Left Lung) and four (Carotid Artery), a submersible Hunter-Killer missile is piloted by the player-character, while the final sequence, set inside the Good CEO's brain, is conducted in the pressure suit alone.

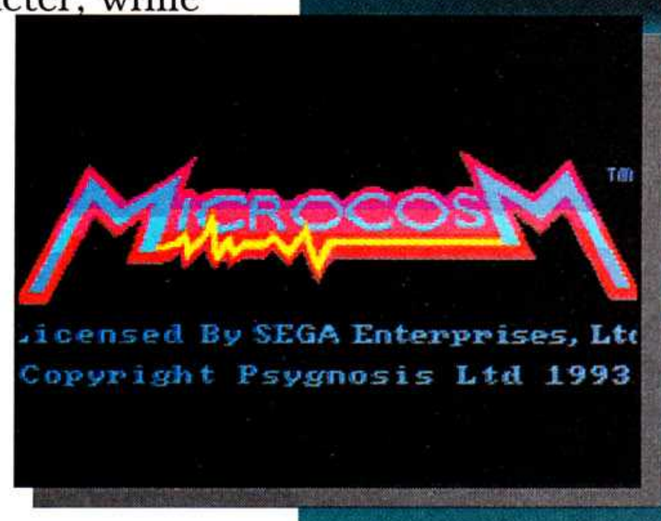
The interactive action sequences are fast-moving and look just fine, but the limited nature of the game's shooter play mechanic makes the game itself seem somehow ... trivial. Also, **Microcosm**'s extensive use of video game cliches such as power-ups destroys the illusion of reality so painstakingly created in those amazing cut scenes.

Ah, the cut scenes. As always with this game, one keeps returning to its incredible special effects sequences; to the seamless integration of digitized human actors with computer-generated sets. In most games of this type, the non-interactive sequences lose their entertainment value after a couple of replays; here, even constant repetition fails to dull the cutting edge visuals. If the steak were as good as the sizzle, **Microcosm** would be a Sega CD system seller. Unfortunately, the whole is never quite equal to the sum of the parts.

If **Microcosm** were indeed a movie, it would be one of those SF flicks that garners Oscar nominations for set design and special effects, while being ignored in the heavyweight categories, such as screenplay and direction. There is a good game here, but the background plot behind the experience is somewhat lacking. However, it is still enjoyable to a certain degree.

The game is rated MA-13, probably for its theme since there isn't a lot of explicit gore.

—Bill Kunkel



PUBLISHER: PSYGNOSIS
SYSTEM: SEGA CD
THEME: ACTION/ADVENTURE
PLAYERS: 1
LEVELS: 5
COMPLEXITY: AVERAGE

What Makes Microcosm Run?

Microcosm is an amazing technical accomplishment on the 3DO; on the Sega CD, it's almost a miracle. Despite the system's limited color palette, Psygnosis deftly blended black & white and color graphics to create the most eye-popping cinematic sequences ever viewed on the Sega CD.

"The Sega CD version is very similar to the 3DO version," explained Psygnosis' Mark Tsai, "and both versions are much more arcade-like than the PC CD edition, which has a much stronger adventure game component, to attract PC gamers."

GRAPHICS	SOUND	PLAYABILITY	REPLAY VALUE	OVERALL
92%	96%	87%	81%	88%

PORTABLE PLAY TIME

INDIANA JONES AND THE LAST CRUSADE
HELP INDY ON THE TRAIL TO THE HOLY GRAIL

PUBLISHER: UBI SOFT
SYSTEM: GAME BOY
THEME: ACTION/ADVENTURE
MEGABITS: 2
PLAYERS: 1
LEVELS: 6
COMPLEXITY: AVERAGE

GOT AN ITCH FOR ACTION?

If Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade scratches it, try a couple of EG editors' Game Boy favorites:

Tumblepop by Tengen combines a great look (angled overhead, side-scrolling) with slick, fun play and a goofy, sci-fi plot that challenges players to save the earth from monsters and mutants.

In Kid Dracula by Konami, the cool offspring of the infamous count takes on foes like Franken-punk and Metal the Heavy, in places like the Forest of Fools and the spooky Pirate Ghost ship.

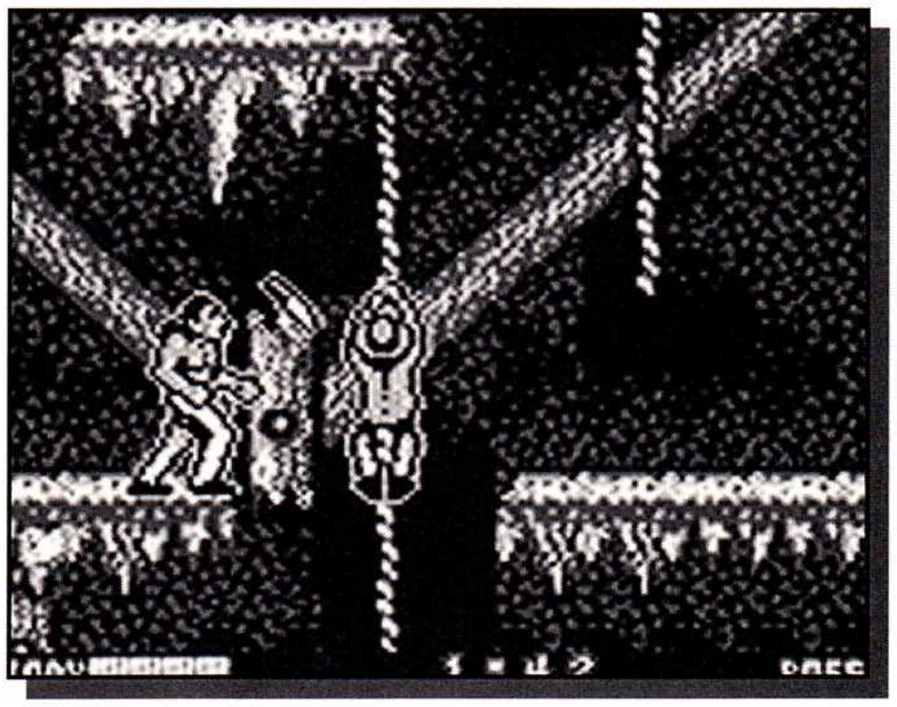
Indiana Jones and The Last Crusade recreates the plot of the hit movie, where famous archeologist Indiana Jones and his father, Dr. Jones, must foil yet another Nazi plot to take over the world via legendary religious artifacts.

Indy begins his side-scrolling search for the Grail in the caves. Here, the young Indiana negotiates pits of lava and sharp stalagmites and stalactites while making his way from level to level by way of dangling ropes. Indy has only his fists and quick wits to use against knife throwing Indians, men with guns and climbers who try to knock Indy off the ropes he must climb on.

A strip across the bottom of the screen shows Indiana's health, a timer and, if there is a boss present, that boss's health. Heart icons restore Indy to health, while hourglass icons reset the timer back to two minutes, which is all the time that the player has to find the Cross of Coronado, defeat the first level boss and escape the caves.

The Torch icon appears only in the caves, which have an annoying tendency to turn pitch black if the player doesn't find a Torch every minute or so. Fortunately for the player, Dr. Jones glows in the dark, so it is easy to see him, but the rest of the screen is very dark; gamers who play outdoors in the daytime or in a well lit room should be able to make out the dim outlines of the other objects onscreen. If there were just one or two more Torches, this would be a better play mechanic.

After leaving the caves, the action starts on the top of a moving circus train. A nicely done scrolling background gives the feel of open space, which is something of an accomplishment on the Game Boy, and the giraffe that peeks out the top of the zoo car is just great.



Here, Indy battles more armed men and lots of knife throwers. Timing is the simple key to winning, but it is a little annoying to take damage from a knife that flies the length of three railroad cars.

As per the movie, Indiana finds his first whip on this level. Indy's whipping prowess increases with each Whip icon found, but there is only one Whip on this level, which isn't very powerful. In fact, it's hard to tell the difference between Indy's fists and the effect of the first Whip icon.

After the caves, players help Indiana explore the catacombs. Besides the previously encountered armed men, Indy must now face rats and fireballs as he searches for the pieces of the puzzle that will allow him to reach the next level. Indy must use his whip to get past the rats in this level, and it does work a little better here than in level 2.

In level 4, Indiana must find the missing pieces of Professor Jones' notebook while scaling the high walls of Brunwald castle. German soldiers are added to the deadly mix here, along with the rats and fireballs.

Level 5 brings us to the Airship. The imperative here is simple: Escape. Find the key to the airplane attached to the zeppelin. Nazi soldiers are plentiful here and even the pilot of the zeppelin gets in on the act of trying to stop Indy from escaping.

Level 6 is the final test of the player's skill. Before he can save his father, Indiana must go through the three trials, just like in the movie. Avoid the blades, spell out the name of Jehovah and make the leap of faith. As if this weren't enough, there are still Nazi soldiers to contend with.

Indiana Jones and The Last Crusade puts the Game Boy through its paces. The graphics are very good, considering the system, and players are treated to the occasional digitized photo of Harrison Ford as Indiana Jones, looking rugged.

The sound is good as well. Listening to the theme music from the movie over and over again can be a little tiresome, but the considerate folks at UBI Soft provided a 'Music Off' option.

Although there are a few rough spots, this is an entertaining, challenging game and fans of the movie—and fans of adventure games—will enjoy it.

— John Wesley Hardin

GRAPHICS	SOUND	PLAYABILITY	REPLAY VALUE	OVERALL
83%	79%	81%	80%	81%

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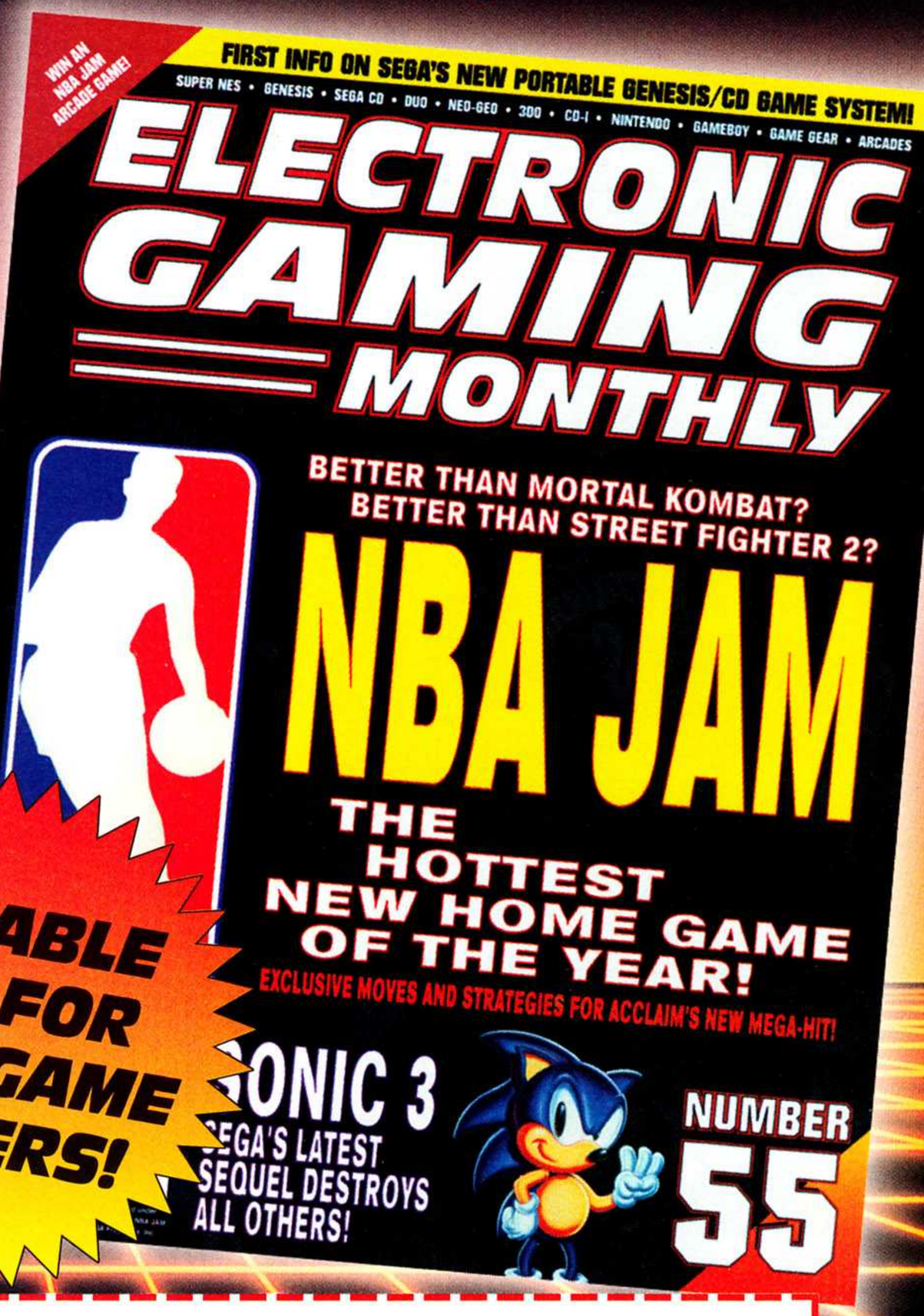

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HEGC8

THE KUNKEL REPORT

CES & THE BIG WHAT IF—?

by Bill Kunkel

If new product is the lifeblood of a Consumer Electronics Show, then rumors are the adrenaline. In many ways, the entire character of a CES is molded more by its scuttlebutt than its sneak peaks.

The 1994 Winter CES was not bursting with spectacular new hardware or software. Many of the hottest games—like Acclaim's **NBA Jam** and Sega's **Sonic 3**—were yesterday's news to the press corps. And so it was left to the industry's loose cannons to enliven the proceedings with some extremely intriguing gossip.

Please bear in mind that these stories have not been confirmed. They are rumors, pure and simple. But true or false, their very existence leads to some interesting speculation and analysis, which is what this column is about. So, with all the caveats in place, let's look at this season's most intriguing dish.

WHAT IF—? #1: Nintendo To Split with SGI?

This was a tough show for Nintendo. While Sega was knocking people out with its Genesis version of **Virtua Racing**, Nintendo visitors were shaking their heads at **Stunt Racer FX**, the first game to make use of Nintendo's new souped-up SFX chip.

The single component of Nintendo City which drew the most consistently acid commentary, however, was the Project Reality station. Ostensibly designed to give the industry an advance look at its next-generation (i.e., coming in 1995!) gaming technology, the display actually consisted of several Silicon Graphics' Indigo work stations with High Definition monitors. These babies sell for about a thousand times as much as a SNES, but somehow Nintendo managed to keep a straight corporate face while explaining how millions of these systems will be sitting in American living rooms in the next few years.

The real question among insiders, however, was how much longer this marriage will last. Nintendo is already well on its way to becoming the Zsa Zsa Gabor of video gaming. With jilted suitors Sony and Philips already cluttering up the landscape, many industry experts feel a Nintendo-SGI breakup is mere months away.

Although NBA Jam is a very exciting game and impressed us at CES, rumors were the real hits.

WHAT IF—? #2: Nintendo To Acquire Atari and/or Jaguar?

Whether this rumor was ancillary to #1 or full-blown gossip in its own right is difficult to say, but picking up Atari might make sense for Nintendo. Everyone agrees the Jaguar is a great piece of hardware; and it apparently did sellout business last Christmas in its test markets. The real questions revolve around Atari's non-existent marketing muscle and whether it can shepherd enough quality software into the pipeline. Nintendo has the money and connections to cure those ills. And, if speculation #1 is true, the Big N may very well need a next-generation game system ... quick.

WHAT IF—? #3: Sonic in Bed with 3DO?

Without question, the juiciest rumor being dished at CES concerned Sega's sudden, intense interest in 3DO technology. To appreciate this, let's sketch in some background:

• The 3DO rollout was a disaster (doomsayers gossiped that only 6,000 machines were sold, but Panasonic refused to name numbers), but don't count them out yet. Sanyo and AT&T will be rolling out 3DO standard machines this year, and a fourth, still-unnamed partner will also jump aboard. The poor launch, meanwhile, is likely to bring down 3DO's price-point earlier than expected, as will the development of a new chip set.

• Sega isn't stupid. It knows that its triumph in the 16-Bit wars had a lot to do with its total defeat by Nintendo in the 8-Bit crusades. As Atari learned in 1983, selling millions and millions of video game systems can be a distinct disadvantage when the time comes to up the technological ante. Users feel betrayed when their vast game collections are rendered instantly obsolete. So, while Nintendo had to wait extra years to introduce the SNES for fear of alienating the 30 million NES owners, Sega was willing to give up its pitiful SMS user base for a jump start to the Next Level.

Now the time is fast approaching for Sega to make a jump, but surely there must be considerable reluctance to do so. In the first place, Genesis product is still selling briskly; the Sega CD is finally coming into its own. If Sega launches the 32-Bit Saturn this coming Christmas, a lot of Genesis owners—especially Sega's demographically older CD users—will feel betrayed.

• Though no one ever came right out and called the system buggy, reports persisted that the Saturn might not be the machine of our dreams, after all.

So, with all that in mind, might not Sega enjoy being liberated from the ongoing hardware wars? After all, Sega only builds hardware so it can sell its software. If it could stick to software development, the instability of the hardware universe would be someone else's problem.

And there you have it, the hot gossip just as it was dished at WCES '94. It's still tasty, even with a grain of salt.

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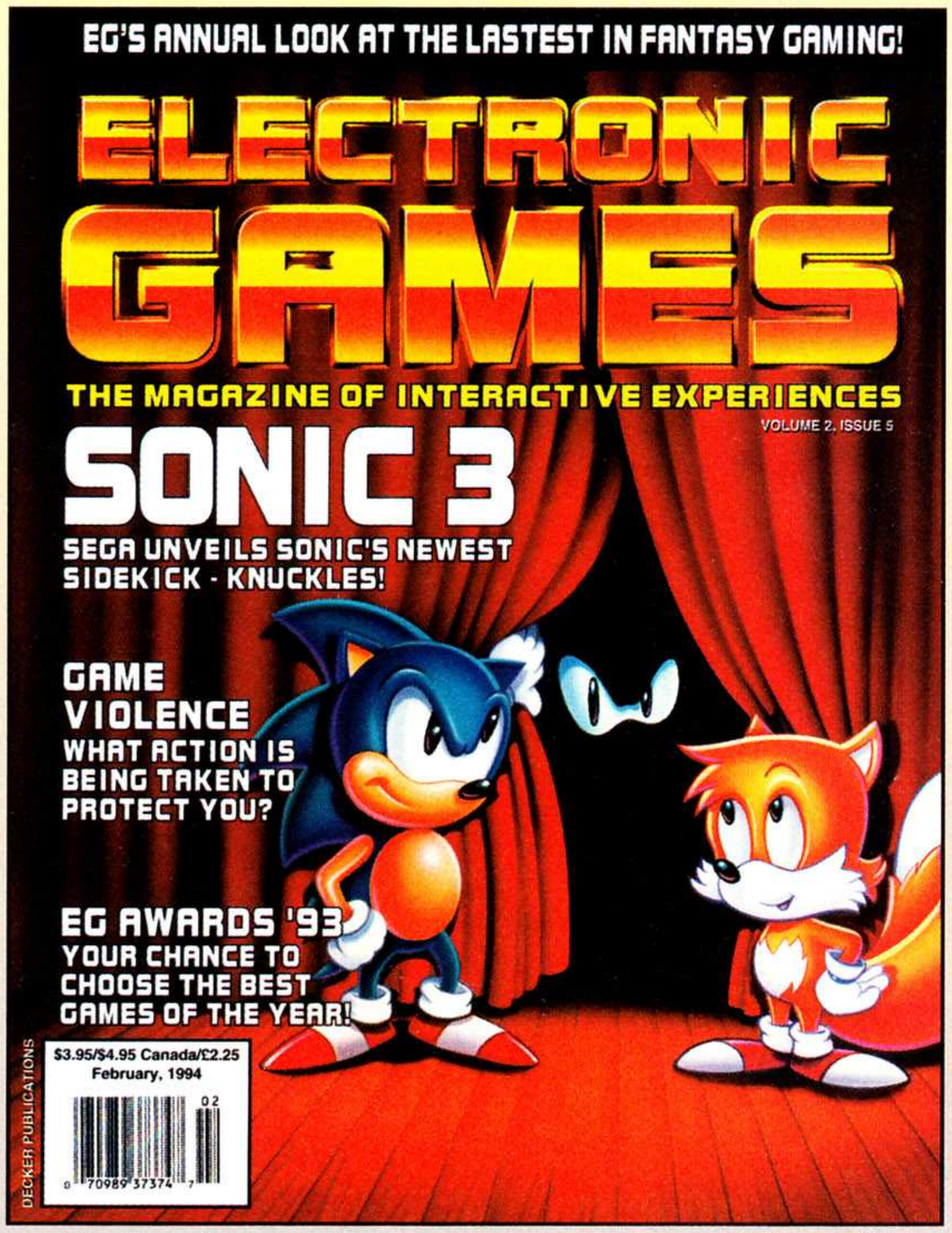

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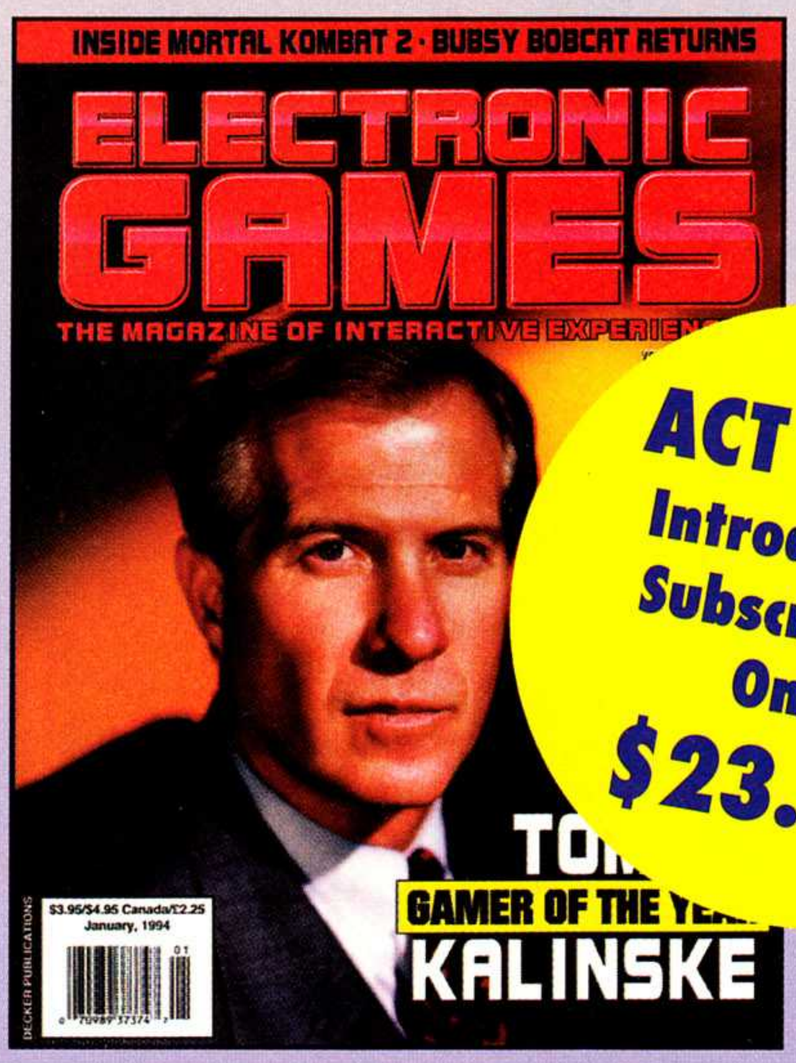

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EG PICKS THE WCES HARDWARE HITS

THE BEST CONTROLLERS AND ACCESSORIES ON THE GAMING HORIZON

by the Editors of Electronic Games

The large number of products introduced during fourth quarter 1993 had the anticipated effect; there are comparatively few new controllers and accessories slated for second quarter 1994. That's not to say manufacturers didn't roll out some classy gear in Las Vegas. Here are some of the ones we think stand the best chance with gaming consumers:

Controller Picks

Arcade Pro (STD/compatible with SNES and Genesis), for July introduction, is similar to the Power Clutch, but is is smaller in size. The steel base gives the unit a good feel on the table top. Two speeds of auto-fire, slow motion and six oversized fire buttons distinguish the $39.95 device.

Arcade Programmable (STD/compatible with SNES and Genesis) is an advanced model priced $10 higher than the Arcade Pro. It includes 66 pre-programmed moves and six user-programmable memory spaces.The latter are stored on a battery backup and displayed on the controller's LCD screen.

F-16 Wireless Controllers (Doc's High Tech/Genesis, SNES) competes with similar IR remote controllers. This one has auto shut off, slow motion, and a 15-30-foot range. Our test of two-player operation disclosed no conflict. Suggested retail is $49.99.

FlightMAX (Suncom/MS-DOS) is designed to operate on the desktop. The unit features a wide base for stability and a throttle control system that is friendly to either right- or left-handed pilots. Further, the latter is encased in a flip-up recessed cavity to preclude inadvertent changes during play. Stick tension is smooth throughout the range of motion and the quality of construction is high for this $49.95 item.

Flightstick Pro (CH Products/3DO) is a straight conversion of the company's existing PC model. The first non-standard peripheral for the set-top system features the same four-way viewing switches (the coolie hat), three fire buttons plus trigger and throttle control.

Suncom's Quickshot joystick offers four-way directional control for advanced maneuvers.

Jet Stick (CH Products/IBM), slated for March, is an entry-level joystick that has the same quality of construction as the Flightstick Pro, but not all the extra features. Standard two-button control with now-familiar elevator and aileron trim controls.

PC Propad (STD/MS-DOS) is a two

button game pad for personal computers with semi-auto and hands free auto-fire at two different speeds. The unit, priced at under $20, will be out by early spring.

Pro Mouse Game Controller (Naki/Genesis and SNES compatible) is a slick little mouse controller with a single cord that adapts to either console. Its March premiere coincides with some of the new mouse titles for these systems. No price announced yet.

Conqueror 3+3 (Quickshot/Genesis) is a programmable six-button controller. It stores up to four move sequences, each of which can be up to eight steps long. It also features a mirror function and can switch functions between buttons to customize the controller. When it hits store shelves this month, it will sell for $35.99.

Best Control

PC Optix/STD/MS-DOS) has the megazoom feature of the PC Commander which self-optimizes to the platform's operating speed. It uses an infrared sensor to measure yoke position, which means there are no internal moving parts.

The durable unit is backed by a five-year warranty. It has four fire buttons with throttle control. It isn't cheapo at a little under $50, but its quality is unsurpassed in the controller field.

Best Accessories

Aerospace Integrated Stereo Speaker System (STD) has a convenient snap on feature that mounts the speakers on the sides of most monitors. Magnetic shielding prevents damage to either component. The system runs on 9V DC adaptor or 6 AA batteries. It requires special cables to work with the SNES or Genesis.

Cleandisx (Irata Systems/computer) is a unique filtering and cleaning system for 5 1/4-in. floppy drives. Computer cooling fans draw air in through the drive, so lint and dust piles up inside the machine. The filters are made of a urethane-impregnated felt cloth and fit inside the floppy drive when not in use. They filter air naturally and also clean the disk heads when the computer boots. A one year supply is $24.99.

High Speed Game Card (STD/MS-DOS) is similar to Suncom's Gameport 2000. It boasts adjustable response from 4.77 Mhz to 80 Mhz with two joystick ports. It can utilize hot keys to modify response speed on the fly if included in an autoexec.bat file.

Sega Game Gear Battery Pack (Nuby) should be in stores this month. It has a new rear-mounted battery design that won't impede player hand positioning and also doubles as a tilt base when the unit rests on the table top. A five-hour charge provides 5-6 hours of play. The retail tag will be in the $25-$28 range.

Nuby's Snap & Power battery pack for the Game Gear allows players to have extended game time.

Universal Cart Caddy (Nuby) is a really smart idea whose time has finally come. Now you can store everything from NES carts to CDs in one unit. The $5 price is low enough that gamers with big collections can buy in quantity. This will definitely end the frustration of having to throw your favorite carts into a cardboard box and truck them around with no real organization.

Universal Cleaning Kit (Nuby/all systems) keeps gaming clean better than Senator Lieberman. Nintendo and Sega warn against the use of chemicals to clean game

Carry many different game system cartridges in the Universal Cart caddy, from Nuby.

cartridges or units, yet some of these products continue to appear on the market. Nuby has substituted a decent chamois, much like the one used in Nintendo's kits but much less expensive, for the damaging chemicals. Add a little water and swab away for $5.00.

These are just a few of the new hardware peripheral products that were introduced at WCES. **EG** will continue to provide the latest info on the newest advances in hardware technology, both on the video game and PC formats, as more products debut throughout the year.

THE JURY

READERS REVIEW MORTAL KOMBAT WITHOUT CAUSING PHYSICAL INJURY.

Now it's the readers' turn to give the controversial fighting game their close examination for **EG**, and no holds, punches or kicks were barred. We pride ourselves on giving you the hard-hitting facts and opinions on all popular games, whether controversial or not. Here's where the readers get to sound off!

Following are the reviews we judged the best of the entries received at press time.

Although it has caused a flurry of debate on video game violence, Mortal Kombat still ranks high!

Mortal Kombat
Acclaim/Arena
SNES/Genesis/portables

Winning Review
by Antonio & Alfonso De Pasquale

The hype is over; Mortal Monday has come and gone. All that remains is the game itself and whether or not it can live up to all the hoopla. The verdict: If you crave that true **Mortal Kombat** experience, then, "Sega does what Nintendon't."

The graphics are very good, although not nearly as sharp as the arcade game or the Super NES cartridge. Also, the absence of most sampled voices further diminishes the overall presentation. This is kind of disappointing, since the sampled voices were a neat part of the original.

Where this cart really shines is in the fantastic game play. Control is very responsive (with the 6-button pad, at least) and the special moves and fatalities just roll off the pad. Speaking of fatalities, the Sega versions of the game have kept, via a special code, all the graphic finishing moves intact. Whether this is good or bad is open to debate; however, Sega should be commended for allowing the developers the freedom to be as faithful to the original material as possible.

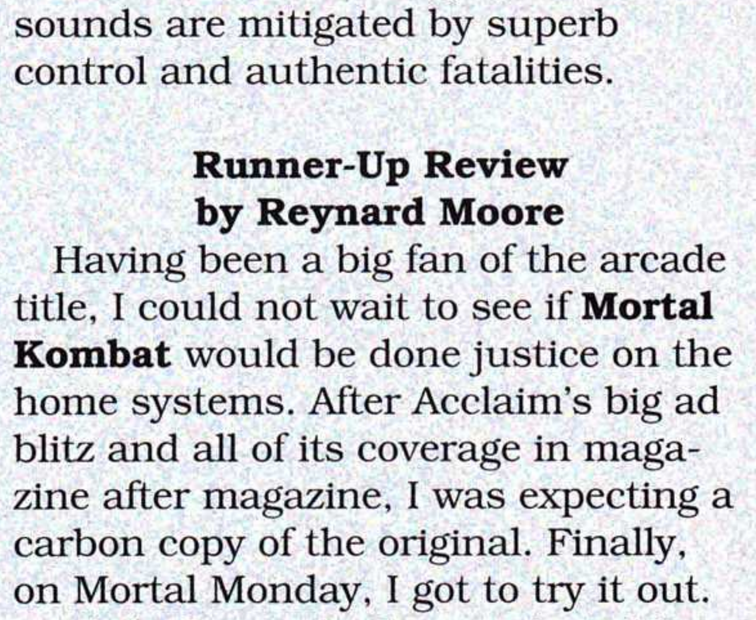
Overall, **Mortal Kombat** for the Genesis is the definitive version of the arcade hit. The bland graphics and sounds are mitigated by superb control and authentic fatalities.

Runner-Up Review
by Reynard Moore

Having been a big fan of the arcade title, I could not wait to see if **Mortal Kombat** would be done justice on the home systems. After Acclaim's big ad blitz and all of its coverage in magazine after magazine, I was expecting a carbon copy of the original. Finally, on Mortal Monday, I got to try it out.

While the game plays nothing like the arcade masterpiece I had come to know and love, I found it to be an exceptional title. While the Super Nintendo version may not have the blood and gore that attracted everyone to the arcade, it plays better than the other three. For those who played the game simply to watch the fatalities comes the Genesis version. It may be hard to believe, but the two Sega games are even bloodier than the original!

My only gripe about this game is how difficult many of the special moves are to accomplish on a pad. After a while you will be able to execute the moves on the two 16-Bit versions without any troubles, but don't worry if you are having trouble with the portables. Other than that I don't see any problems with the overall playability of the game. This is definitely another flawless victory for Acclaim!



Shang Tsung's "ace in the hole" is Goro, the four-armed freakazoid. Talk about a handful!

REVIEW A GAME IN EG'S MONTHLY CONTEST!

Each month, **Electronic Games**' critics review dozens of new releases. They do a great job, but a lot of our readers are knowledgeable and perceptive about the games, too. Now, our unique monthly contest lets you strut your stuff. We'll pick a video cart each month, and challenge gamers to review it. Then, in *The Jury*, **EG** will print the best ones—and give a free game cart to the winner.

The rules are simple:

1. All reviews must be of the nominated game.
2. Entrants can submit only **one** review of each game.
3. All submissions become the property of **EG**.
4. Reviews should be 200 words or less, typed double-spaced.
5. The month's best review, as determined by **EG** editors, earns the writer the currently available video or computer game of his or her choice (sorry, no Neo•Geo carts).
6. The contest is open to anyone who has not sold professionally to **EG** within the previous 12 months (exclusive of this contest).

GAME FOR CONTEST #17:
MADDEN NFL '94/ELECTRONIC ARTS
GENESIS/SNES

Deadline for this month's contest:
April 10, 1994
Send entries to:
The Jury (Electronic Games)
330 S. Decatur, Suite 152
Las Vegas, NV 89107
...and don't forget to tell us what video game you'd like if you are the winner!

PLAYING IT SMART

A NEW CROP OF SMART GAMES TO HELP EXPAND YOUR HORIZONS.

by Joyce Worley

No area of home software showed as much growth during the last year as the edutainment market. Sales boomed, and the flow of software rose to meet the demand, perhaps even surpass it. By the same token, no area of software showed such dramatic improvement in quality. Software manufacturers, in order to capture shares of the big purse, are bringing state of the art technology to bear on the educational products, and at least in some cases, cutting edge concepts that make the lessons fun.

The Winter Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas proved again that the computer is the teacher's ally in tailoring lessons to individual learners. Studying may never be their favorite pastime, but it's a lot more pleasant when couched in sparkling graphics, beautiful sounds, with clever on-screen activities.

The EA*Kids line is being redone for CD and 3DO. In each case, the games will be enhanced, especially in areas of voice and speech. For example, **Peter Pan** uses essentially the same charming graphic set that made this a hit, but there are three versions of every text message delivered in speech, adding a lot of replay value.

Over 400 megs of speech make the CD version of **Eagle Eye Mystery in London** even more fun. The learner sees the history and culture of England, can tour all of London, and explore many museums and historical locations while trying to solve the mystery. All text passages can now be heard as speech with accents where applicable.

Around the World In 80 Days is the second in the EA*Kids storypainting adventure line. Novotrade's design lets the child choose one of four companion tools to overcome problems. This is so delightful, parents will want to play, too. Every situation is handled differently by the spray can, paint brush, eraser or pencil, so the game will be played over and over to see the animations.

Recess in Greece (Morgan Interactive/Mac CD) teaches history, sociology and geography of Ancient Greece, through games, puzzles and activities that take the child through the Hellenic war. It uses cinematic interactive scenes, and lets the user see through Morgan's eyes or from his teacher's viewpoint.

The Learning Company is another famous tutor that's going into multimedia. The first CD release will be **Spellbound**, with over 1000 words, 600 of which are spoken. It also lets the parent add in word lists. Gamers learn through spelling bees, crossword puzzles, and find-a-word games.

Raya Systems is producing more games in the Health Hero series. **Packy & Marion** (SNES/Fall) is a 22-level side scroller that sends two elephants to a summer camp for kids with diabetes. Mice steal all the supplies, kidnap the camp directors, and the elephants have to put things to right, and remember to take their insulin to keep their energy up. There are also quizzes on diabetes-related topics. Another SNES game, **Rex Ronan, Experimental Surgeon**, shrinks the lead character to microscopic size, then sends him into a smoker's body to repair damage caused by tobacco, through side-scrolling video game play.

TuneLand Starring Howie Mandel (7th Level/MPC-CD) is a delightful novelty that contains over 40 sing-along songs. Children ages three and up explore scenes, hear the famous comic tell jokes, see magic tricks and gags. TuneLand is inhabited by a set of friendly animals and some of the nicest animated graphics in edutainment.

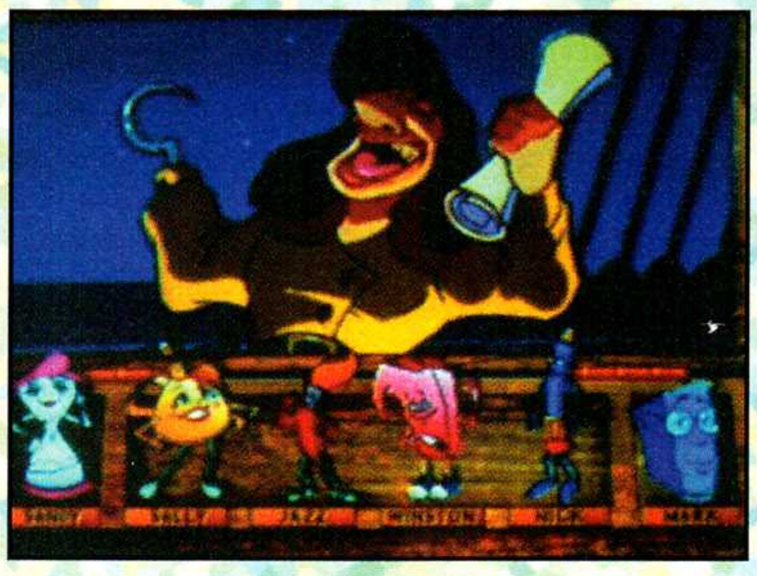
Who knows what lurks behind the hidden boxes? This time, it's an opportunity to learn the ABCs.

The Book of Shadowboxes (EduQuest/Mac CD) proves that there's always room for one more alphabet tutorial when it's this good. Lavish art, 3-D animation, enticing sounds, and clever games and puzzles guide the learner through lots of pictures hidden in the 26 shadowboxes, guided by Shadow, a lovable doughboy-styled companion.

Perhaps the most unusual edutainment product of WCES was **Karaoke Shakespeare: Macbeth** (IBM/CD-ROM). One to ten players can take the stage and speak their chosen roles in the fully animated play. Would-be thespians or students of the Bard take their turn upon the boards, prompted by the lines on screen that appear when it's their character's turn to speak.

That's a peek at the flood of educational entertainments shown at the Consumer Electronics Show. We'll look deeper at some of these in months to come, in addition to new releases sure to hit software stands.

— Joyce Worley



Kids can help Peter as he navigates his way through an exciting and dangerous adventure!

TEST LAB

Atari Roars Back to Life

Jaguar is the Newest Predator in the Video Game Jungle

Jaguar 64-Bit
Atari Corp.
$249.95

Amidst rumors of a rather dismal Christmas for 3DO, none of which were dispelled via hard sales figures by either Panasonic or the 3DO corporation, a new cat entered contention for video gamers' dollars. The Atari Jaguar has already sold out the limited quantities that were shipped to the New York and San Francisco test markets. Further, given the fervor of CES observers over the new system, it appears that a battle between the old and the new is inevitable. To set the stage for the coming conflict, Test Lab will expand on the coverage previously afforded 3DO, the Amiga CD^{32} and the Sega CD to see how the newcomer shapes up.

Although much has been made of the Jaguar's entry price point of $250, the truth is that this is for the cartridge console only. A double speed CD add-on unit will arrive later this summer for about another $200. Additionally, at the 3DO Press Conference, CEO Trip Hawkins predicted that their hardware units would dip below the $500.00 mark around the same time frame. This is significant because, although the 3DO has undoubtedly suffered from its rather high initial price point, by the end of this year all of the contenders will be playing on the same financial dance card. As such, what will separate the winners from the losers will be performance and quality of software.

In terms of performance, the Jaguar is an impressive work horse. As the accompanying table illustrates, Atari learned a lot from its failed 16-Bit attempt, the Panther. Opting to ignore the 32-Bit market and stage a coup by arriving at roughly the same time with a 64-Bit machine, Atari did more than talk about it, which was the extent of Nintendo's Project Reality. They built it.

Some of the figures of this table may require some additional explanation. Bus bandwidth is one of the more significant figures provided, and you can see that the Jaguar has twice the capability of 3DO in this area. The heart of a video game architecture does not lie in the individual processors or components, rather in the interaction of these components both separately and in conjunction across the system bus.

THE JAGUAR ALSO HAS MANY OF THE HIGHLY TOUTED INDIGENOUS FEATURES OF 3DO, INCLUDING: TEXTURE MAPPING, MORPHING ... AND TRANSPARENCY.

Jaguar's 68000 processor requires a bandwidth of about 7 Megabytes/second while a true color display (either NTSC or PAL) adds another 9 MB/sec to the operation. The Digital Signal Processor (DSP) chip requires about half a meg on top of this to play back sampled sound. In the aggregate, this leaves 85% of Jaguar's bus open to burst operations when they must be performed. Keeping this in mind, the second limiting factor of system performance is the number of code instructions which may be performed per second. These figures are always in the millions per second, so the common form of measurement is the MIP. Note that the Jaguar is almost 10 times as fast in terms of processing power as its closest competitor, the 3DO. The final telling benchmark of performance for game applications is animation speed. Here we find that the Jaguar is 14 times as fast as the 3DO.

The Jaguar also has many of the highly touted indigenous features of 3DO, including: texture mapping, morphing, warping, point source lighting and transparency. Texture mapping involves wrapping a simple or complex image onto any two- or three-dimensional object. The technique allows for a limitless number of textures and patterns to be overlaid on geometry to further the suspension of disbelief. Morphing is an animation process which allows the smooth transition of animate and inanimate objects from one image to another. Most players first saw this technique employed in *Terminator 2* for the T-1000 unit, or in the Michael Jackson video, *Black or White*. Point source lighting involves the ability of the designer to specify one or more light sources within a given play environment. Once these are defined, all objects in the environment are illuminated or shaded according to their proximity and position relative to the source. It is just like lighting a stage for a play. Transparency simplifies the creation of smoke or shadows, or provides special effects such as **Crash & Burn**'s raceway in the sky sequence.

The problem with Jaguar's initial rollout is that many of its first software titles don't maximize some of these strengths. Whereas the 3DO system has had the luxury of almost a year of software development time, which will soon culminate in a virtual avalanche of new titles, Jaguar has stayed largely under wraps until recently. Although Atari has lined up a substantial list of developers, most of them are just learning the new system and tweaking the glitches out of their titles.

What this means to the consumer is that the 3DO titles will look sexier for at least the first part of the year, but this doesn't truly reflect a disparity between the machines with Jaguar on the lower end of the spectrum. The Jaguar is a stronger machine, but the average player won't see that on the surface alone. Once designers get a handle on the processing power of the Jaguar, as well as access to the extra code space of the CD medium, expect the sophistication of the Jaguar software lineup to improve by leaps and bounds.

By that time, 3DO may have further entrenched itself in the marketplace, forcing Atari to continue the up-hill battle. This will be an epic battle not unlike David and Goliath. 3DO gets to play the part of the giant based on financial backing alone. So many companies, software producers and hardware developers alike have sunk so much money into the 3DO project that they simply must hang in there to see a return on their investment. That puts mass and momentum on their side and it will be tough for Atari to overcome these forces. Further, should Atari capture the attention of the marketplace, you can rest assured that 3DO's backers will throw even more money at the system to stay ahead of the power curve. Meanwhile, if software developers can make money with both systems, they will feed the monkey accordingly. It will be something to watch.

Test Lab doesn't discount the Amiga CD 32 from capturing its share of the market either. Though less capable overall than either of the previously mentioned contenders, the Amiga has racked up an impressive first showing in the European market, which guarantees some degree of push from Commodore here in the U.S.

Amidst all this flurry of marketing madness, the Sega CD continues to languish in last place, at least in terms of performance. In fact, the greatest thing that system has going for it also premiered at CES, AT&T's Edge. This is a 2400 baud modem that allows head-to-head gaming across the phone lines, as well as connectivity to popular BBS systems like the ImagiNation network. For more extensive coverage of The Edge, see this issue's special on the Winter CES.

With the addition of the Jaguar, the multimedia bandwagon has converted from a canvas canopy calliope player to a fiberglass low rider with smoked windows and an attitude. Atari's back to reclaim its once undisputed title as the King of the Strip and the race is just starting. Just be sure to buckle up, because it will definitely be a heck of a ride!

Third Party Software Developers for Jaguar

21st Century Software, 3D Games, Accolade, Activision, Anco Software, ASG Technologies, Inc., Brainstorm, Beyond Games, Inc., Euro-soft, Dimension Technologies, High Voltage Software, Gremlin Graphics Software Ltd., Interplay Productions, Inc., id Software, Loricel S.A., Krisalis Software Ltd., Microids, Maxis Software, Microprose (US & UK), Millennium Interactive, Ltd., MidNite Software, Inc., Ocean Software, Phalanx Software, Rebellion Software, Retour 2048, Telegames Inc., Silmarils, Titus, Tiertex Ltd., Trimark Interactive, Tradewest, UBI Soft, Virgin Interactive Entertainment, Ltd., U.S. Gold, Ltd.,

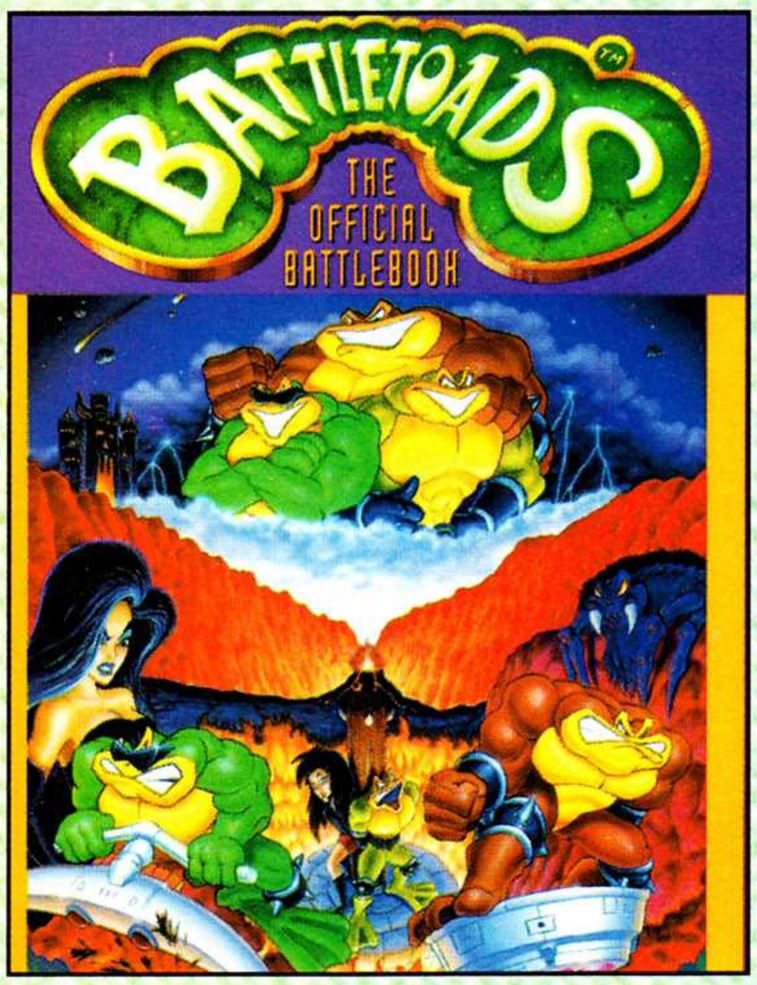
EG's Test Lab: Comparison of Four Multimedia Formats

	Jaguar	3DO	Amiga CD^{32}	Sega CD
CPU Speed	13.3 Mhz	12 Mhz	14 Mhz	12 Mhz
Architecture	64-Bit	32-Bit	32-Bit	16-Bit
Bus Bandwidth	106.4 Megabytes/sec	50 Megabytes/sec	50 Megabytes/sec	<2 Megabytes/sec
MIPS	55 Mips	6 Mips	3.5 Mips	0.3 Mips
Memory	2 MB DRAM	1 MB VRAM, 2 MB DRAM	2 MB DRAM	64 kb VRAM, 64 kb SRAM
Animation Speed	850 Million pixels/sec	64 Million pixels/sec	7 Million pixels/sec	1 Million pixels/sec
Resolution	720 x 576	320 x 200 (with hardware interpolation, up to 640 x 4000)	1280 x 400	320 x 200

LORE

THE 7TH GUEST AND THOSE BRAWLIN' BATTLETOADS OFFER SOME HINTS.

Fight gamers who don't fear getting overly involved in their games can identify with the Battletoads, who were once teenage video game testers for the Psicone Corporation. A virus in the code for a new game called **Battletoads** zapped them into the video game's titular characters and they remain trapped in the Gamescape world.



Battletoads: The Official Battlebook
Steve Schwartz, Prima Publishing, 108 pages (softbound, $12.95)

There are several game carts out there sporting a variety of Gamescape scenarios. Schwartz's book can help gamers with **Battletoads** for the NES and Genesis, **Battletoads in Battlemaniacs** for the SNES and **Battletoads/Super Dragon** for all three systems. He advises that the first runthrough can also be used to a limited extent for the Game Gear version of **Battletoads** and for **Battletoads in Ragnarok's World** for the Game Boy, but not for the very different **Battletoads** on the Game Boy.

The author says the **Battletoads** games are the toughest arcade games ever created, requiring much practice and excellent reflexes to even see the upper levels. There are Warp Zones where it's possible to skip a level, but no level-select codes outside of the Game Genie. Given that, the book is densely packed with step-by-step recommendations for how best to get through each scene of every level, with special hints where required for system-specific portions of each game. General playing strategies lead the discussion of each game and most levels, plus Super Secrets, such as tips for extra lives at startup in the first two games. There are many illustrative screen shots and sequence maps, all in black and white but clear enough to help judge where you are.

Presumably Tradewest completely eliminated that nasty virus when it took the game over from Psicone, so players who have any of the **Battletoads** games covered here, but haven't gone as far into them as they'd like, need not fear to use this book to help them reach the highest levels.

— Ross Chamberlain

The 7th Guest: The Official Strategy Guide, Rusel De Maria, Prima Publishing, 356 pages (softbound, $19.95)

This companion compendium to the hot CD-ROM mystery/fantasy, **The 7th Guest**, possesses the same strength as the game which inspired it: A strong reliance on visuals.

De Maria's work is illustrated with almost twice as many screen shots as other books in the Prima line, some of which are special viewing angles for the game's locations which could not be seen elsewhere. These studio generated images allow readers to examine puzzles from a new perspective, and promote understanding of the author's recommended solutions to each obstacle.

The first part of the book is a fictionalized walk-through of the entire game using one specific approach. Disclaimers note that this is not the only possible path, but some of the alternatives are not explored until much later in the work.

The section is organized by chapters, each of which covers a specific location and the puzzles located there. The intent is to allow the reader to get an overview of the storyline and action, but avoid the minutia. In keeping with that tone, puzzle solutions are eschewed in favor of less specific play hints. The farm will be given away, for those who need it to be, but not quite yet.

The second section contains the original script of the game, as written by Trilobyte. In conjunction with the designer interviews and concept documents at the end of the book, this gives the reader a glimpse of the development process of **7th Guest**. This is noted only because these sections comprise a full third of the work.

The final section of the main body contains concise solutions for everything except the microscope puzzle, which was omitted, with apology, due to the lack of a reliable strategy. The similarities between this segment of the work and a conventional hint book cannot be ignored. In fact, these 60 pages contain all the vital information a player really needs to know, exclusive of the remainder of the book. Why then, one might reasonably ask, were the other sections offered? Some readers may castigate De Maria for trying to stuff 10 pounds of "stuff" in a 100 pound bag, but their criticism would be misguided.

Granted, **7th Guest** is not deep enough to justify over 300 pages of hard core material, but the author did not fill the extra space with fluff. He presented relevant material in different fashions to strike the widest possible cross section of individual playing styles. It was redundancy with a purpose, which is excusable.

—Ed Dille

EG POLL

The editors of **Electronic Games** want to know about you, the reader, so that we can tailor the magazine to your needs. The Reader Poll lets us know what aspects of the electronic gaming hobby are most interesting to you. We also want to know what you're playing, and to receive your vote for the most popular game programs each month. Those results appear in "Hotline" every month.

Just circle your choices below, then send your poll sheet (or a photocopy if you prefer) to **Electronic Games, 330 S. Decatur, Ste. 152, Las Vegas, NV 89107.**

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How many people read your copy of EG?
1 2-3 4-6 7-8 9 or more

I regularly play (Circle all that apply): Video Games
Computer Games
Multimedia Games
All

How many of the following did you buy (or receive from others) in the last 12 months:

Video Game Cartridges _____

Portable Game Cartridges _____

Computer Games _____

Multimedia Games _____

Please check all hardware you own or plan to buy in the next 12 months:

	Own/ Use	Plan to Buy
SNES	____	____
Genesis	____	____
Neo•Geo	____	____
Jaguar	____	____
Game Boy	____	____
Game Gear	____	____
Lynx	____	____
CD-i	____	____
3DO	____	____
Amiga-32	____	____
CD-ROM Drive	____	____
Macintosh	____	____
MS-DOS Computer	____	____

Other Computer (write in name)
Own/Use _____
Plan to Buy _____

Please rate the following game subjects from 1 (no interest) to 10 (very interesting):

Sci-Fi/Fantasy ___
Mystery ___
War ___
Sports ___

Please rate your interest in these game categories from 1 (not interesting) to 10 (very interesting):

Video Games ___
Coin-Ops Games ___
Computer Games ___
MultiMedia Games ___

My favorite video games are:
1._____
2._____
3._____

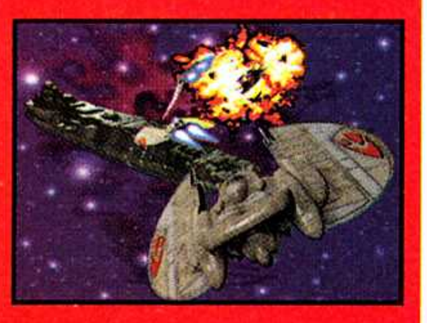
My favorite computer games are:
1._____
2._____
3._____

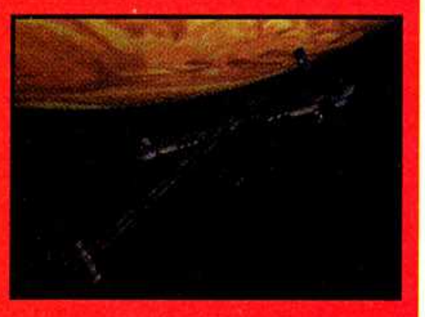
My favorite multimedia games are:
1._____
2._____
3._____

My favorite coin-op game is:
1._____

LET EG KNOW WHO YOU ARE! SEND IN THE POLL TODAY!

THINGS TO COME



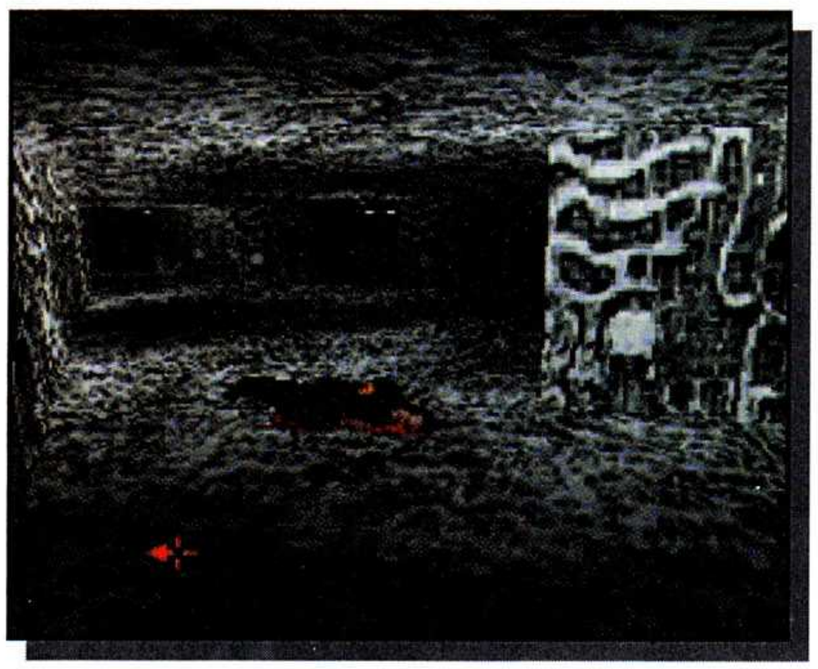


The Player's Guide to Spring and Summer Gaming

March's "CES Express" only warmed up the **EG** crystal ball. Next month, we've got the advance word on all the video, multimedia, computer and portable games coming during the second and third quarters, plus never-before-seen screen shots.

Arcades Over Vegas!

Tomorrow's arcades are collecting quarters in America's Glitter Capital today! Our reporters penetrate the secrets of the pyramid, The Luxor Hotel/Casino, and check out the other trailblazing amusement centers.



State of the Art: Computer Entertainment

Many computerists like to see themselves as pioneers, blazing software trails on the digital frontier. The editors of **Electronic Games** boot 'em up so you don't have to waste time with the also-rans. We survey the software on the cutting edge and pick the ones worth your money.

...FIND ALL THIS AND MORE ON YOUR NEWSSTAND MARCH 22, 1994!

OTHER GAMES MAY TALK.
THIS ONE HAS A VOICE.

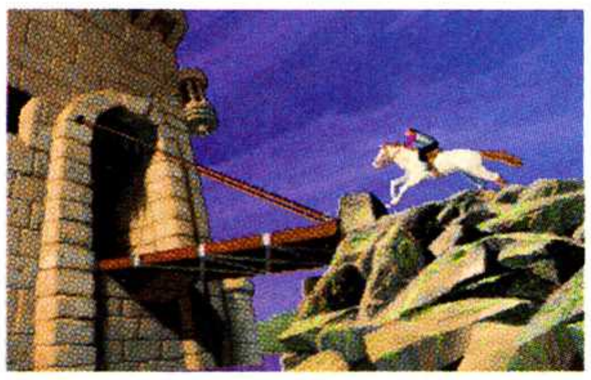
Star Trek: The Next Generation's

PATRICK STEWART

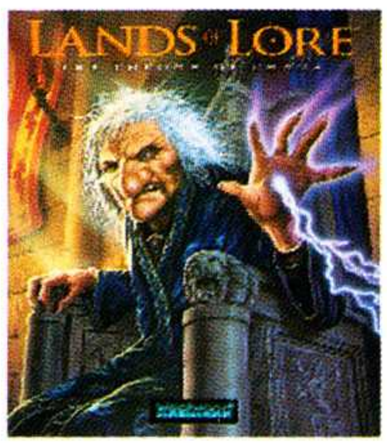
in

LANDS OF LORE: *The Throne of Chaos*

With Patrick Stewart as the voice of King Richard, *Lands of Lore* has a royal advantage over other fantasy games: An actor of real authority in a role of authority, at the head of a huge cast of heroes and villains who speak, rant and roar their way through the most vocally interactive role-playing adventure yet devised. (A mammoth 130 MB of digitized speech makes it possible.)



The Dark Army is on the move, led by the shape-shifting sorceress Scotia—and each time you meet her she'll be more powerful and terrifying than the last. But your powers can grow, too. Experienced-based character development makes great warriors of those who take arms (in real-time combat) against a sea of indescribable monsters and makes mighty wizards of those who cast Larger-Than-Life spells. Explore ancient castles, living forests, hidden lairs, bustling towns, haunted caverns, through 30 enchanted levels made vividly real by more than 20 MB of compressed art and special effects.



For the PC CD-ROM

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