SUMMER CES IN REVIEW • THE LION KING ROARS • BLOCKBUSTER MOVES INTO VIRGIN TERRITORY

ELECTRONIC GAMES

THE MAGAZINE OF INTERACTIVE EXPERIENCES

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 12



SPECIAL REPORT

VIDEO GAMES: THE NEXT GENERATION

WHICH HARDWARE PLATFORM WILL FINISH FIRST?

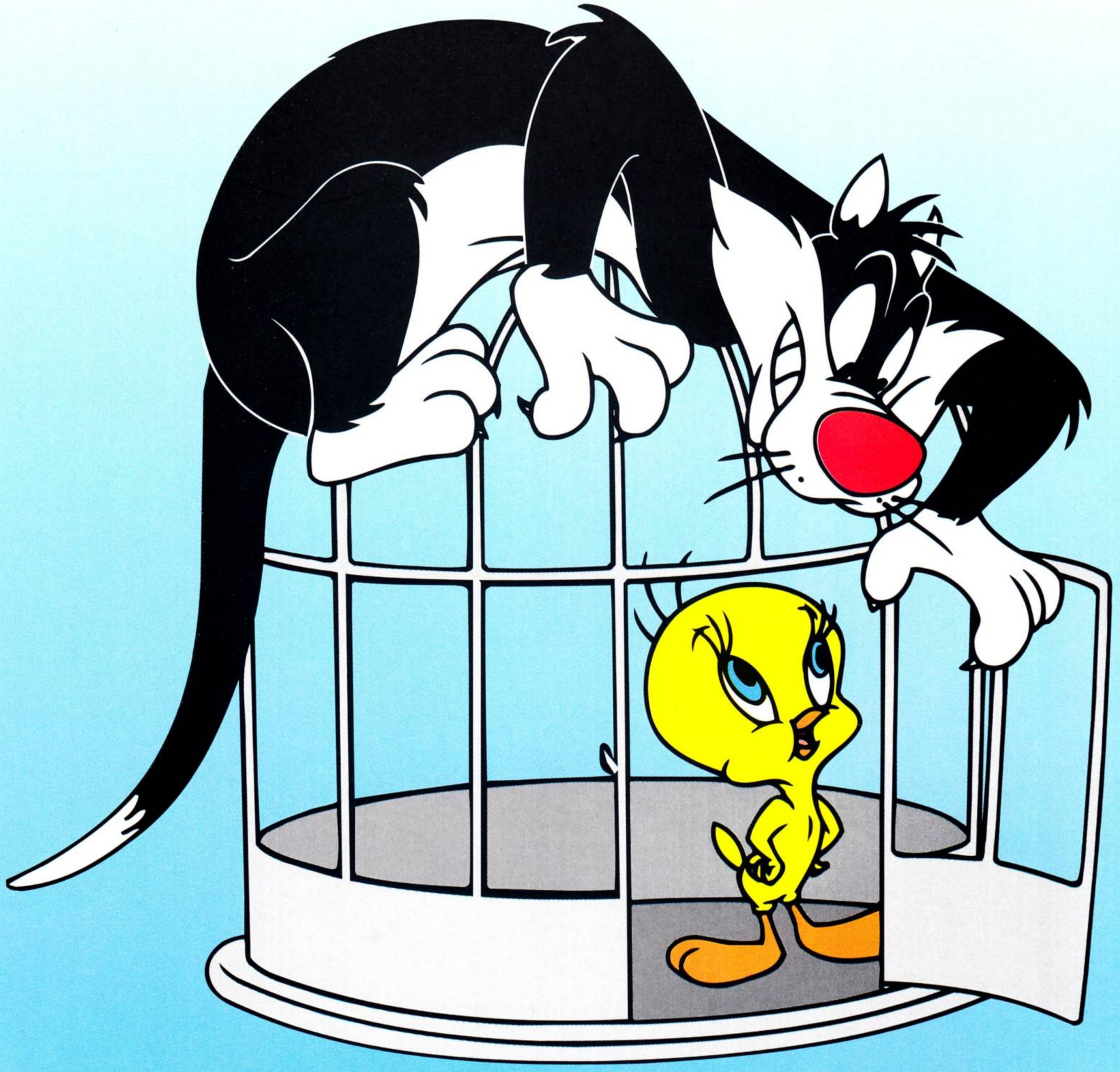
Page 48

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Sylvester and Tweety in Cagey Capers



"BAAD OL' PUTTY TAT!"

Sylvester is at it again! His favorite meal (Tweety) is so close he can taste it – but there's a slight catch. He has to get past Granny, Spike, Hippety Hopper the Kangaroo and more to get his paws on Tweety. It's amazing what this cat will do for a bite to eat.



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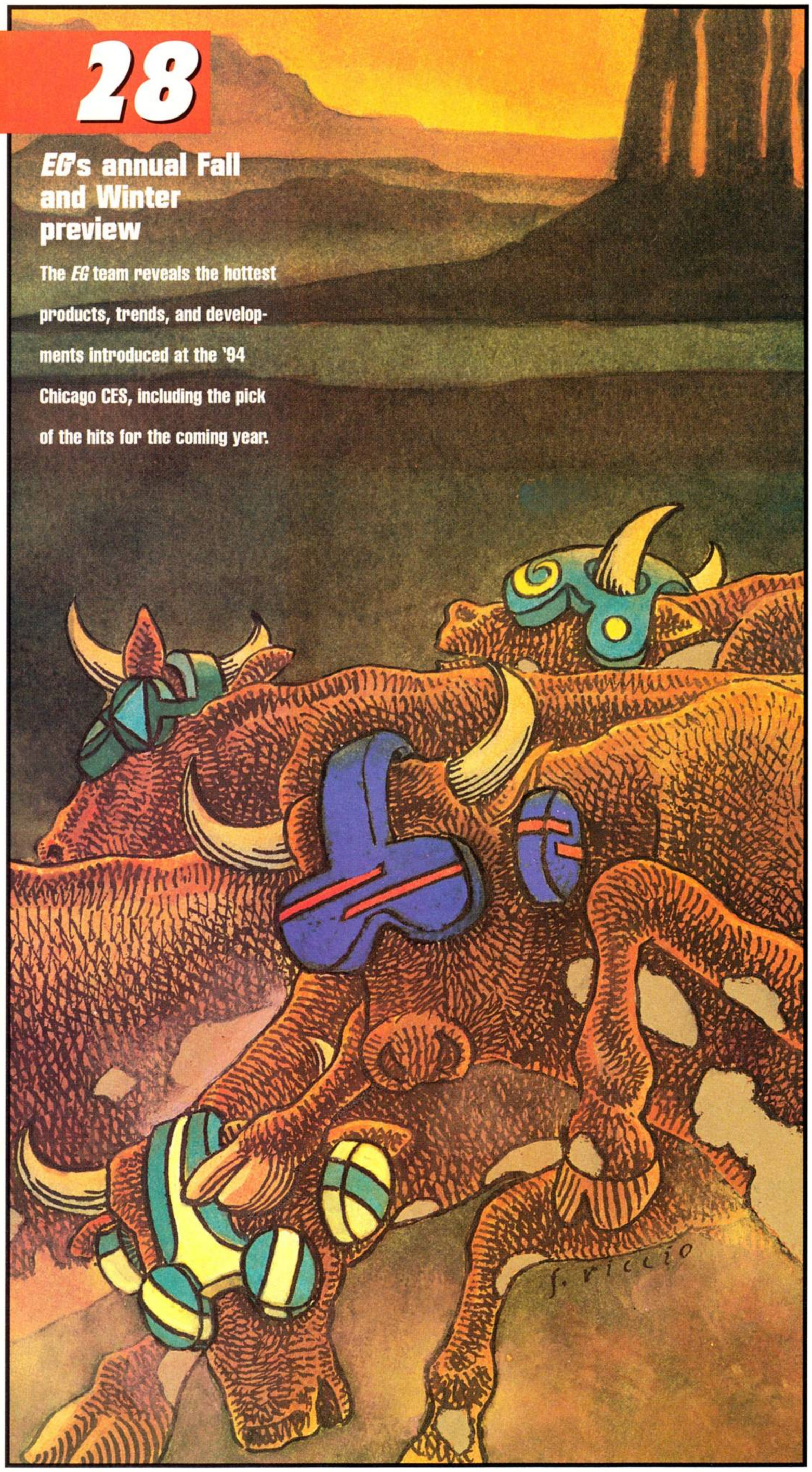
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CONTENTS



NEWS

PAGE 14 **Hotline**
Mega deal—Blockbuster buys Virgin!...
Nintendo sets guidelines for developers...
Jefferson Airplane sues Berkeley, and more...

DEPARTMENTS

PAGE 6 **Power On!**
You say you want a revolution? Well look no further—great new products revealed at CES.

PAGE 8 **Feedback**
Playability more important than secrets? Is the Great Game Crash II due? One writer hopes so.

PAGE 24 **Game Doctor**
What's up with the game **Dueling Firemen**? Can game cartridge batteries be replaced?

PAGE 60 **Test Lab**
Searching for big screen excitement at an affordable price? Use your TV as a monitor!

PAGE 62 **The NET**
Making the NET "cool" will take a lot, but Total Entertainment Network is up to the task.

PAGE 113 **The Kunkel Report**
Nintendo hurriedly enters the Quest for Cool.

FEATURES

PAGE 48 **Super System Race**
The corporate battle to dominate the next generation of electronic gaming. Will it be Sega, Nintendo, or maybe even Sony?

PAGE 56 **The Lion King Cometh**
The process in which a major Disney motion picture becomes a major Disney video game.

REVIEWS

PAGE 66 **Cartridge**
Bubsy II. He's back with all the thrills and action of the original with new tricks, too.

PAGE 80 **Disk**
The classic board game **King Maker** comes to the PC. Begin your quest for the crown today.

PAGE 96 **CD-ROM**
The popular PC game **Return to Zork** hits the Macintosh in an improved CD-ROM format.

PAGE 106 **Edutainment**
World Beat by MedioMultimedia. **The Cat Came Back** by Sanctuary Woods, and more.

PAGE 109 **Print**
Official Strategy Guides for PC games **Alone in the Dark** and **Outpost**. Fear of computers.

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POWER ON!

You Say You Want a Revolution

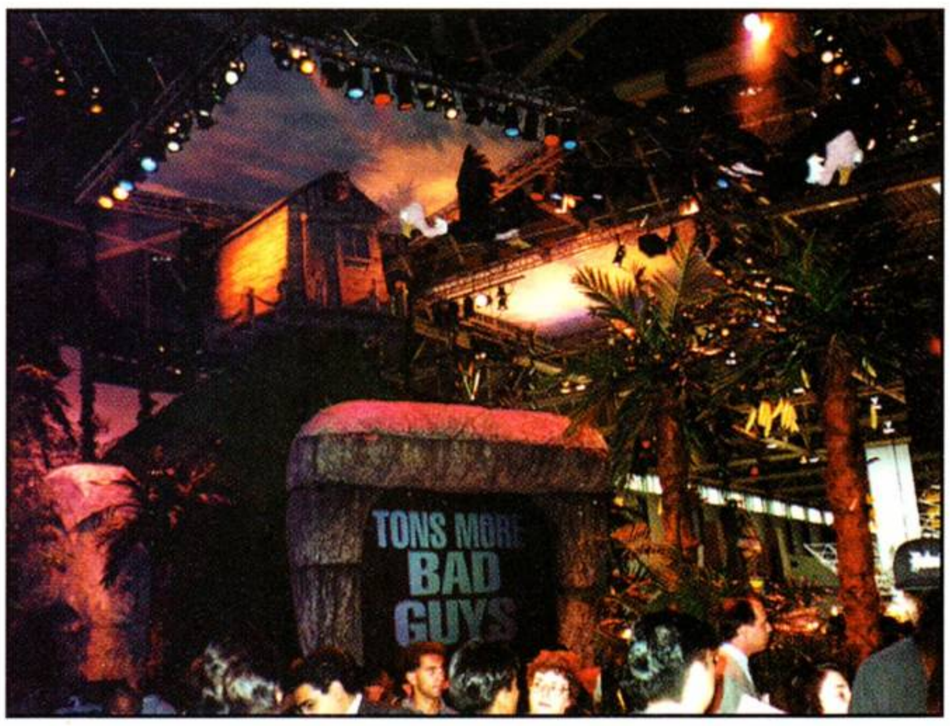
"We have not seen the last of bad-looking games. Clinkers will always sneak into the market, and we'll clobber them here, but we've definitely turned the corner."

The Consumer Electronics Show is always interesting and usually exciting for us writers and editors. You wouldn't know it the way some of my journalistic colleagues moan about the long hours, skipped meals, and marathon walking, but it's an event all of them would walk through fire to attend. I'll admit to some fatigue at the end of six days of meetings and demonstrations, but I haven't missed one since I started in 1981.

It's that important.

Very rarely, perhaps once every half-decade, a CES embodies a revolution. This was one of those times. How big a deal is this? Well, the last similarly momentous CES was the one at which Nintendo of America and its legion of third-party licenses arrived in force to prove that video games were back.

The 1994 Summer CES signaled a seismic change in interactive electronic entertainment. Like any true revolution, this one caught most people completely by surprise, so its effects may not be felt until after this holiday season. Once everyone realizes what has happened, the industry and the hobby will never be quite the same again.



I didn't really put it together until Thursday afternoon, after Bill Kunkel and I finished moderating our workshops. I presided over one about product trends for the holiday season and beyond, while Bill led a distinguished panel that defined the changing audience for interactive electronic entertainment.

The sessions were gratifyingly well attended, and the informal question period after the official one forced me to reflect on my first-day experiences. When I considered the dozens of new games I'd seen since CES opened that morning, the pattern was clear.

The industry standards for sound and graphics have risen to a new level. Hard to believe, but every game I previewed had good graphics and sound, and most were on a par with last year's best.

We haven't seen the last of bad-looking games. Clinkers will always sneak into the market, and we'll clobber them here, but we've definitely turned the corner. No company will ever introduce a technologically deficient game without knowing they're headed for the bargain bin.

Graphics and sound technical quality have become non-issues in interactive entertainment overnight. Maybe that sounds like a small step, but it's going to change the way games are sold—and how they're critiqued in magazines and newspapers.

A high degree of technical polish has sold a lot of games in the past. The Summer CES ended that era.

Think back to all the software box copy that extolled the clarity of the images and the room-filling presence of the sound. All the fancy verbiage had one aim: convince customers that the product was developed to the highest standards of technical excellence.

Think about all the reviews you've read—sadly, including a few we ran in early issues of **EG**. How many of them said the graphics of some game were "awesome," "outstanding," or "superb?" (We've got a guy in the office who thinks they're "splendiferous," but that's another problem.) Those are seldom evaluations of the content; they're estimates of the professionalism of the artists, musicians, and programmers who implemented them.

Now recall TV ads for movies. How many extolled the clarity of the photography and the precision of the editing? Those elements are important, but almost every mainstream release meets high technical standards. What those commercials did was show the pictures and play the sound, while they proclaimed the less obvious virtues of the movie related to its content.

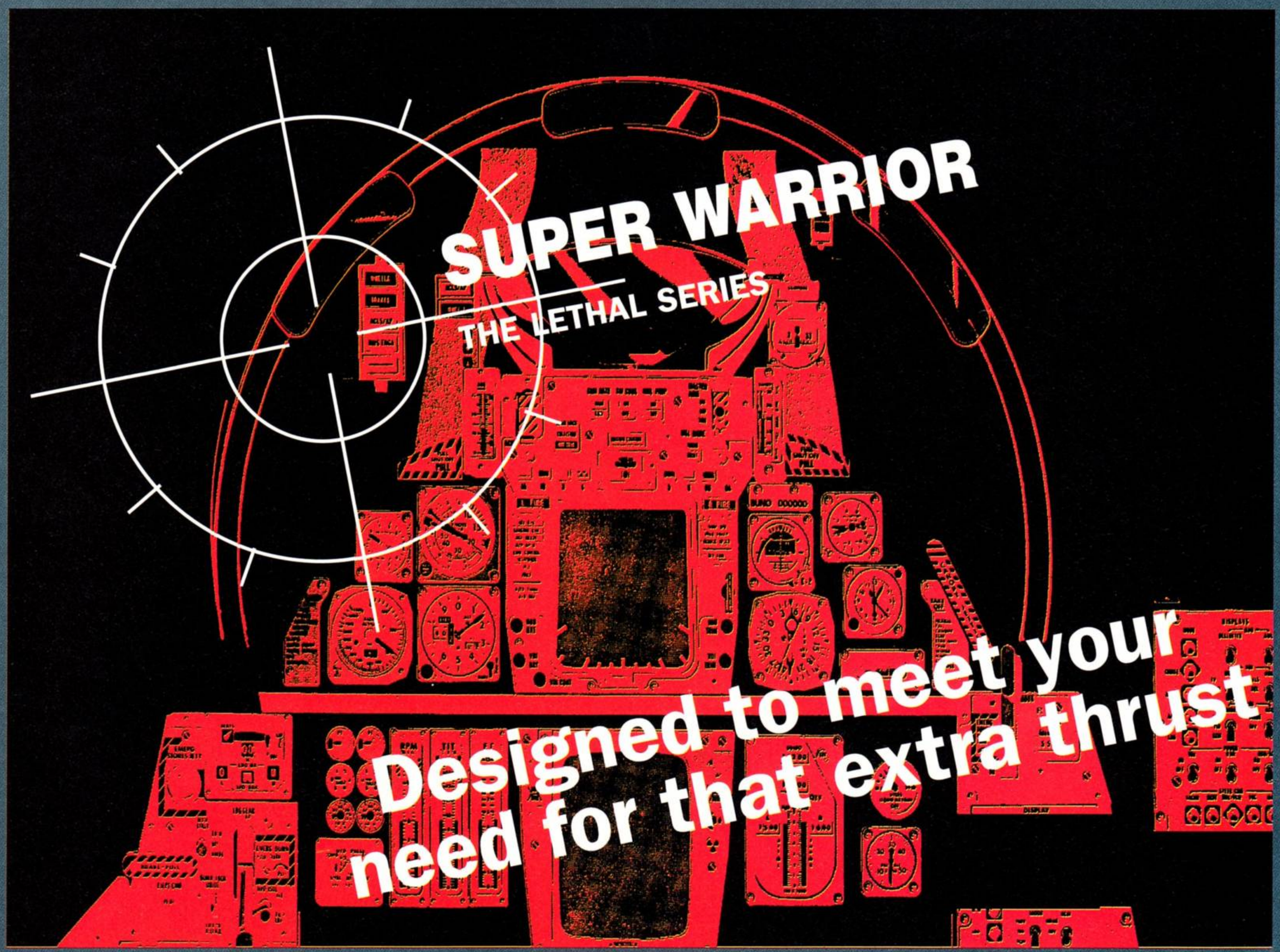
Thanks to the revolutionary Summer CES, that's going to become the only way for publishers to sell video, computer, and multimedia games and entertainment. Only titles that have nothing but graphics and/or sound technical quality will stop at boasts about the size of the color pallet or frame-rate of the animation.

Once consumers sample the games we're previewing in this **Electronic Games**, they're not going to be satisfied with anything less than the same high level of implementation on future products.

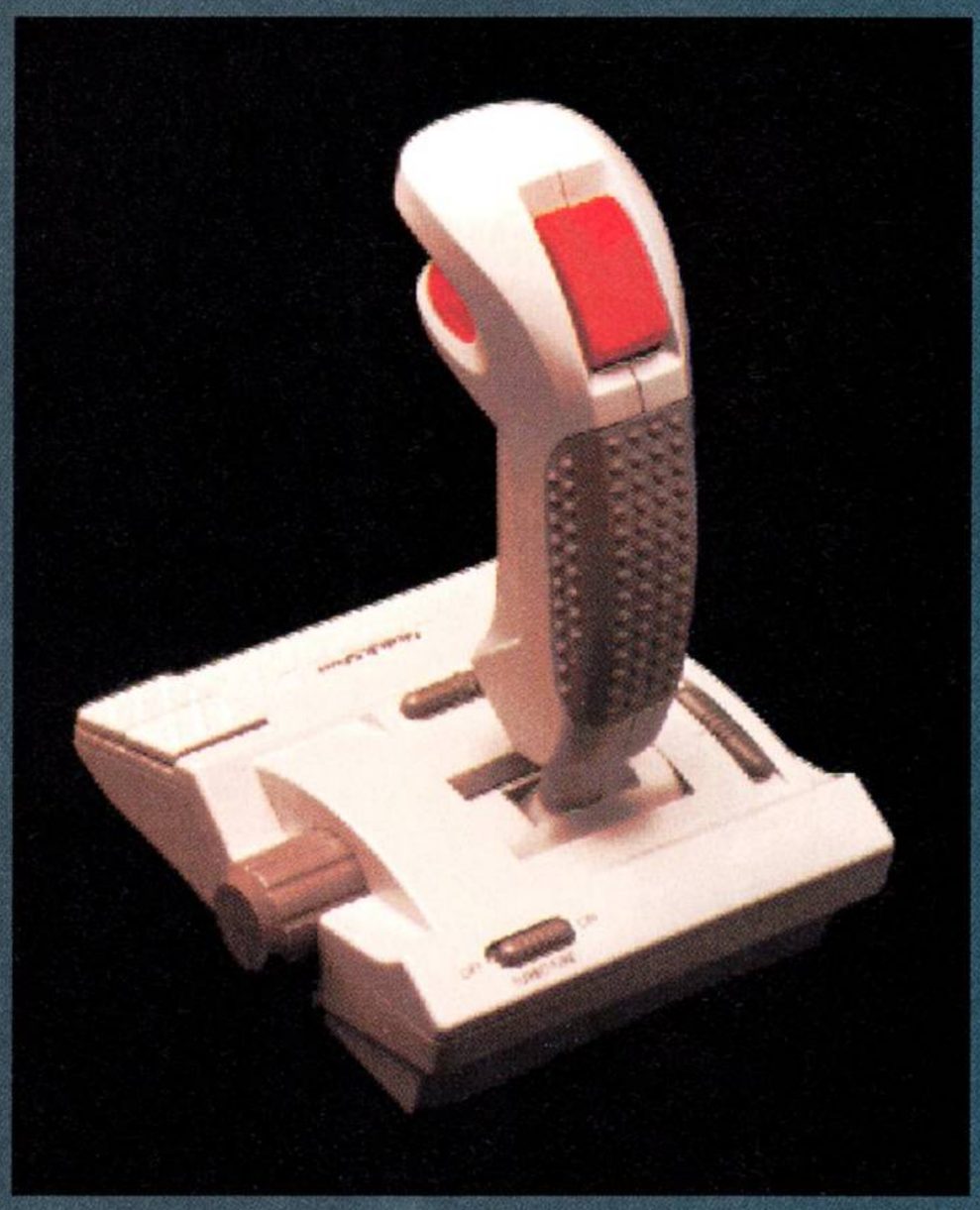
Neither will our reviewers and analysts. They'll continue our policy, started last winter, of paying more attention to the artistic merit and effectiveness of the audiovisual effects than the skill of the implementation.

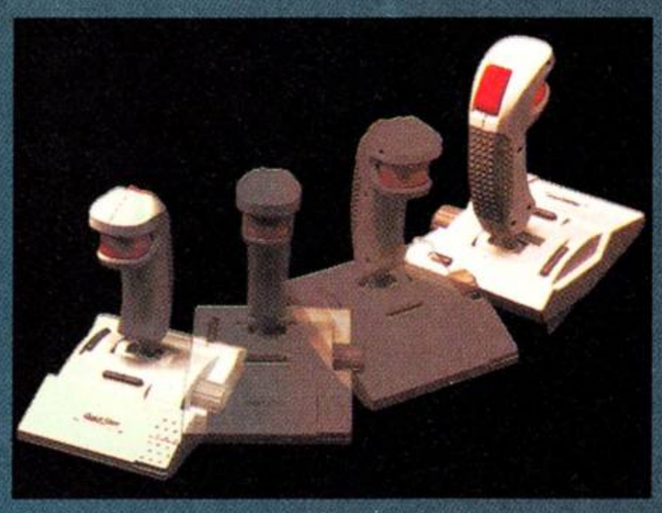
Welcome to the revolution!

by Arnie Katz



Designed to meet your need for speed and control, the Super Warrior is the first available from a new line of IBM compatible game controllers called the Lethal Series by QuickShot.
The Super Warrior is ergonomically designed with four positive response fire buttons, a smooth tracking bio grip, and high speed auto fire capability. And with a built in throttle control for flight simulation games, you'll definitely get that extra thrust you need to take on any enemy.





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FEEDBACK

"Instead of complaining about their secrets leaking out too early, Midway should count themselves lucky to have a success in the Mortal Kombat games."

ARCADE VIDEO DEATH REVISITED

Today I saw and played the new Midway game **Revolution X** for the first time, and I am disappointed to see it follow the trend of current arcade games. In your recent article, "The Death of Arcade Video" (*Coin-Op*, **EG** June '94), you stated that game designers "build in as much entertainment value as they can in the hope that the game playing experience will be enjoyable, challenging and, ideally, something that will endure over a long period of time." **Revolution X** definitely has plenty of challenge (perhaps too much too soon), but I didn't enjoy spending $2 in quarters to get my butt wasted escaping in the helicopter. As for longevity, I give this game six months, tops. After that, the novelty will have worn off. Look at **T2: Judgment Day** by Midway. It was really popular when it first came out, but now hardly anybody plugs money into that machine. Arcade owners will seriously consider this, especially with a large machine like **Revolution X** taking up the space of two normal sized machines.



• **Revolution X**

The video game trend that I mentioned is for a game to last a year, maybe two, and then get replaced by the next big thing. In 1989, Konami came out with **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles**, which was a big success due to Turtlemania and an excellent job of game design, but you don't see that game in arcades anymore. New gameboards such as **Spider-Man**, **NBA Jam,** or **D&D: Tower of Doom** have been put inside the old **TMNT** cabinets. After players have conquered these games they'll abandon them and move on to something new. The old video game classics like **Ms. Pac-Man** and **Galaga** have a very strong longevity because these games are fun to play.

Instead of complaining about their secrets leaking out too early, Midway should count themselves lucky to have a success in the **Mortal Kombat** games. With limited success in **Smash TV** and total bombs with **Strikeforce**, **Total Carnage**, and **High Impact**, Midway needed a hot game to keep up with Japanese companies like Capcom, Sega, and Konami. Instead of putting so much effort into secrets (like hidden stages, characters), Midway should focus more effort on playability for a game to have a longer lifespan.

Paul Hansen
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

*Jay Carter replies: "I appreciate your observations, Paul, but want to respond to a few of your points. First off, in comparing **Revolution X** to **Terminator 2**, both Midway gun games, you might be surprised to learn that **T2** was released in 1991 and still is one of the top rated coin-op games in the industry trade magazine polls. That looks to be a bit longer than six months of popularity, and **Rev-X** could well replicate this success although it's still too early to tell.*

"You're very accurate in your assessment of video games as a trend business. Unfortunately the mega-hits tend to be few and far between when it comes to staying power. As for Midway complaining about secrets being revealed, as a manufacturer they weren't alone. Actually, most of the concern expressed, as I attempted to explain, was really from location owners and operators who make the final purchasing decision for every piece of equipment.

*"Finally, Williams/Bally/Midway has won the Best Manufacturer of the Year for the last two years and, if anything, with the **Mortal Kombat** and **NBA Jam** games, it's the other, Japanese companies who are trying to 'keep up' when it comes to coin-op."*

Thanks, Paul, for your thoughtful letter. You get this month's prize of your choice of STD controller.

The Hottest Game

I was astonished to see an error in your article, "Park Place: Raid or Rescue" (*Hotline*, **EG** May 94). The secret meeting between Sony and the selected few Park Place employees was held on Dec. 25, 1993. The reference to those who left Park Place for Sony without any notice as "Cream of the Crop" is insulting. Those who were "invited" to go were strategically selected to cripple Park Place. Sure, some of those programmers and artists who left are very good, but most of them are really inexperienced.

Talking about gaming, might I suggest the hottest game you can play? It is a very intense game that will keep you occupied for hours at a time. It may take as little as a month and as much as two years to learn how to play. Once you learn, you will be playing scenarios that take from six months to three years to complete. You may even find that teaming up with others is the only way to win.

How much does it cost? That depends on if you

Letter Contest

*Win an STD controller! Each month **EG** selects one letter and the writer gets a choice of one of STD's fine line of controllers for SNES, Genesis, and computers.*

"...Spike McFang is the *man!*" Game Players Magazine, June 1994 **"Editor's Choice – Gold!"** Electronic Gaming Monthly, June 1994 **"Spike McFang i... l, playful game** Game Pro Magazine, April 19... into this video g... ike any hero yo... ntendo Power, June 1994 **"...** ... excellent sto... and awesome graphics!" Electronic Gaming Monthly, June 1994 **"...Spike McFang is the game you want to play."** Video Games Magazine, March 1994





Use Spike's lightning hat and spinning cape to destroy his enemies.



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Snapping Piranhas have razor- sharp teeth and their lunch menu says "vampire sandwich".

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"I'm hoping for 'The Great Crash II' to happen. This industry needs a good shake-out, and it really is about time for one."

decide to learn on your own or pay someone to teach you, but generally you play for free and when you get really good you can get paid to play. The name of the game is Programming, and includes real-time interaction along with latest technology hardware research and sometimes even requires you to learn other languages. I know it's the best game I've ever played. I've been programming an average of 50 hours a week over the last 18 years and still look forward to my daily dose.

Kent Simon
(Ex-Park Place employee)
Chatworth, CA

*You may have seen Bill Kunkel's correction regarding the timing of the Park Place meetings in the July **EG**. As to the great game of Programming, we know some folks who really enjoy playing it, too, on a variety of platforms. But it's not for everybody, Kent—and it's really hard to review! So we don't discuss it all that much in these pages, except indirectly.*

Last of the Amigans

What has happened to your coverage of Amiga software? I have been a faithful reader since your first issue, especially impressed at the time by your relatively unbiased coverage of software for the three major computer platforms and the different game consoles.

Lately, however, you seem to have followed the path that so many other "multi-platform" magazines have traveled, and devoted the majority of your software section to IBM. Case in point: in your April, 1994 issue you feature a review of the outstanding pinball game, **Pinball Fantasies**. The one aspect I found somewhat surprising was that you neglected to mention that there is an Amiga version available. Not to mention that the Amiga version came out over a year before the IBM version! Also it was one of the pack-in disks for the CD^{32} for a while. By not telling your readers about the existence of a version of a particular game for another platform, I fear that you are going to mislead many of them into thinking there is hardly any software available for any computer other than IBM. I'm not disputing IBM's legitimacy as a viable gaming platform, but let's try to be fair here, guys! The Amiga can play games too—as well as, if not better than many of the other systems out there! With the recent introduction of the AGA models of Amiga as well as the CD^{32}, I would think that magazines like yours would be increasing their Amiga coverage as opposed to diminishing it.



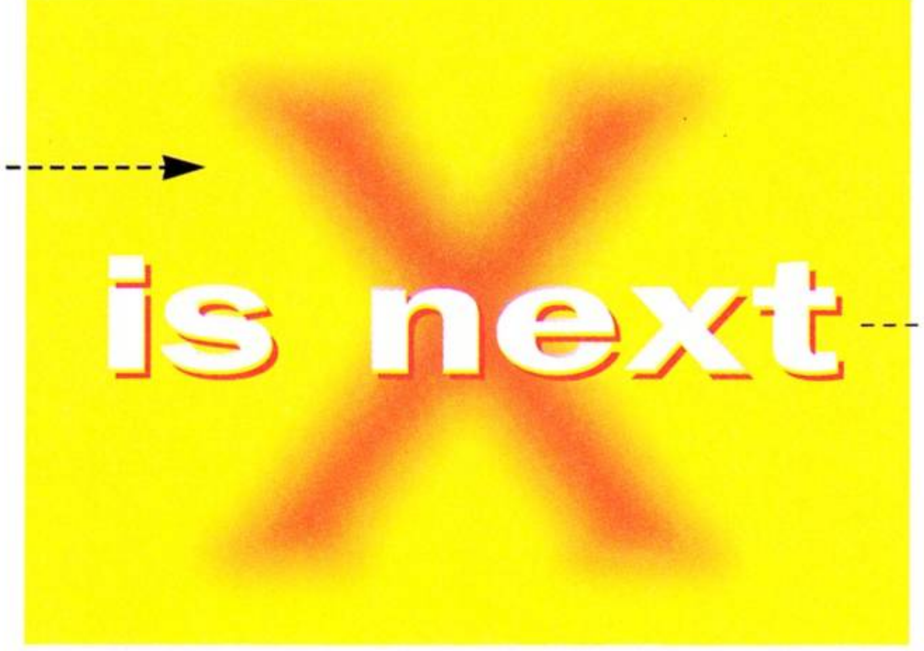
• Pinball Fantasies

Sean McLean
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

*As you now know, Sean, since you wrote this letter the question has become academic with the fall of Commodore. Your letter was picked as representative of many we receive from staunch supporters of the Amiga as well as of other platforms where coverage slowed down due to lack of support by the suppliers of software for those platforms. Those of our reviewers who cover the Amiga, the Neo•Geo, the Lynx, etc., do not get the advance copies of games **EG** requires to prepare timely reviews. Meanwhile, games for the IBM (or, more accurately, PC/MS-DOS) are flourishing. This is one of the fastest growth segments in the entertainment industry, and **EG** has no intention of slipping behind in its coverage of it.*

Head-to-Head Baseball

Congratulations on your coverage of the flood of baseball carts in your June issue. The red hot head-to-head prospects listing is just what we need to make a choice—those of us who don't have a rental store nearby. One suggestion: please add a rating for the computer intelligence. Unlike other carts, a sports game contains two possibilities: 1) against a friend, and 2)

against the computer. Some games are great in category #1, while in #2 after a week they're of no interest. Those of us who are short on friends who are video gamers need to know a little bit more.

Rufino Juarez
Mexico

Rating the AI in a sports game is possible, Rufino, but impractical. The AI attributes are generally far more subtle in their contribution to game play than those elements we did compare in that table, such as animation and stats. We do try to indicate within our reviews whether the AI is strong or limited, in areas where it can show up quickly, such as the predictability of the opposition's response to any given action.

Gamer Seeks Employment

How can I become a game tester for a company like Capcom, Natsume, Enix, Koei, Accolade, Sony, or any company that usually specializes in Japanese video games? I also would like to know how could a person contact one of these companies about this. Finally, could you tell me how I could become a game reviewer for a game magazine such as yours.

Dwayne Mazyck
Jamaica, NY

Look closely at the boxes the video game cartridges come in, Dwayne, and you'll find the addresses of the companies you are interested in contacting.Write to them ... You'll almost certainly find that most of these companies are already well staffed with game testers, just as most magazines in this field already find themselves hard pressed to fit all their available review writers into the space available. The next step? Get involved in gaming fandom. Writing reviews for fanzines pays nothing, nor is it a direct step into the industry, but it will hone your skills and increase your circle of knowledgeable acquaintances. As the circle expands, it may eventually include people within the industry who can help you find a testing (or reviewing) job.

All-Purpose Player Machine

I own the "old" 8-Bit Nintendo and I am looking at all of the different 16-, 32-, and 64-Bit systems, and I am trying to figure out if I should buy one of those (how many *are* there?) or if I should just buy a CD-ROM and Soundblaster for my computer and ignore all of the cartridge systems. It was easier when the NES was the only system that anyone cared about and thousands of games were made solely for it. (Just how many games were made for it?)

I have yet to see the machine that could handle games designed for most of the video game systems. I did read an article in another magazine that said that a system that could handle games for both the Sega Genesis and the SNES was being designed for hookup to a PC. This would be a very good and interesting machine to see on the market. I believe it would be a very good and expensive idea.

Steven J. Moss
Joliet, IL

Expensive? Imagine trying to get both Nintendo and Sega to agree to license a machine that would play games for both systems! We suspect, Steven, that buying both a Genesis and a SNES and a CD-ROM and Soundblaster system for your PC would all add up to less than that one machine ... We have seen special PC cards for the purpose of running carts for one of the systems you mention demonstrated as works in progress at CES. As to how many over-16-Bit systems and how many games were made for the NES ... These figures change so often that by the time you see this any answer we offer will no longer be accurate.

The Great Crash II is Due

I'm writing to comment on Arnie Katz' *Power On!* topic, "Beware of the Cart Backlash!" in the July **EG**. I don't think "The Great Crash II" is just media hype. While it's true that 16-Bit sales are down due to people waiting to see what the new 32- and 64-Bit systems are all about, myself included, this isn't the only factor. Like the last crash, the reason and cause for another one is the glut of product in the industry. There just seems to be too many games, magazines, and systems coming out all at once. And with this flood of new product, I think the average consumer would rather bail out than drown in a sea of choices.

As for myself, I'm hoping for "The Great Crash II" to happen. This industry needs a good shake-out, and it really is about time for one.

James Catalano
Chicago, IL

Well, James, that's a striking opinion, if gloomy for many of us to anticipate. Let's hear from other readers on this—or anything else!

Feedback,* % *Electronic Games
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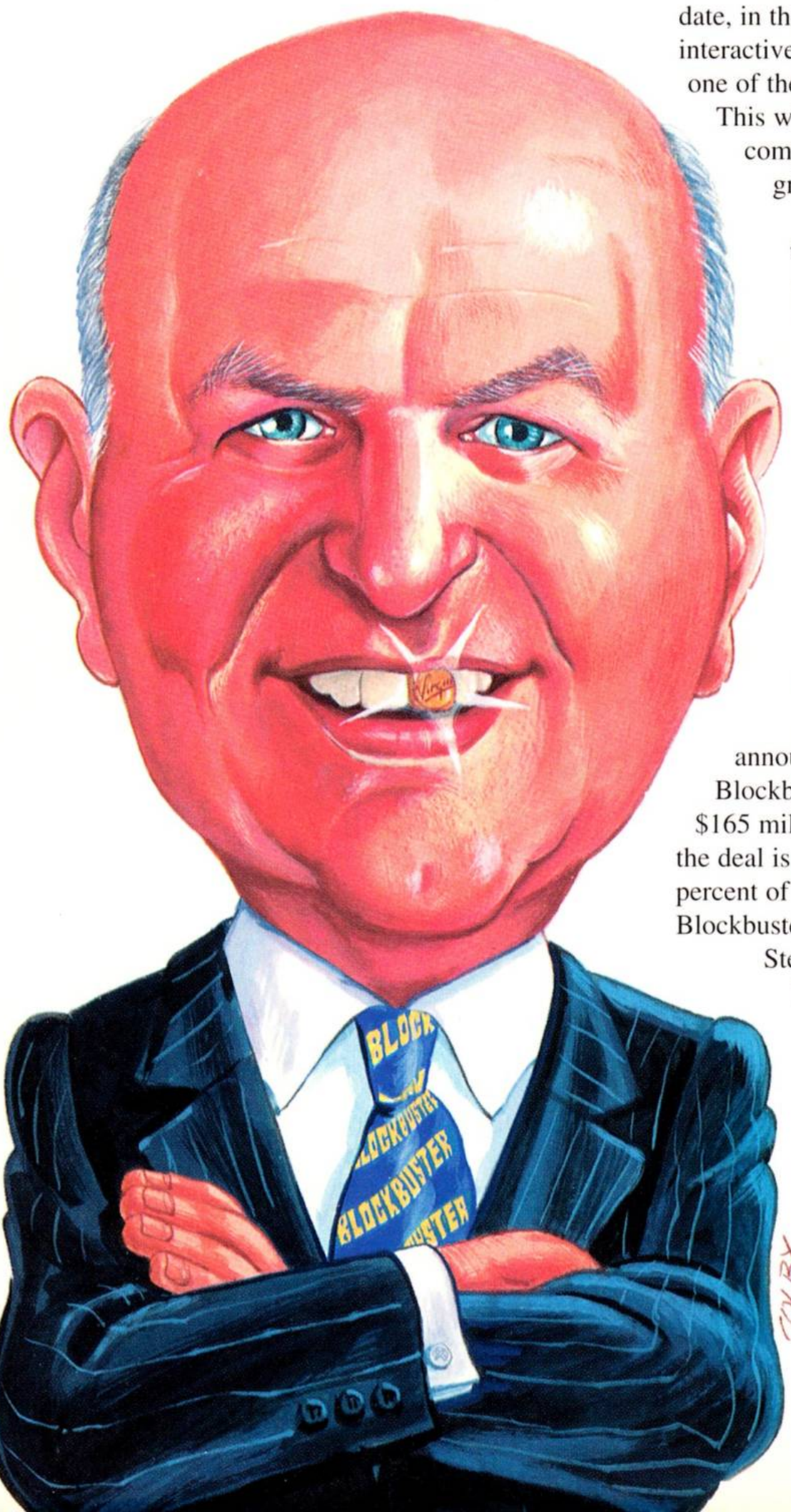
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HOTLINE

THE INSIDER'S GUIDE TO THE ELECTRONIC ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY

Blockbuster's Blockbusters

Blockbuster goes for the golden slice of the interactive pie



Blockbuster made its most dramatic move to date, in the company's ever-increasing inroad into interactive entertainment, by agreeing to acquire one of the world's largest software manufacturers. This will make the well-known movie rental company a significant player in the ever growing software industry.

Virgin Interactive Entertainment is the target of a Blockbuster deal, which will result in Virgin moving out of the Richard Branson sphere of business.

Blockbuster and Spelling Entertainment Group agreed to acquire 55 percent of VIE. Since Blockbuster already had a 20 percent interest in the software manufacturer, this deal brings the ownership ratio up to 75 percent. Although Virgin shareholders still retain 10 percent of the company, a separate arrangement may result in acquisition of those additional shares by Blockbuster at a later date.

Meanwhile, Spelling Entertainment announced its intention to acquire Blockbuster's interest in VIE in exchange for $165 million of Spelling common stock. When the deal is completed, Spelling will own about 75 percent of Virgin Interactive Entertainment, and Blockbuster will own about 77 percent of Spelling.

Steven Berrard, president and CEO of both Blockbuster and Spelling, explained that this will make it possible for the companies to work closely together. "This transaction gives us the ability to realize the enormous potential synergies between the development of filmed entertainment products and interactive software." This statement could possibly indicate that some of Spelling's properties, such as the TV programs *Models, Inc.*, *Melrose Place*, and *Beverly Hills 90210*, will become interactive games.

There are no plans for any changes in management at VIE. The software publisher will continue its operations in Irvine, CA, under direction of President and CEO Martin Alper. Berrard had this to say: "The superior quality of VIE's senior management team, employees and developers, and broad distribution network are a perfect complement to our creative talent base, substantial programming library, and global multimedia distribution capabilities. This transaction gives us the ability to realize the enormous potential synergies between the development of filmed entertainment products and interactive software."

This acquisition of Virgin Interactive Entertainment marks another bold step forward in Blockbuster's growing involvement in the burgeoning electronic game industry.

Wally Knief, corporate communications director, efficiently summed up the situation: "Between the capabilities of VIE and Spelling and Republic, it would give us a major position in the game market."

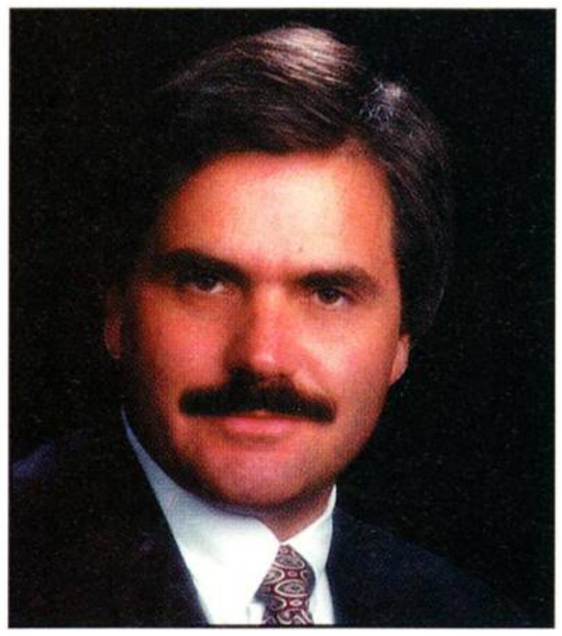
Blockbuster is currently considering sales of software in its 4250 retail stores worldwide. Currently the company has opened four software stores in the Southeastern region of the United States to test the reception of the retail market.

A Look Back

Virgin was the first English software house to successfully make the long trip across the Atlantic. Others tried, but most didn't survive the trip; their products weren't exactly suited for the American marketplace, cross-Atlantic business was difficult and expensive to administer, and sales weren't sufficient to make the effort worthwhile. But despite a disappointing beginning and slow progress, Virgin kept slugging away, and managed to make the American venture succeed, then went on to become a major force in the game industry.

The company originally set up offices in New York under the name Mastertronic, and introduced a line of products for the Commodore 64. The games were largely undistinguished. Even those that were major hits in the English market didn't quite fit the American mold, where the play action was expected to be augmented with frills which at that time were unpopular among many English players.

But, there were high spots even among those early imports. The Darling Brothers, the pair of well-known designers from England, did a special game-buster that disabled sprites so that collisions were not detected and the player could run through a game with no problems, a sort of early version of the Game Genie.



Steven Berrard, Blockbuster president and CEO

In the late '80s, the company, now known as Virgin Mastertronic, started to bring in-house numerous development arms, such as Arcadia, Melbourne House, and Leisure Genius. The company's size grew dramatically, and the number of products increased. Most were fairly generic, but **Lord of the Rings, Risk,** and **Clue** were stand-out products.

Virgin Mastertronic, under the leadership of Martin Alper, continued to make steps forward in concept and quality. **Cool Spot** turned an unlikely license from 7Up into a major hit. They hammered out an alliance with Westwood Studios, thus bringing one of the most dynamic development houses into their fold. In a dramatic dedication of company resources to cutting-edge technology, they began work on a a monumental project: **The 7th Guest**. The gamble paid off: The game garnered praise from critics and players, and became the dominant program in multimedia entertainment, and the top-selling CD of 1993.

Virgin Interactive Entertainment had over 30 titles in 1993, including **The Seventh Guest**, **Cool Spot**, **Terminator**, and **Aladdin**. In 1994, they have announced **Jungle Book**, **The Lion King**, and **The 11th Hour.** With Westwood, they are developing sequels to **Kyrandia** and **Lands of Lore**, plus several other dramatic programs.

by Joyce Worley

TURNING OVER A NEW LEAF

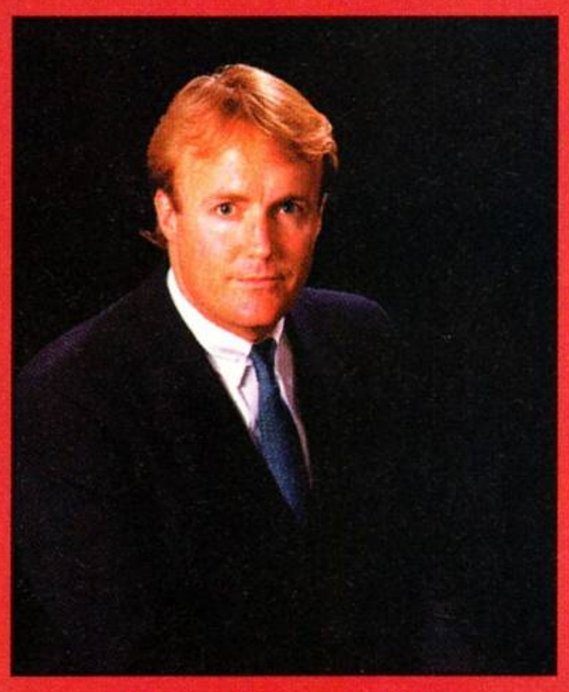
IBM and Blockbuster, in a joint venture called New Leaf Entertainment, are working with Sega and Acclaim, to test electronic distribution of video games for rental in Blockbuster Video stores, using a system called The Game Factory.

New Leaf is establishing a network, so that all Blockbuster stores will be able to connect by modem and update their electronic banks, which ideally will contain all games for the Genesis created to date. The stores then will be able to download the games onto special reprogrammable video game cartridges.

The cartridges can be reused. The gamer will simply return the cartridge to the store, and get new game data burned onto it. This can be done an unlimited number of times.

David Lundeen, New Leaf Entertainment's president, explained the impact: "With the ability to program game cartridges at retail locations, retailers and game publishers can maximize their opportunity to put products into customer's hands and increase overall transactions." In his interview with **EG,** Lundeen said that many retailers experience "out of stock" problems with hit games, reducing their sales.

With this system, stores will not have to worry about the amount of inventory to keep in stock. Tom Kalinske, president and CEO of Sega, explained, "With nearly one thousand Genesis and Game Gear software titles available, it's tough keeping an inventory broad and deep enough to satisfy peak demand."



David Lundeen, President of New Leaf Entertainment

Additionally, game publishers, who now are paid only for the sale of the cartridges to the store, will receive a percentage of the revenue of every rental. Lundeen says the potential for piracy is insignificant, since built-in monitors track and record every eprom that has been burned.

The tests began in August at undisclosed locations in the Southeastern U.S. After two to four months, all parties will evaluate the results to determine whether the system will be offered nationwide.

The New Leaf technology also can be adapted for music, movies and CD-ROM programs, but tests haven't started for those formats.

Other Views

Modie Katz, founder of SoftKat and veteran software distributor, commented in an exclusive **EG** interview: "We've seen these types of systems put into place for the last 10 years ... For example, SoftKat tried it, and put kiosks into stores ... But it didn't work out. There weren't that many stores [that] got into it."

He went on to explain why he thinks download systems are unsatisfactory: "It gets down to merchandising. People want to come into the store where they can look, touch, see a demonstration if possible. They want to handle the box. There's a real emphasis on retail packaging in this industry. Game boxes are unique and attractive merchandising aids that people want to examine."

Brad Grob, Baker & Taylor's Director of Business Development For New Media, had this to say: "No matter what the test is, I think we are a long way away from doing everything right in the stores. It's a big investment, and it's not going to happen overnight. It would be naive to say electronic distribution will never come. The question is when is it going to happen and what sort of investment is necessary to make it happen."

He went on to discuss the problems of piracy when eprom burners are available. "It's not different than the problem we've always had with software. The question when you go to electronic downloading is whether it is easier or harder to control."

Nintendo is also unwilling to go into testing of electronic downloading now. Perrin Kaplan, Corporate Communications Manager for Nintendo of America, explained, "Nintendo's position is that we like the idea, and we have our engineers taking a close look at it, but don't have any plans to enter it at this time."

HOTLINE

Complied by Joyce Worley & Ross Chamberlain

Once Around The Blockbuster With Barry Friedman

The news that Blockbuster Entertainment Corp. is buying a controlling interest of Virgin Interactive Entertainment should come as no surprise to anyone. Prior to this purchase of an additional 55 percent of the software company, Blockbuster Entertainment had owned 20 percent .

Blockbuster bought the 20 percent last year for about $30 million, and announced plans to sell the entire 75 percent to its Spelling Entertainment subsidiary for $165 million. This puts a value of about $135 million on the additional 55 percent stake Blockbuster plans to buy.

A look at recent headlines reveals some expansion areas:

Blockbuster To Rent CD-ROMS, Sony Unit Participates—11/93

Viacom Merges With Blockbuster, Sweetens Paramount Bid—1/94

Kidsoft Partners With Blockbuster On Magazine, CD-ROM—4/94

Sega And Blockbuster To Test On-Demand Video Game System—5/94

Blockbuster Backing Interactive Video Game Service —6/94

Blockbuster To Buy Control Of Virgin Entertainment—6/94

It's obvious. Blockbuster is moving to publish, distribute, rent, and control a lot of the children's, teens', and young adults' interactive marketplace.

Rental of CD-ROMs in the stores is a great move in a time when CD-ROM drive sales are through the roof. Most new configurations being built in 1994 include a CD-ROM drive.

The move with Viacom has not closed yet. It's quite possible that Blockbuster and Viacom won't conclude this merger. Blockbuster is certainly capable of acquiring as well as creating its own proprietary assets for its play in this industry. It does not require Viacom.

Club KidSoft partnering with Blockbuster is a wonderful idea. The club provides members quarterly issues of the magazine and a CD-ROM with interactive games, activities, contests, and an electronic catalog of "kid-tested, parent-approved" educational software. The tie with the club and magazine is a perfect match for Blockbuster stores.

The technology being tested by Sega and New Leaf will allow for significant reductions in price eventually. If they can work through the security issues with the publishers, they may have a very big winner.

Blockbuster Entertainment Corp. and Hollywood financiers Marvin and John Davis formed a company to sell new equipment that allows video game players to compete with each other over telephone lines. Catapult Entertainment, based in Cupertino, CA, plans to sell the service later this year for a monthly price of $5 to $10. The service will offer customers a chance to put a game in their Sega or Nintendo game machine, dial into a central data system and be matched with other customers in different locations who own the same game.

Blockbuster's most recent move in buying Virgin Interactive Entertainment gets its hooks into a publisher who published 31 titles last year and is due to release its game version of Walt Disney Co.'s hit movie *The Lion King* shortly, perfect for Blockbuster with its rentals and sales of the video.

It is obvious that Blockbuster is adequately covering its bases and getting ready for the ultimate game in town—The Interactive Marketplace. Blockbuster revolutionized the video rental marketplace by consolidating smaller chains and the numerous Mom-and-Pop video rental stores into a formidable network of stores. It will be interesting to see if they can do the same thing in the interactive game marketplace.

STAR POWER HEADLINES GAMES

Chuck Norris will headline in three adventure games. The star of over 20 movies and the current *Walker Texas Ranger* TV program, will be seen in **Chuck Norris: The Assault** (by Rembrent Productions with Accent Media Productions), the first of the trio. Jean Claude Van Damme and Raoul Julia will take the leading roles in the cast of the **Street Fighter** movie. At least 15 other actors will join them in recreating the action game on the silver screen.

MGM/UA is working with Imagination Pilots, the Chicago software development company, to create the **Blown Away** game. It is a sequel to the movie, for PC and Macintosh CD.

Chicago Bulls guard/forward Scottie Pippen signed with Digital Pictures to appear in **Slam City With Scottie Pippen**, a live-action interactive game for the Sega CD scheduled for November.

SEGA KNUCKLES UP

Sega has a new mascot: Knuckles is happily joining the Sega family of corporate images. The Australian anteater made a name for himself in **Sonic 3**. The latest appearance of the cute echidna is in **Sonic & Knuckles**, scheduled for an October release.

This new add-on cart has a hidden feature that lets owners of **Sonic 2** and **Sonic 3** activate the Knuckles character in those games, so you can now play as him with gliding and wall-climbing abilities. Players manipulate him throughout the levels to defeat the evil Dr. Robotnik.



NINTENDO MAKES ZOO A-PEEL

Nintendo marked the return of Donkey Kong with a most unusual benefit. In keeping with the Donkey Kong theme a banana toss was held in a Chicago shopping center on June 22. Participants tossed plastic bananas into Donkey Kong's barrel on a large stand-up in James Thompson Center's concourse area. The banana lobbers won donations from Nintendo to be given to the Lincoln Park Zoo of $10, $25, or $50 depending on the proximity to the target.

Chicago White Sox legend Minnie Minoso and Craig Hodges of the Chicago Bulls were on hand to greet the banana tossers. By event's end, Nintendo, with the help of over 300 participants, had raised $2,500 for the Illinois' zoo.

POLLS PREDICT MULTIMEDIA BOOM

Everybody's doing it ... taking polls, that is, and they're all coming up roses. According to a recent Gallop poll of 500 video game players ages 8-20, 88 percent play against friends and 65 percent compete with family members. The poll also asked the gamers to rate their own skills. Gamers think highly of themselves; 45 percent of the group rated themselves at eight, nine, or 10, in a ranking of one to 10, and 51 percent consider themselves better players than their friends.

Frost & Sullivan took a poll, and predicts the market for multimedia hardware and software will quadruple during the balance of the decade. And, according to a study from SIMBA, the number of multimedia-capable pcs will reach the substantial number of 17.1 million by 1995.



Two's company.

HOTLINE

SCORPIONS ROCK FOR SOCCER

The rock band Scorpions got involved with World Cup Soccer cross-promotions and made an appearance at Chicago's CES. The German band says they're avid soccer fans, and this interest led to the inclusion of one of their songs on PolyGram's *Gloryland: Soccer Rocks The Globe* compilation album. The Scorpions tune *No Pain, No Gain* is also the German national soccer team's anthem.



Members of Scorpions enjoy a game at Chicago CES.

When the Scorpions heard that U.S. Gold was working on the **World Cup USA '94** game, they contacted the company. U.S. Gold subsequently used *No Pain, No Gain* and *Under the Same Sun* on the soundtracks for the PC CD and Sega CD. In return, the band uses clips from the video game in their video for *No Pain, No Gain.*

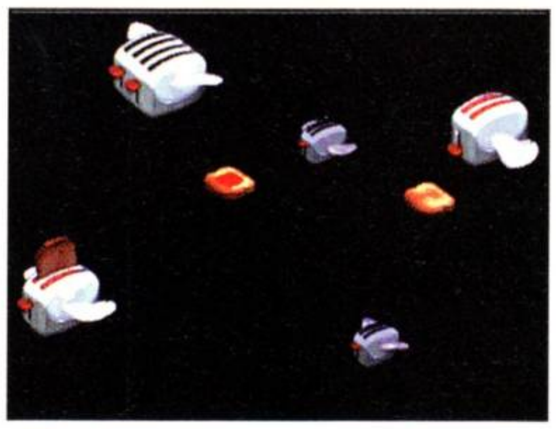
Scorpions guitarists Rudolph Schenker and Matthias Jabs talked to **EG** about video games and **World Cup USA '94**. Jabs owns a Super NES and thinks that games are good "to get away from things like traveling and performing. It's pretty cool to be involved in the music soundtrack for a game. It's another new place for Scorpions music." Schenker finds the whole video game industry fascinating. "Modern video games are a great market for music. When I'm traveling, there's no time left to play games, but now with this soccer game I have learned a lot more about video games. Maybe we can get into other soundtracks."

AIRPLANE LANDS ON TOASTER

The Jefferson Airplane filed a lawsuit against Berkeley Systems, claiming trademark and copyright infringements. According to Jefferson Airplane, the famous Berkeley Flying Toasters, created in 1989 for the **After Dark** screen saver, is based on the cover art from an album, *30 Seconds Over Winterland,* released in 1973.

Wes Boyd, president of Berkeley Systems, said he was surprised when he was notified of the suit by Grunt Records (a label formed by the Jefferson Airplane early in the '70s, distributed by RCA.) "The flying toasters in **After Dark 2.0** were independently created ... we were completely unaware of the album at the time." He explained that the logo was created by Jack Eastman, now VP of engineering for Berkeley Systems.

"We've filed a motion for the suit to be dropped. The Jefferson Airplane aren't an entity anymore, and they don't have a copyright registration," Boyd insisted. But he was philosophic in talking about the legal matter: "This is just part of doing business in this country. We have to deal with such things. We just want to get through it as quickly as possible."



The now famous screen saver display of the flying toasters.

TOP VIDEO GAMES
JUNE 1994

The list of top-selling video games was compiled by Software Etc. based upon unit sales.

Top Video Games

1. *FIFA Soccer,* Genesis, Electronic Arts
2. *World Series Baseball,* Genesis, Sega
3. *FIFA Soccer,* SNES, Electronic Arts
4. *NBA JAM,* Genesis, Acclaim
5. *Mortal Kombat,* Sega CD, Acclaim

TOP SOFTWARE
MAY 1994

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 1,300 stores.

Top MS-DOS Games

1. *SimCity 2000,* Maxis
2. *Microsoft Flight Simulator,* Microsoft
3. *Elder Scrolls: The Arena,* Bethesda

Simulations are still holding as the best sellers at the moment, but **The Arena** is a strong contender for role-players.

HAVE WE GOT THE DEALS FOR YOU...

BIZ-DEALS

Malibu Comics Entertainment will produce three Sega CD games for Sony Imagesoft, based on Ultraverse characters. **Prime** and **Strangers** will be developed this year, and a third title will show up in '95 ... Time Warner made a deal with Interpublic Group (a leader in interactive advertising), to create information and entertainment products. Does this mean infomercials on CD? We'll see ... Stormfront Studios (the company founded in 1988 by Mr. Computer Baseball, Don Daglow) will develop sports multimedia titles for Sony Imagesoft's ESPN label ... Sony's getting serious. They set up a new company, Sony Computer Entertainment of America, to market hardware and software for the Sony PlayStation ... Broderbund set up two new departments, Broderbund Studios to combine engineering and publishing activities, and Business Development Dept., to pursue partnerships and alliances, business development, licensing, and the affiliated label programs ... Gametek Cinema Division will bring movies to Mac CD and MPC, for kids and adults. Eight KidStuff titles and 18 Gametek Cinema products will hit computers before Christmas, all with special point-and-click theatre lobbies (refreshments, arcade, etc.).

EDU-DEALS

Three MECC titles are included in the Futurekid curriculum. (Futurekids have over 1,200 locations that offer computer learning classes for kids.) Available are: **Storybook Weaver**, **My Own Stories**, and **Odell Down Under** ... **The World of Totty Pig** (Byron Preiss Multimedia/ PC CD) is included in an affiliate label deal with Time Warner.

DISTRI-DEALS

It's not edutainment: Davidson just picked up five more Affiliate Labels. DogByte's product is **Stationery Store**; InterMedia Interactive just released **Lovejoy's College Counselor**; Everyware Imaginable's latest is **Sensible Soccer**; Jasmine has 17 libraries of video, music, and still photos, such as **Famous Faces**, **Famous Places,** and **America in Motion**; and Impressions' line includes **Caesar**, **The Blue & The Gray**, and other strategy hits which will also be available in educational channels ... Byron Preiss Multimedia, a company that specializes in pop-culture themes, will let Time Warner distribute **The Multimedia Cartoon Studio**; **The Seinfeld Screensaver and Planner**; **The Essential Frankenstein**, and **R. Crumb Screensaver and Companion** ... Sega signed its first affiliated label deal, grabbing up Rocket Science, the new company that everyone's talking about. First titles affected are **Loadstar: The Legend of Tully Bodine**, and **Cadillacs & Dinosaurs.**



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FINAL FANTASY III

SUPER NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

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MOTLINE

NINTENDO CHANGES RULES

Nintendo sent a set of Game Content Guidelines to all developers, to bar themes inconsistent with the Nintendo corporate philosophy. The rules indicated, "Exceptions may be made when an objectionable item is necessary to maintain the integrity of the product or the games' theme." These guidelines apply to audio-visual work, packaging, and instruction manuals.

Nintendo will only approve products which do not:

a. Contain sexually explicit content including but not limited to nudity, rape, sexual intercourse, and sexual touching: for instance, Nintendo does not allow bare breasted women in its games; however, mild displays of affection such as kissing or hugging are acceptable.

b. Contain language or depictions which specifically denigrate members of any race, gender, ethnicity, religion, or political group.

c. Depict gratuitous or excessive blood or violence. Nintendo does not permit depictions of animal cruelty or torture.

d. Depict verbal or physical spousal or child abuse.

e. Promote racial, gender, ethnic, religious, or political stereotypes: for example, religious symbols such as crosses will be acceptable when fitting into the theme of the game and not promoting a specific religious denomination.

f. Use profanity, obscenity, or incorporate language or gestures that are offensive by prevailing public standards.

g. Promote the use of illegal drugs, smoking materials, tobacco, and/or alcohol; for example, Nintendo does not allow a beer or cigarette ad anywhere in a product. Yet, Sherlock Holmes smoking a pipe would be acceptable as it fits the theme of the game.

STOCK WATCH

INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT ON WALL STREET

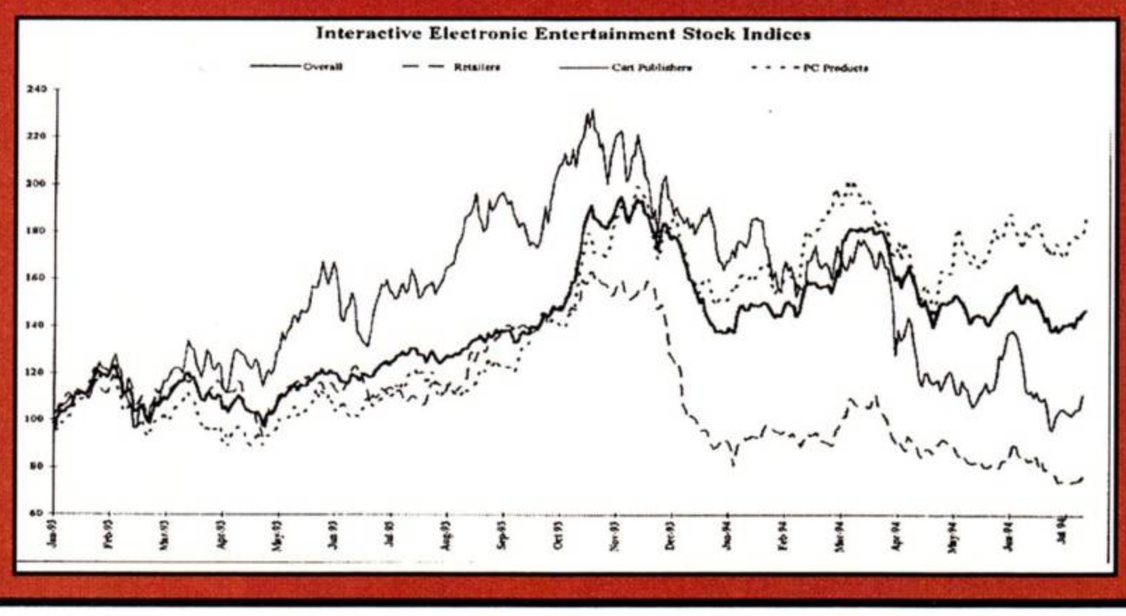
Welcome to this, the first monthly installment recapping the interactive electronics business from a Wall Street perspective. This column's goal is to keep you apprised of the important broader industry and company specific trends, and how they are being reflected by investor activity.

The dominant theme today is investor concern about the platform transition facing the at-home interactive games market. Sales of Sega Genesis and Super Nintendo hardware platforms peaked in 1993, and unit volume is headed down this year. Sales of 16-Bit software, while still comparing well with last year, are expected to tail off dramatically in 1995. Despite more or less steady demand for software in 1994, the risks of publishing cartridges are increasing every day: sales are highly concentrated in a small number of hits like **NBA Jam** and **Mortal Kombat**, advertising commitments are increasing, and the risks of overbuying cartridge inventory is escalating.

These trends are clearly reflected in 1994 year-to-date share price movements. During the last six months, our index of interactive electronic entertainment stocks has dropped one percent, and is down 20 percent since its peak on March 17. Most dramatically hit have been cartridge publishers Electronic Arts and Acclaim, whose share prices are down 53 percent and 24 percent respectively since Dec. 31, 1993. Specialty retailers Babbages and Software Etc. have sold off almost 30 percent since year end 1993 as well.

The only sector showing investor confidence is PC software publishers, whose sales and earnings growth is expected to accelerate from PC CD-ROM products. Stock prices have also been lifted by speculation that large media companies would enter the interactive business by acquiring one of the current publishers (i.e., Pearson/Software Toolworks at four times trailing revenue.) I expect the market to remain confused about companies dependent on set top game machines until such time as a clear leader for the next generation is established. In the meantime, product life cycles and seasonal factors will most likely be the dominant influences on share prices.

John Taylor is an interactive entertainment industry analyst with L.H. Alton & Company, a San Francisco-based investment banking firm.



NINTENDO LIGHTENS UP

The company that once said its standards were so tough that ratings for its games would be redundant, had a change of heart. In the content guidelines for third party developers issued recently, Nintendo tossed out some of its more fanciful restrictions and clarified vague language from earlier standards.

The new guidelines still oppose religious stereotypes, but add that "religious symbols such as crosses" are okay, as long as they're not promoting a specific religion.

Gone is the prohibition on "graphic illustration[s] of death" and the ban on "excessive force in a sports game beyond what is inherent in the actual ... sports."

The other big news: "kissing and hugging" are now OK.

'NOT TOO BAD' SAYS KOEI REP

EG talked to Mark Hughes at Koei, a company specializing in historical recreations of warfare. He feels Nintendo will take a sensible approach to their products. "Koei supports most of the guidelines; we agree sexually explicit scenes, denigration of specific groups, those types of things don't belong in games."

But, the guidelines do cause some changes: "We are working on **New Horizons**, our spin-off from **Uncharted Waters**, our 16th Century game. When you go to port, you visit various public places, and pubs were very popular in the 16th century. In the Japanese version, we did have alcoholic beverages; that was typical of the day. We converted them over to coffee houses." Hughes said, "It would have been nice to offer something like ale."

As for combat scenes, Hughes thinks there will be no problem. "We do want to be historically accurate, but Nintendo has been good about that sort of thing in the past." He pointed to the fact that Nintendo had allowed **Liberty or Death**, since it was a historical quotation, even though they normally have banned the word death. "We would expect that Nintendo would work with us when we're dealing with historical veracity; so far Nintendo has been fair with us."

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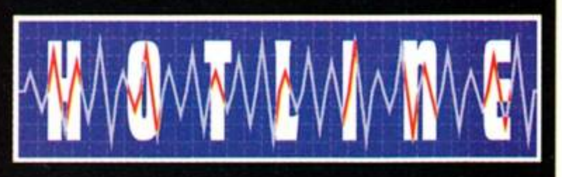
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COMPTON'S NEW MEDIA

Where does the Compton's bombshell patent stand? On March 25, 1994, the USPTO rejected all 41 claims of the Compton's New Media patent during the re-examination process. Most of the claims were rejected based on the submission of The Hypercard Handbook and several previous patents as examples of prior art that precluded the validity of claims in the Compton's patent.

Philip Dodds, executive director of the Interactive Multimedia Association, declared the rejection to be very good news, but notes that, "other overly-broad computer software patents will likely move into the spotlight in the months to come. There's still much to be done."

Attorneys representing Encyclopedia Brittanica, which owns equal interest in the patent along with Compton's New Media parent, the Tribune Company, countered by submitting a 52-page document on June 23, 1994. This document, according to attorney of record, Jon Grossman, amends Compton's original claims "in an attempt to clarify the invention."

Disputing the rejection of most of the original 41 claims, Compton's deleted one claim and replaced it with six new ones that narrow the scope to apply to CD-ROM-based encyclopedias with features that include retrieval and storage of user-generated notes and spoken pronunciation of text.

IMA Director Dodds says that "this response comes as no surprise and underscores Compton's intentions to defend the patent. We don't see any new information in this response to support Compton's position that their information was non-obvious."

The USPTO will deliberate, likely issuing a second or final office action within 60-90 days.

PATENT PROBLEMS

The groundswell in the interactive entertainment industry is causing headaches for the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. While long used to determining which company first created lawnmower blade sharpeners, the USPTO is now faced with cutting-edge issues ranging from what defines a programmable controller to multimedia databases.

Programming for Speed

The latest round of patent squabbles involves a variety of software and hardware-based issues. Hardware companies are now entering the arena in earnest, and many are determined to become the market leader through technology dominance.

STD Entertainment, an industry leader in control pads, received a patent on Nov. 9, 1993, for programmable video game controllers, but held off on the official announcement until a press release dated April 20, 1994. The patent abstract defines the product as "a controller for video games [that] includes a mechanism for recording, storing, and retrieving a sequence of instructions. When playing a relatively complex game involving a relatively complex sequence of instructions which are used repetitively, these instructions need to be entered only once and can be retrieved as required."

In the STD case, both the date of the patent application (Aug. 7, 1992) and exactly what it covers are going to be important factors. Rodger Kolsky, president of Triax Technologies, stated, "While I can't go into details with this matter still pending, Triax has acquired the rights to a patent held by a U.S. company that was applied for and approved before [STD's]." ASCII Entertainment Software was unable to comment as of press time.

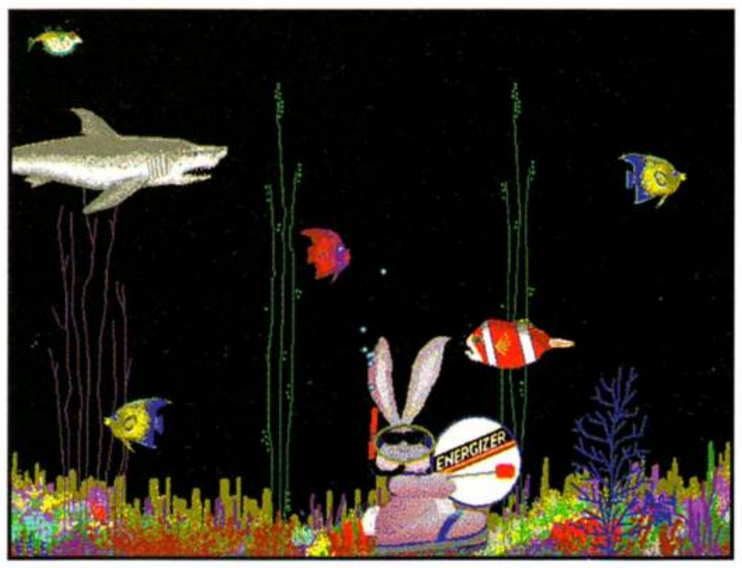
STD's controller patent is also for real-time execution, with memory of not only the timing of the moves, but also their order, as opposed to the limited sequence controllers that do not retain timing or order.

This debate over controller patents seems to just be starting.

Problems keep going and going...

PC Dynamics Inc., meanwhile, entered into the patent fray with their Energizer Bunny Screen Saver (Windows & Macintosh). The screen saver not only features the Energizer Bunny parading, parachuting, and snorkeling across the screen, but permits him to make unexpected randomized guest appearances.

Who claims that PC Dynamics violated a patent? Not the Eveready Battery Company, which has received royalties for the right to use the Energizer



Bunny and does not receive revenue from advertising or promotional exposure.

No, the claimant is Software Advertising Corp., holder of patent number 5,105,184 which, according to their attorney, Edward J. Treska, covers any "system which integrates an advertisement into computer software without altering the function of the program. Screen saver programs which perform their intended function yet display advertisements are the type of programs" covered by the patent. Jim Shay, attorney for PC Dynamics, counters that "PC Dynamics believes the patent is not infringed—and that the patent is so broad as to be invalid and indefensible."

Software Advertising Corp. is willing to grant PC Dynamics a license under the patent "to make and sell computer programs having integrated advertisements that appear on a computer screen when the program is in use. [Software Advertising Corp.] seeks a fair royalty on any licensed product sold and would prefer to negotiate for the royalty under an amicable setting."

Peter Avritch, president of PC Dynamics, stated that "this may be the most bizarre software patent in history." Avritch continues, "we believe that this is an outrageous effort to wring money from a small software publisher, creating a precedent that threatens continuing litigation against any display of a logo or symbol on a computer screen."

PC Dynamix has also alerted industry trade associations and other software publishers to the broad nature of the patent, in addition to congressmen. In fact, Ken Wasch, executive director of the Software Publishers Association, submitted a letter to Bruce Lehman, Assistant Secretary of Commerce and Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks, observing that this patent could "arguably apply to any display of products, services, and trademarks affected by computer software."

Philip Dodds, executive director of the Interactive Multimedia Association stated that "this is yet another example of over-broad and obvious patents. Such patents would never have been granted if they were published before being granted, which is why we need changes in the patent process."

In late May, Lehman followed a request submitted by Senator Dennis DeConcini (AZ) to re-examine the patent. This is only a first step toward reversing the patent. Lehman's decision to re-evaluate cites prior art that "raises a substantial new question of patentability." Part of that prior art is a review of SuperPaint (Silicon Beach Software) by the *New York Times* on April 28, 1987. The review notes and condemns the integration into SuperPaint of advertising for "Silicon Beach Software's latest arcade game, **Dark Castle**."

Will the Energizer Bunny keep going and going? Or will Software Advertising Corp. finally do what a James Bondian assassin, and other hired bad guys could not? *(Laurie Yates)*

ENHANCED CD-ROM

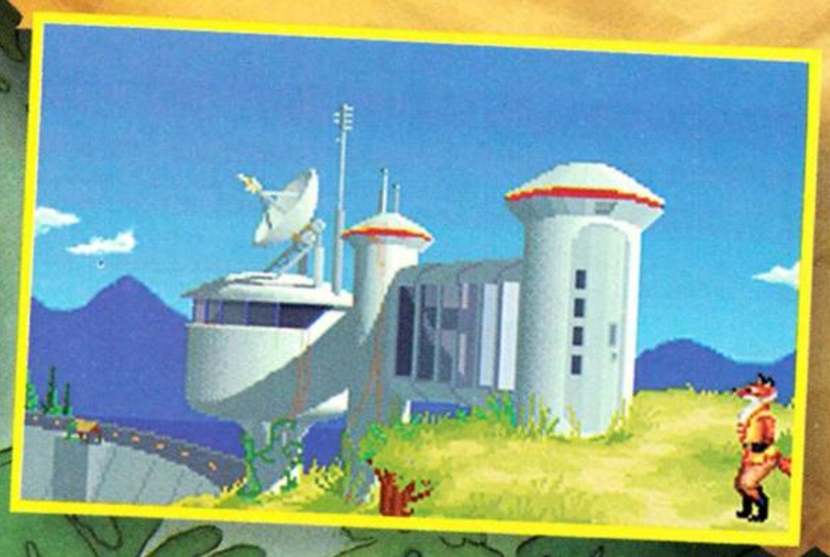
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Join Rif the fox and his companions Okk and Eeah on the adventure of YOUR life! Inherit the Earth will transport you to a world of beauty and intrigue! The Orb of Storms has been stolen, and Rif is accused. You have only days to help Rif get to the bottom of the mystery of the missing Orb. Your journey takes you to the Wild Lands, through hostile territories and ultimately to the ancient ruins of the legendary Humans.







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the Dreamers Guild

PUBLISHER RATED GA — General Audiences — Fun for the whole family

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GAME DOCTOR

SEGA CHANNEL UPDATE

Yo, Interactive Nation, how are we feeling today?

Pumped, I should think, given the vast number of fascinating hard and software products turning up on retail shelves. Of course, with the wave of new technology comes disorientation and even a possible financial undertow.

In any case, the waiting room is humming and we even have a celebrity consultant with us to offer some interesting information on the Sega Channel, from SC's director of corporate communications, Ellen Beth Van Buskirk. Take it away, Ms. Van Buskirk:

"Saw your June feedback on Sega Genesis 32X. Guess what?! Sega Channel can indeed develop a special Sega Channel Adapter to access Sega Genesis 32X games on the new cable channel. The adapter would have more memory to accommodate the super fast and super great graphics of these new Sega games. The final decision on which adapter (regular or super) [is] ultimately the decision of the local cable operator. Perhaps your readers should start asking for it!"

You know, Ellen, I think they just might do that little thing. But is it an either/or situation? Isn't there any way for the user to get both adapters, and simply use the Genesis plug-in when in the mood for those products and a 32X peripheral for more exalted gaming moods? (Oh, by the way, Ellen, your guess as to the Doc's identity was ... incorrect!)

Q: Tell me about this game I keep hearing about called **Dueling Firemen**! Who published it? What system is it for? And is it really as crazy as I have heard from people who were at Chicago CES? They said it was the strangest product at the show—and that Rudy Ray Moore, Tony Gold, and Tim Leary are in it! Sounds pretty psychotronic to me.

Paul Davidson
Waterford, MI

A: *You know, your friends may be right on this one, Paul. Although the Doc never actually saw this product being demonstrated at any point, he was lucky enough to obtain the ad sheet, and it is, indeed, psychotronic dynamite.*

First off, the game is being published by a newcomer to the interactive entertainment biz, Runandgun! Inc. The original target system will be 3D0. There's no mention of future platforms, if any, in the ad copy. The game was directed by Grady Sain with Sandra Desmond listed as producer. The cast includes Jon Los, Nancy



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.

Ferguson, Chris Carter, and the one and only Rudy Ray Moore (fans of the more esoteric Black exploitation films of the '70s doubtless remember Rudy from the "Dolemite" film series, and from similar roles such as "Petey Whitestraw" in which he was known as "Mr. Excitement"). Special appearances are provided by musician Mark Mothersbaugh, Timothy Leary (who has become the '90s version of Andy Warhol), and "introducing" Tony Gold as "the Dancin' Gremlin."

Readers expecting ***Under a Killing Moon****, or the latest cinematic effort from Crystal Dynamics, however, are looking down the wrong street. This seems to be the first attempt to do an interactive electronic version of the kind of goofy exploitation movies made by folks like H.G. Lewis, Frank Henenlotter, and others. It was shot on location in Chicago, and rendered using 3-D Studio technology, with a story line that—well, allow me to quote a bit: "****Duelin' Firemen*** *takes place in the great Chicago Fire of 1995. All of the city's fire, police, and rescue services have abandoned their posts, leaving the city fair game for two competing bands of lunatic 'fire brigades.'"*

The player is cast as the leader of one of these "lunatic" brigades whose mission is not to put out fires, seemingly, but to locate "safehouses"—the few remaining structures in the city which are not aflame. Now, get this: when a brigade locates a safe house, what do they do? "Once inside, they quickly create an intricate dance accompaniment to the captain's musical selection of choice." OK, you say, that's pretty bizarre. But where's the game? Aha! Points are scored based on how well the dancers perform, of course. The fire brigades somehow become cult attractions, winning more and more fans. Eventually, however, two rival brigades will find themselves attempting to stage a show in the same safehouse. That's when the real action starts! "If the two bands happen to meet at a safehouse—watch out! It's time for a hoedown! The two bands race against the clock to choreograph their numbers, then perform like mad!"

'Nuff said, I think, other than to advise readers to watch for this one; it smells like a true golden turkey! By the way, Paul, for giving me a chance to reprint some of that ad, you definitely win a Game Doctor prize packet. Just don't go on any hoedowns!

Q: Is there any chance the battery could be replaced in games that have them once they've worn out? My oldest battery-backed game, Sega's original 8-Bit **Phantasy Star** is on its "deathbed"—sometimes it'll save the game; sometimes it won't. This is my third time through the game and I'd like to be able to replay it again in the future.

Since these batteries eventually stop working, why don't the companies make these games all with password-save, so we don't have to worry about them?

R.I. Palmer
Greensboro, NC

A: *Good questions, R.I.—what the heck, you get a Prize Packet, too. There's no technical reason I know of why a battery couldn't be replaced, though, of course, in the process all saved games would be lost. Today's on-board batteries can run in the area of seven years, which is longer than the lifetime of a hardware system, so publishers are quicker to use them.*

As for why passwords aren't used exclusively, there's a problem. If the information being saved is really simple—such as, which level is the player on?—then passwords are a snap. But in RPGs, for example, where characters have traits and large inventories and spells, etc., the number of integers required to produce a password save becomes unrealistically long.

And that's everything for this month's issue, loyal and space-wise Game Doctor readers. Please remember to keep sending those cards and letters to: The Game Doctor, *Electronic Games,* 330 S. Decatur, Suite 152, Las Vegas, NV 89107. Aloha.



Negotiate every mile of Mario's career, from the slide turns in a sprint car, through the drafting in a stock car, to the precise handling of Indy car racing. Without so much as smelling a fume.



FOLLOW IN

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(YOUR CHOICE OF SPRINT

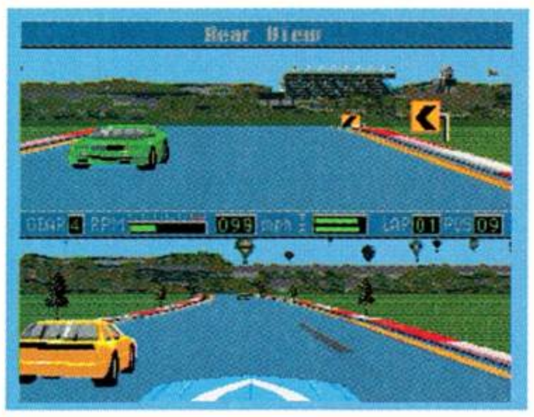


Mario Andretti was recently named Driver of the Quarter Century. Now you can mirror the legend's career and take Driver's Ed from the man himself.



Right out of the box, use the rookie setting. Work your way up through sprint and stock to the big bucks in Indy cars. Just like Mario.

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Mario Andretti has always pushed technology to the limit. Mario Andretti Racing is no exception. Nobody else gives you 3 kinds of racing. 15 different race-tracks and no loss of speed when you're one-on-one against an opponent.

ANDRETTI'S TRACKS.

T, STOCK OR INDY TREAD)



Andretti likes to see every-thing on a track. No wonder his game has more views than anybody else's: nose cam, chase car cam, over-head map, rear, competitor and full or split screen. Oh yeah, and instant replay anytime you want.



It's Mario's retirement year. He's the only driver in history to win in five different decades. From the 1950s into the 1990s, if it's in Mario Andretti's career, it's in Mario Andretti Racing.

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f. riccio

EG'S FALL/WINTER PREVIEW

HERE COME THE NEXT BIG THINGS!

by the Editors of **Electronic Games**

Will this be the winter of discontent for interactive electronic entertainment? It depends on who you ask. The overall trend is exceptionally positive, but there are some trouble spots—and some bitter pills for the industry to swallow.

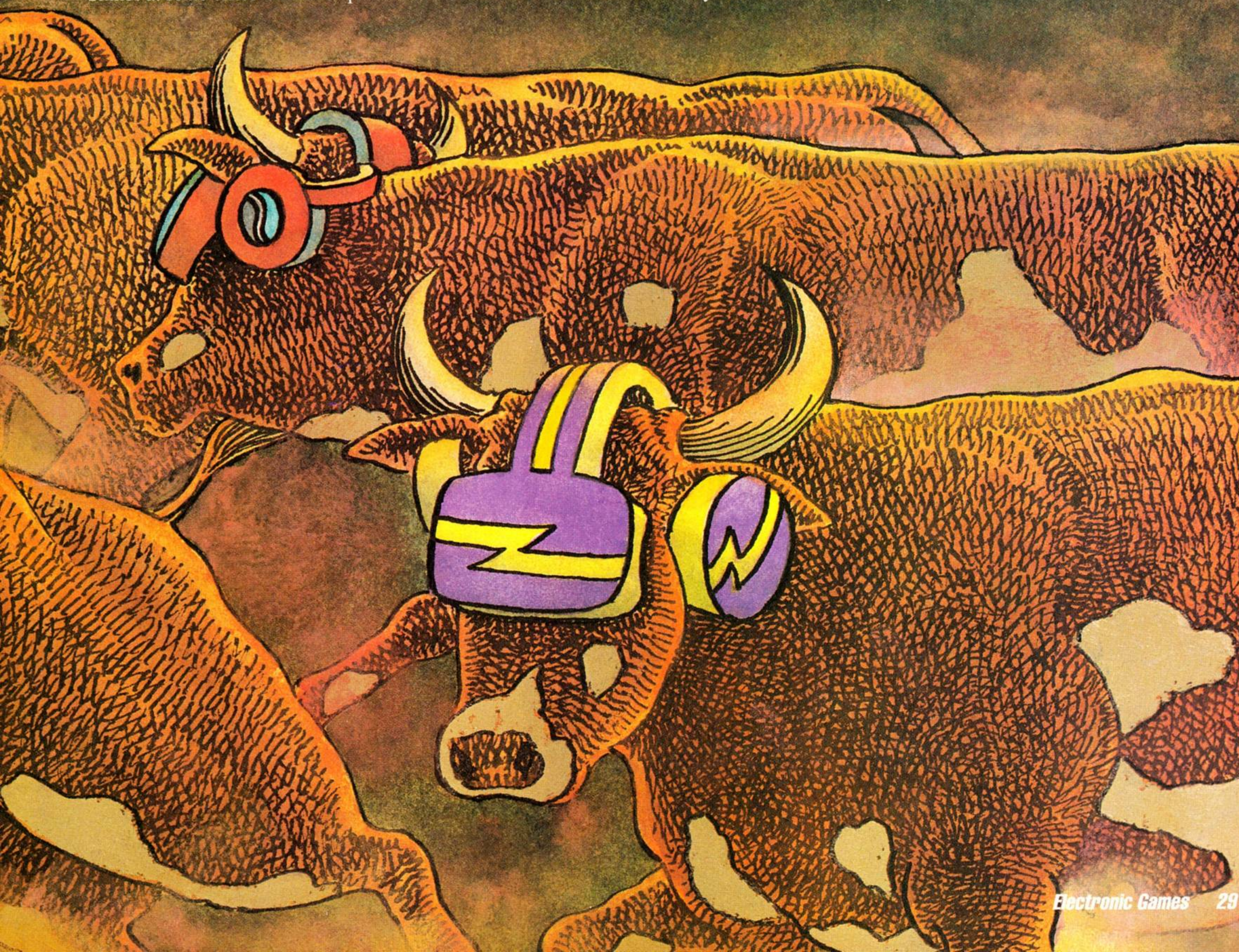
All types of interactive entertainment seldom prosper at the same time. Consumers have only so much money to spend. When video game sales soared high in 1988-1992, computer software marked time. All segments will grow over the long haul, just not simultaneously.

Smiles at some office Christmas parties in Nintendo City and Segaville will be tighter-lipped than usual. Sales of 16-Bit hardware dropped 20%-30% during first half 1994, and that's only the beginning of the inevitable slide into Classic System Land.

The signs were ominous for SNES and Genesis at the Summer Consumer Electronics Show in Chicago. "The retailers come into the booths ready to talk about inventory," confides one video gaming executive. "That's not a good climate in which to sell new cartridges."

Video game sell-in is tough, but sell-through will be a modern labor of Hercules. And then the market will really shrivel in the first-half 1995. Products slated for massive media exposure, like Donkey Kong Country, will hit the two-million-unit mark, but the typical title will move half as many units as the same SKU would've done a year ago.

The advance publicity for new 32- and 64-Bit systems has shortened the lifespan of 16-Bit by at least a year. Tantalizing hints about forthcoming super systems have undermined consumer interest in the current hardware. Many potential buyers have postponed buying a 16-Bit machine, and many more are cutting back on cartridges for a system that may be closet bound by mid-1995.



Blisters anyone?

Introducing 6 new scorchers for the Super NES.



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Original Tetris concept, design and program by Alexey Pazhitnov. **© 1993,1994 Enix/Quintet. Licensed exclusively to Nintendo.



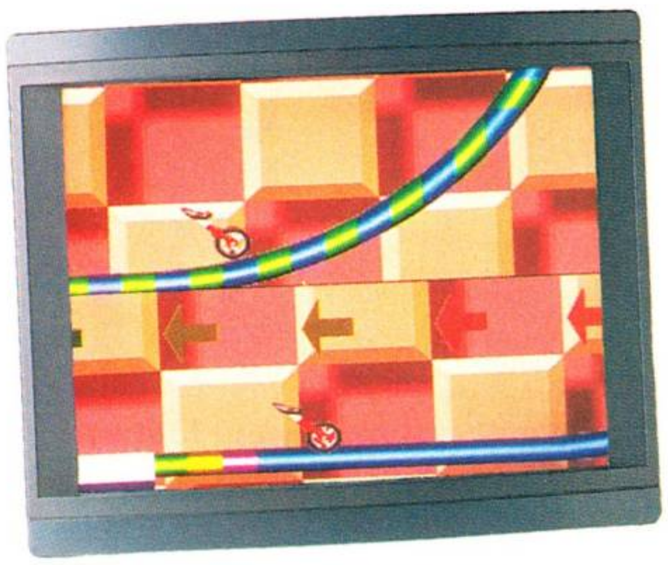
It's 32 MEGS, unbelievably detailed, with totally natural movement in 3 dimensions. It's **Donkey Kong Country.®** Coming this November. The first video game fully designed on SGI super-computers. So pound your chest and pick flies off a loved one...this one's a monster!



The sequel to the biggest selling game in the universe as we know it now comes to 16-Bit. **Tetris 2™*!** With 2-player Tetrocity and plenty o' bombs. So grab a friend and blow him up!



24 Tracks, 3-D action and the high-octane power of the next generation Super FX Chip. **Stunt Race FX.™** If you don't know how to drive, you've come to the right place.



You're out of control. Your path is full of obstacles. No, it's not the road to higher education. It's **Uniracers.™** Coming this October. A one-wheeled, one-of-a-kind race game, brought to life with the latest 3-D SGI technology.



16 MEGS of fantasy adventure makes **Illusion of Gaia™**** a must for any Zelda fan. It's out this September. And if you think it's hard to pronounce, just try getting through it before the next millennium.



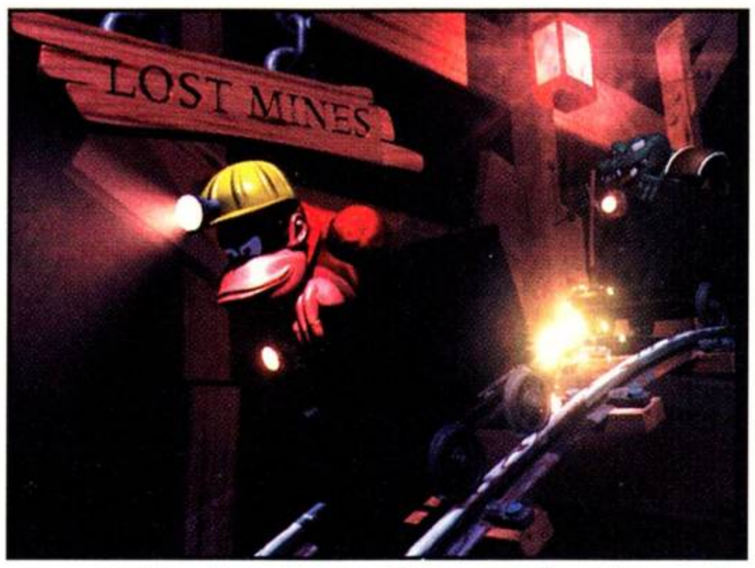
Our #1 boxing hit is back this October and bumped up to 16-Bit. **Super Punch-Out!!®** With more whacked-out opponents than you can shake a fist at. All pumped up HUGE to get totally in your...OOfF Ow! ARGH! Fuuh! OOF!...well, you get the picture.

SUPER NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM®



Only Sega's 32X upgrade will be available before year's end, and no one is expecting it to sell more than 500,000 units in its first six months. The price, under $150, is very appealing, but the same can't be said for the software. SOA's software development is progressing slowly, and only a handful will make Christmas. Third party publishers tell **EG** that some games originally earmarked for the Saturn are being revamped for the 32, but the catalog will be thin this fall and winter.

Jaguar has a lot of support on paper, but has had difficulty translating its list of more than 80 third party companies into exciting new games. There are some, but few will excite the experienced interactor. Retailer skepticism about Atari's ability to pay the high cost of



• **Donkey Kong Country by Nintendo**

rolling out a major system isn't helping.

Nintendo (Ultra 64) is targeting mid-1995 for the introduction of its systems. The hardware capabilities are impressive, but the decision to go with silicon instead of plastic could boomerang.

This is not a Second Video Game Crash. The industry is doing its best to orchestrate an orderly transition to 32- and 64-Bit systems that won't mortally wound retailers. If the retailers aren't buried in dead merchandise, the theory goes, they'll be ready to take on new video game machines next year.

Still, there are big changes ahead for cartridges this winter. Some smaller companies won't survive the transition to the super systems. A few are already acting like they are anxious to clean up inventory and steal off into the night. Even companies in it for the long haul, like Electronic Arts, are scrutinizing 16-Bit projects, wondering how many should be diverted to other platforms.

Retailers may get nervous during the transition to higher-level video game systems. Some form of inventory protection may be necessary to give big discount chains incentive to keep departments large despite slower-than-usual sales.

Multimedia Arrives

This is the season to be jolly for multimedia hardware and software makers. The installed base of drives in the U.S., which reached five million last June, could be 15 million or more when the robins sing their first songs in 1995. That's a mass market worth coveting, and if over-production of database-type infotainment doesn't deflate enthusiasm, the Golden Age of Multimedia is here.

The single-speed CD-ROM drive is practically a thing of the past. The double- and triple-speed units, which sharply reduce critical access lags, are taking over the market. The changeover to faster drives is so advanced that manufacturers will soon have to reassign the names. Today's double-speed drive could become tomorrow's single-speed unit as technology continues to rush forward.

Data compression is the holy grail of multimedia research. The current limit of 650 MB per disk is already chafing companies that not so long ago thought 48K was a lot of space to fill. **Under a Killing Moon**, finally released at the end of July, uses *four* disks. Companies are investing serious money to hurdle this problem, and a breakthrough will probably be announced in time for CES Interactive next May in Philadelphia.

Although the Amiga 32 and its predecessor CDTV have become doorstops, a fate that didn't surprise many, things look better for the other multimedia platforms, CD-i and 3DO *(for full coverage see "The Super System Race Begins" elsewhere in this issue).*

Philips has worked hard to improve the quality of its entertainment offerings. Although it's still primarily a point-and-click system, some of the CD-i disks described in the "Fall-Winter Preview" section have more continuous interaction.

Versatility is still the CD-i watchword. Besides games and some educational titles, Philips has expanded its catalog of non-interactive entertainment, mostly with movies and music events.

A strong roll-out in Japan gives 3DO hope of reversing its slow launch. At CES, the area with booths for 3DO-related products was a beehive of activity in a wasteland of deserted car stereo and cellular telephone exhibits in McCormick East hall.

Sega (Saturn) and Sony (PS-X) have multimedia systems planned for 1995 introduction. They're both jockeying for position, signing up third party publishers, and generally keeping a low profile.

Computers: Reach Out and Play

Modems are the hot home computer peripheral. They are the keys and the ignition to the digital highway. Within a year, they'll be standard equipment on most boxed PC systems. The networks are aggressively battling for new subscribers, and wide band systems are already being field tested.

Any game that is suitable for modem play will probably have that capability. The success of **Doom**, this year's blockbuster on-line favorite, has made every developer telecommunications-conscious.

Pentium and 486 product development continues, but the volume of projects is shrinking. It's now more common to aim at a CD-ROM product and then, if possible, adapt it for floppy. Some games, like **Ultima**, haven't adapted well to CD, but they are rare exceptions.

The Diagnosis

Fall and winter won't be seasons of good cheer for some segments of the industry. Small video game publishers who haven't hedged their bets by latching on to other platforms face an uncertain future.

But the next six months will be prime time for fans of interactive electronic experiences. Games and entertainments are better than ever—and there may be some significant price breaks after Christmas.



• **Under A Killing Moon by Access**



NEVER LOAN OUT YOUR 'STICK.

"Hey, Billy, since you're gonna be away, can I borrow your Fighter Stick for a few days? I promise—I'll take *real* good care of it..." That's how it starts. Then days turn into weeks, and the next thing you know, you and your former best friend are duking it out on the People's Court. One look at the Fighter Stick, and you'll know why. There's enough power here to change a person, to make 'em untrustworthy, even. There's Turbo-Fire and Auto-Turbo, with up to 36 shots per second. And super slow-mo lets you digest those really tough moves.

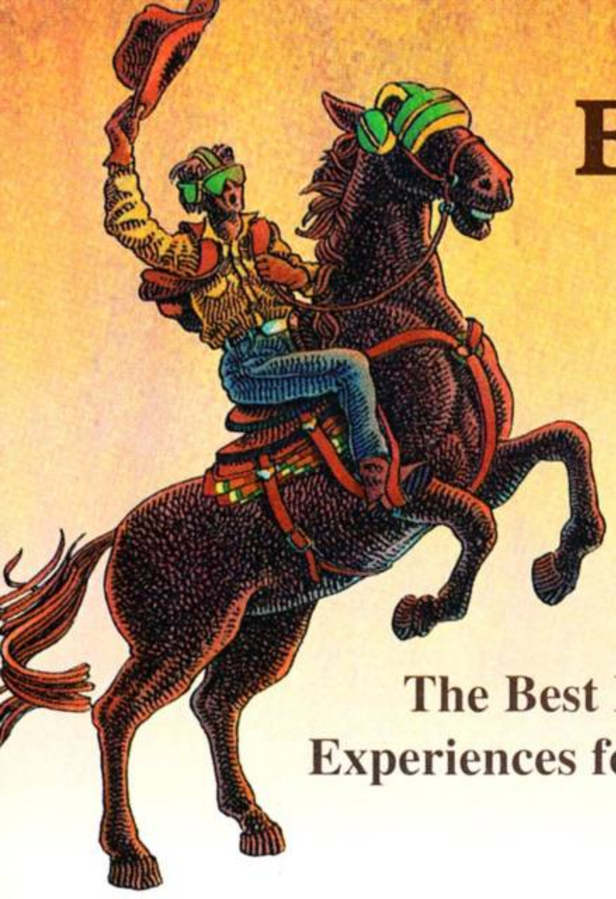
So, quit wrestling with those boring, wimpy ASCIIWARE™ control pads — reach for the Fighter Stick SN for the Super NES or the Fighter Stick SG-6, for Sega-Genesis and Sega-CD.





IT'S HOW TO WIN!

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EG Presents: The Next Hits

The Best Interactive Experiences for Fall and Winter

by the Editors of
Electronic Games

Electronic games and entertainments premiering in the next six months are more than just a feast for the senses (*see this issue's "Power On"*). Hot licenses, slick implementation, and engrossing play-action are the rule, the average.

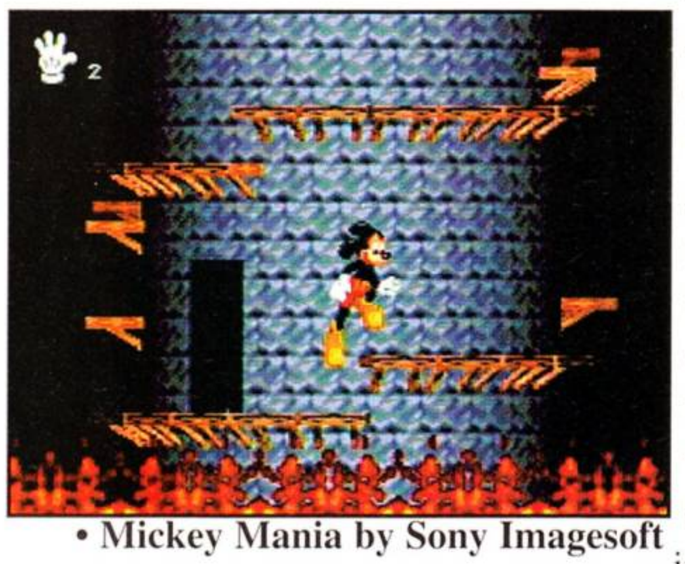
After crawling home from six grueling days at the Summer Consumer Electronics Shows in steamy Chicago, we studied the products coming between Labor Day and the vernal equinox. The editors had trouble separating the best from the rest. By last year's standards, most impending releases would rate a B+ or A-.

So **EG**'s staff got tough, and then we got going through the hundreds of eligible products. These are the best of an outstanding lot—our picks for the big gaming smash hits of fall and winter.

Cartridge Picked Hits

Lion King (Virgin-Disney/Genesis). Only the hoopla from **Donkey Kong Country** might keep this energetic side-scroller from copping the lion's share of the critic laurels this fall. The Westwood Studios creation is a multi-phase action game that evokes the Disney movie's finest moments. The most exciting is the stampede that kills Simba's father, which boldly rushes out of the screen just like the animated film.

The **Lion King**'s realistic animation of four-footed animals is unmatched. This gives both the side-scrolling platform phase and the paw-to-paw combat unique look and feel. **Lion King** may be even better than last year's **Aladdin** in looks and game play.

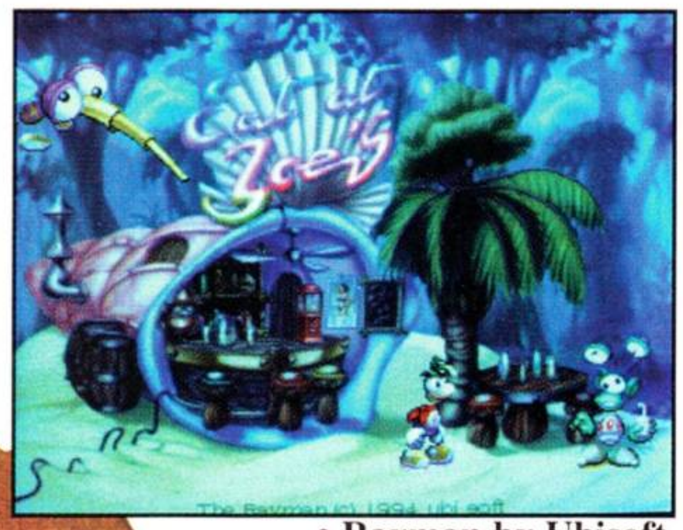


• Mickey Mania by Sony Imagesoft

Mickey Mania: The Timeless Adventures of Mickey Mouse (Sony Imagesoft/Genesis, SNES, Sega CD). Mickey journeys from his original appearance in *Steamboat Willie*, to the current movie, through seven films. The top-notch animation was done by a Disney artist. Sequences from Mickey's earliest films are in black and white, to lend perfect veracity. In later episodes, the heroic mouse is shown in glowing colors. The artistic representations are perfect, as Mickey moves through situations that are similar in feel, if not actually taken from, the famous original movies.

There are 15 levels, some in scrolling platform format and others in first-person "in-your-face" perspective. Cut scenes punctuate the action between the levels.

Rayman (Ubisoft/Jaguar). Rayman can walk on his hands and spin his feet to fly like a helicopter. The super-doer is presented in 25 fps animation with a brilliant color palette. This game is a model of cute graphics: Rayman comes apart at the seams. That's his attraction. His little head, arms, feet, and body separate, then bounce back together. The unusual main character is the main redeeming

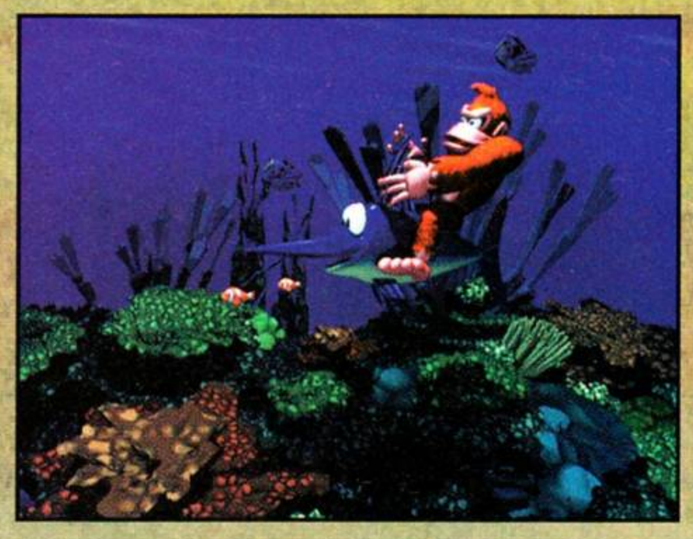


• Rayman by Ubisoft

Best Video Game

Donkey Kong Country (Nintendo/SNES). Extra chips definitely make a difference. Drawn from the pre-NES days of the Mario Mythos, the 32-megabit cart is the most beautiful video game of all time. The superbly rendered, large characters and lush, layered backgrounds enchanted the entire CES, and figure to have the same effect on consumers this fall.

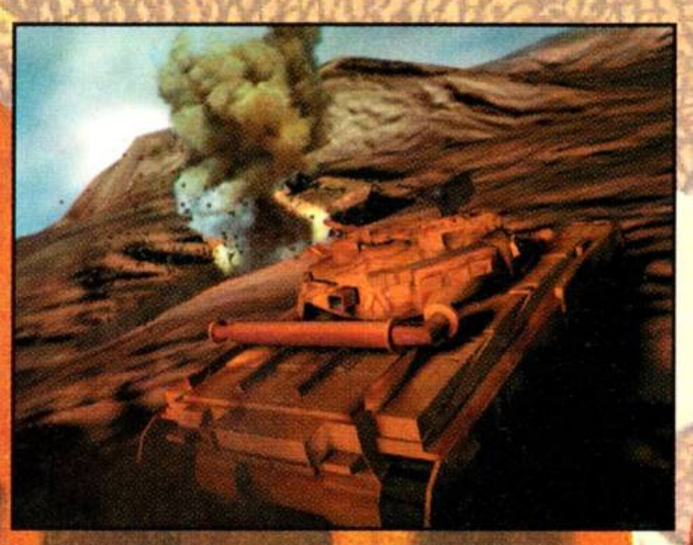
Joining Donkey Kong on his excellent side-scrolling adventure is Diddy Kong, a pint-size tag-along reminiscent of Tails in **Sonic 2**. The action doesn't seem especially innovative, but **Donkey Kong Country** raises implementation to a new pinnacle of excellence.



Best Computer Software

Armored Fist (NovaLogic/MS-DOS). This tank game sparkles with NovaLogic's usual attention to the finer details of graphics, sound, and user-friendliness. Very dramatic 3-D Studio renderings depict realistic modern armored battles against almost photographic landscapes. The background is consistent terrain.

There are over 25 historical missions, plus a construction set. Special effects include thermal night vision, zoom, translucent smoke and explosions, camouflaged mines, and smoke grenades.



feature for this playable, but otherwise fairly standard action cartridge.

Uniracers (Nintendo/SNES). Easy to overlook in Nintendo's display of flashy supertitles, this one- or two-player charmer had the pros lining up to play at CES. **Uniracers** is a simple but beautifully-rendered entertainment in which players guide a riderless unicycle over a rail-like track, performing stunts like forward and reverse flips for bonus points. Each graphic element is superbly drawn.

This is a non-violent, fast-moving, and compelling contest, reminiscent, in some ways, of speed-metal games like **Sonic** (Sega) and **Awesome Possum** (Tengen).



• **Colonization by MicroProse**

Computer Picked Hits

Colonization (MicroProse/MS-DOS). They've broken up that old gang at MicroProse, now part of Spectrum Holobyte, but the changes haven't stopped Sid Meier. The designer of **Civilization, Railroad Tycoon**, and **Pirates** returns with a deep simulation of the Age of Discovery.

The **Civilization** spin-off plays in four languages: English, French, Spanish, and Dutch. In any of them, its time-tested interface makes **Colonization** a natural choice for those who want intricate, strategy-oriented entertainment.

Dark Forces (LucasArts/PC CD). This first-person shooter is a new story set in the *Star Wars* universe. A Rebel agent must discover the construction plans for the Death Star and relay them to Rebel headquarters.

The interface and viewpoint are similar to other games in this fast-growing category, but LucasArtistry adds realistic elements like flying TIE fighters through bases. Players explore



• **Dark Forces by LucasArts**



• **Dominus by MicroProse**

12 vastly different areas and use a variety of weapons to eliminate stormtroopers and elite darktroopers.

Dominus (U.S.Gold/MS-DOS). Seven difficulty levels make this colorfully drawn real-time strategy game accessible to participants with a wide range of ability. As leader of a dominion, the player fends off encroachments by rival clans while building up the economic and military might of the homeland.

Dominus has action combat, war strategy, and fantasy role-playing elements. Eight different invading clans, each with a distinctive personality, test the Overlord's ability to administer the Dominion in peace and war.

Doom II (GT Interactive/MS-DOS). Fine-tuned multi-player mode, new weapons, more baddies and an expanded game-universe are among the features fans will enjoy when 300,000 copies of **DOOM II** hit the mass market on October 10.

Id Software's latest increases the emphasis on player-versus-player combat, which contributed so much to the success of **Doom**. **Doom II** will be released on CD later this year, with little enhancement beyond some sound effects.

Whispers from McCormick North

***JJ Barrel**—he's everywhere! He desktops by night and speaks the truths other dare not utter. JJ puts his private eyes and inside spies into every corner of electronic gaming. Our investigative ace takes no prisoners.*

And now, direct from somewhere along the digital highway... ***JJ Barrel!***

Creative Labs' 3DO PC card improves the struggling system's chances. Creative won't reveal the pricetag on the board yet, though it's due in less than a month. The best guess is that it won't cost more than the stand-alone 3DO players, which means a street price of around $379...

Dynamite Headdy might've reached market as **Dynamite Head** if an alert public relations woman hadn't flagged the *double entendre*. Sega of Japan is pleased...

3DO will start publishing software before year's end. Three projects are moving forward, including the system's first platform game, **Soccer Kid**, and an addictive kinetic puzzle game called **Gridders**...

No one can stop the runaway, blockbuster smash *The Lion King* at the box office, but a Japanese company may attack the mega-franchise in the courts. The producer of "Kimba the White Lion," an animated series, has sent a written protest that claims similarities...

AT&T is re-evaluating multimedia, proving that even a giant can stretch itself too thin. One casualty is the AT&T 3DO machine, which won't come out in 1994 or 1995, if ever...

Magic, the hottest non-electronic brain game since *Dungeons & Dragons*, will go electronic. MicroProse copped the license after a real battle with several other publishers sensing a sure-fire hit...

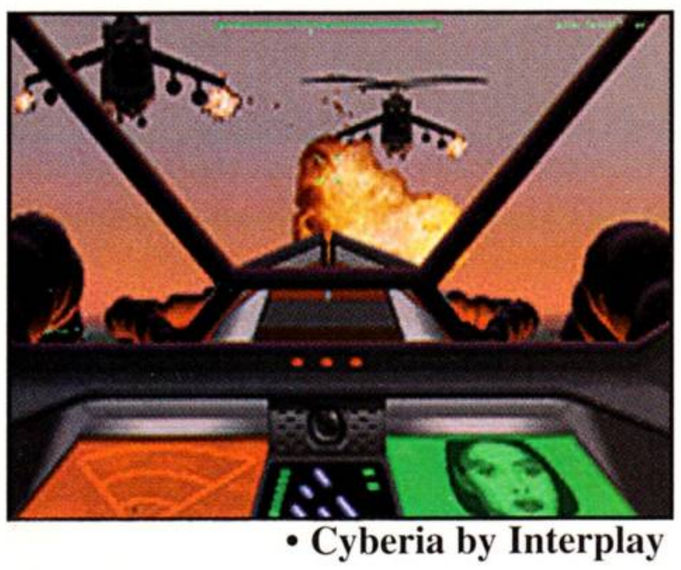
At the Morphs Outpost convention, the adult magazine people from **Penthouse** gave out condoms as a promotion item to support a multimedia disk that lets anyone play **Penthouse** photographer. An executive of the world's most famous computer chip maker, commenting on the brilliance of the giveaway, said his company ought to try something similar to the **Penthouse** marketing idea. Well, it certainly would give a new meaning to the phrase "Intel Inside."

And with that piece of deep analysis, it's time for JJ to hit that road again. OK, newshawks, it's all yours!

Multimedia Picked Hits

Burn: Cycle (Philips/CD-i, PC CD-ROM, and Macintosh CD). This entry exploits the current interest in the trappings of cyberpunk and the hacker ethic. British developer Trip Media's **Burn: Cycle** employs a brain-blasting, "techno-rave" soundtrack, high-quality human modeling and near-cinematic quality animation. Toss in a hip story line, and you've got a first-rate multimedia experience.

Burn: Cycle blends electronic-noir cut scenes and transition graphics with enough puzzle-solving and action game play to pin users to the console. In this cyberpunk take on *DOA,* Sol Cutter has two hours to find the person who downloaded a computer virus into his brain before he shuts down permanently.



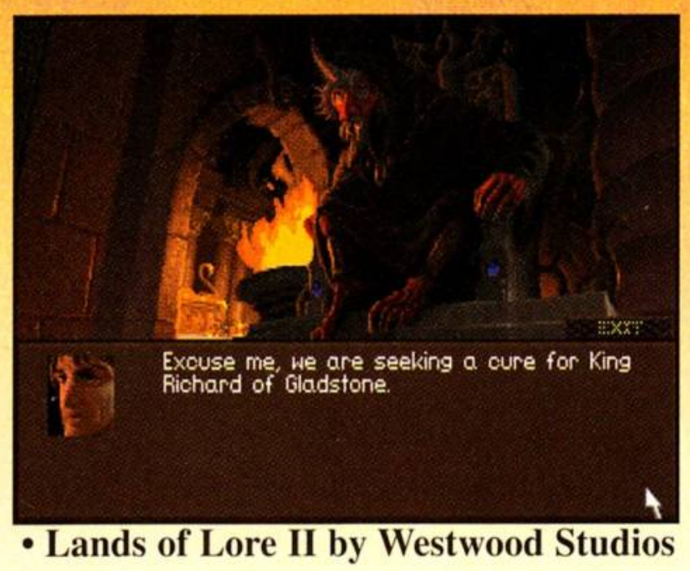
• Cyberia by Interplay

Cyberia (Interplay/PC CD). This hybrid action/adventure will test the mettle of both arcade aces and puzzle solvers as they attempt to save the world from destruction. In a future ruled by global terrorists, the ultimate doomsday device is discovered in frozen Northern Asia. Wonderful 3-D rendered graphics show the attempts to end the menace.

High-impact cinematography and intense music propel the protagonist from chase scenes to pitched battles. **Cyberia** is the kind of exciting action game that multimedia needs to reach mass market success.



• Cyberia by Interplay



• Lands of Lore II by Westwood Studios

Lands of Lore II (Westwood Studios/PC CD-ROM). Still in early development, this game has already earned tremendous acclaim from expert adventurers for powerful art and impressive 3-D modeling. The high-speed cinematic thriller sidesteps puzzles and spellcasting in favor of all-out action and visual sizzle. When the Hive Mother awakens only a hero can stop her from popping out spider beasts.

Technology has now reached the point where electronic games can produce truly scary monsters. The hive creatures in **Lands of Lore II** will make your skin crawl.

Stonekeep (Interplay/PC CD). This first-person dungeon crawl was well ahead of its time when critics first got a peek. It's no longer quite as revolutionary, but its debut is still an event.

The game's graphics are wonderfully done, and photo realistic to the eye. From the first glance down a rough and gloomy stone corridor, **Stonekeep** has the look and feel of full-motion video. The worthy adventurer will seek out and find many monsters, deadly weapons, and many more objects in this fantasy-themed "bughunt" tour de force. With its intuitive interface, **Stonekeep** is a major progression in game design from the company that rewrote the book on fantasy RPGs with **The Bard's Tale** series.

Best Multimedia

Way of the Warrior (Universal Interactive Studios/3D0) Although developer Naughty Dog's splashy street-fightin' contest drew raves when it was first unveiled last winter, the finished version is far more impressive than the preliminary one. The nine primary fighters and the bosses each consume close to three megabytes! Kull, an armored skeleton with a massive mallet, is so tall his head nearly touches the top of the screen. Auto-zoom, which pans in and out depending on the distance between the fighters, makes the images seem even hotter.

Each warrior has 50-60 standard moves as well as 15-30 specialized maneuvers. The battles all take place in a Citadel atop the Himalayan Mountains, but the individual encounters are set in a variety of exotic locations within the stronghold. These include a lava pit. And the room with a ceiling fan can prove a nasty surprise for a defeated champion.

Way of the Warrior will also be heading to the arcades as a coin-up.





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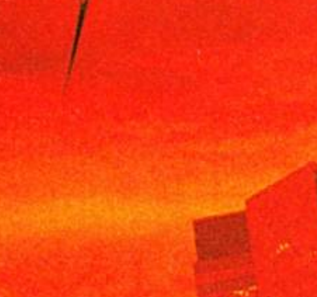
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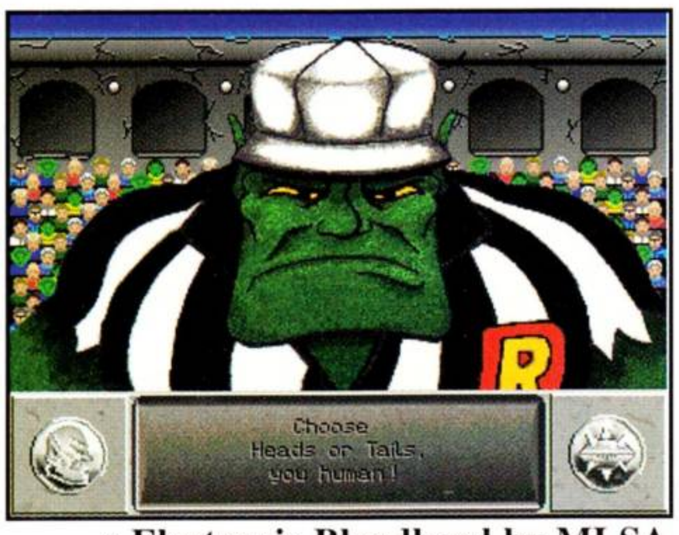
Acclaim® entertainment inc.

Sports Picked Hits

Front Page Sports Baseball (Dynamix/MS-DOS). This is an ambitious attempt to supplant Stormfront Software's **Tony LaRussa Baseball** (SSI/MS-DOS) as the top all-purpose hardball simulation. It steps to the plate with an All-Star array of special statistical and presentation features.

In fact, **FPS Baseball**'s only serious weakness is not game-related; it won't carry the Major League Baseball license. It has the players and stats, but not team names, logos, leagues, or stadiums.

The graphics recreate the rich, grass-meets-sky beauty of the great baseball stadia in soft pastels, supported by plenty of player animations. This could be the new king of the baseball sims, but the lack of a tie-in with Major League Baseball may hurt.



• **Electronic Bloodbowl by MLSA**

Electronic Bloodbowl (MLSA/MS-DOS). The Games Workshop board game comes to the electronic screen with all of its familiar rules systems. Subway Software's design is faithful to the original Jarvis Johnson game, including changes made in rules supplements.

The strategy sports contest adds sound and animation to bring the bone-jarring action of the futuristic sport alive on the screen. One or two coaches can pilot any of eight gruesome Bloodbowl teams. A promised add-on disk will provide enough teams to put together a full Bloodbowl campaign.



• **Stunt Racer FX by Nintendo**

Stunt Racer FX (Nintendo/SNES). Additional development since the Winter CES has turned this suspect into an exciting prospect. Not only has Nintendo fixed everything we didn't like in Las Vegas, but superb design and implementation have made it one of the fall's best forthcoming titles.

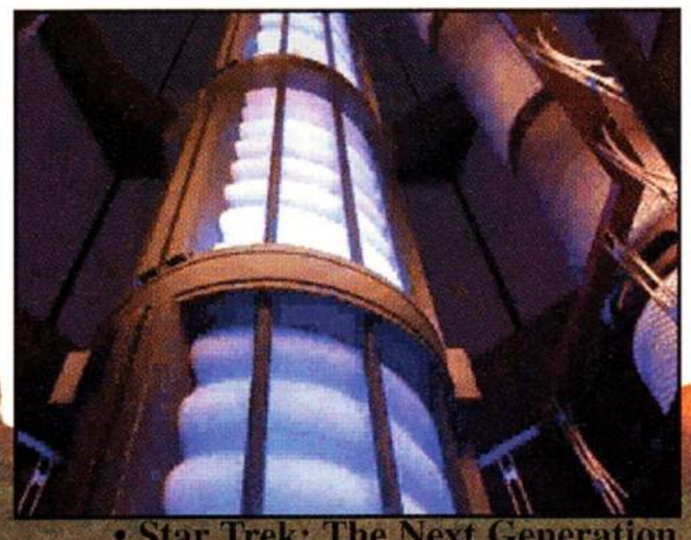
The second generation FX chip really struts its stuff in this one. No SNES game has ever moved objects as fast, or as well, as in **Stunt Racer FX**.

Most Innovative Games

Click 'n' Play (Maxis/PC for Windows). This answers the prayers for a quick and enjoyable way for non-techies to create playable electronic games. **Click 'n' Play** allows users to create arcade-action games, strategy contests, logic puzzles, and other formats in a matter of minutes.

Nickelodeon Director's Lab (Viacom Interactive/PC CD-ROM). Kids will love the chance to make their own music, videos, and animated sequences—and adults will like this user-friendly application, too. Hosted by Melissa Joan Hart of *Clarissa Explains It All*, the program also contains plenty of stock footage and audio from Nickelodeon's vault. **Nickelodeon Director's Lab** is an intelligently designed product that makes excellent use of its license.

Star Trek: The Next Generation Interactive Technical Manual (Simon & Schuster). Take a complete tour of the *Enterprise* as moviegoers will see it in next year's *Star Trek: Generations*. Industrial Light & Magic cooperated to produce this fully interactive model of science fiction's most famous vessel.



• **Star Trek: The Next Generation Interactive Technical Manual by Simon & Shuster**

Best Sports Simulation

All Pro Video Football (Accolade/PC CD-ROM). Accolade used an arena football squad to execute the plays, which were then rotoscoped, to produce the most amazingly authentic football game. Every player on both clubs is a fully realized simulacrum of an actual athlete.

All Pro won't replace the full-league simulations, because it is deep rather than wide. But if you want to revel in the full experience of one gridiron match-up, this is the one you have been searching for.



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Summer CES Round Up

The High Spots and Sputters of Gaming's Biggest Show

by the Editors of
Electronic Games

A few publishers have pulled in their horns, waiting for the platform situation to stabilize, but most can't afford to wait. They're pumping out the product at top speed to meet operating expenses as they retool for the next boom.

The second annual Fall-Winter preview covers most, but not all, of the digital bounty coming to market in the next six months. Since it's impossible to write about every new title, we've ruthlessly skipped games previously covered in **EG**, or which are not primarily intended for our sophisticated audience.

Using This Guide

With so many programs, organization is important. We've separated them into video, computer, and multimedia entertainment. Each category is subdivided into popular genres and then listed alphabetically within each subclassification.

Best Fall/Winter Video Games

Ready for (Inter) Action

Animaniacs (Konami/Genesis) is an action-puzzle game starring three characters. Each has a special ability that helps the player solve the puzzles. For young people and adults.

Ballz 3-D (Accolade/Genesis) split critical opinion, because of its unusual art. All characters in this fighting contest are made out of spheres. The tongue-in-cheek tone calls to mind **Clayfighter**, though the games are fairly different.

Batman: The Animated Series (Konami/SNES) has graphics that look just like the animated series. The action seems more appropriate, with more emphasis on using items, than previous Bat-games.

Boogerman (Interplay/Genesis) stars the most irreverent superhero since Fartman. He picks his nose and flicks it at foes and flies by expelling gas after eating chili and beans. There are over 400 frames of animation for the character which unreel at 24 fps.

Bubsy II (Accolade/Genesis, SNES) will thrill fans of **Claws Encounters** when it bows this fall. The Amazatorium is a fascinating backdrop to Bubsy's flying, running, and jumping. Besides a new graphic feel, **Bubsy II** widens the play-options with special objects and mini-game sequences.

Captain Commando (Capcom/ SNES) is an old coin-op coming to the home market for the first time. This basic fighting game is somewhat like **Double Dragon**, without the B-movie story line.

Clay Fighter 2 (Interplay/Genesis, SNES) brings back three characters plus six new ones. And there are 11 secret characters who pop up unexpectedly. The graphics are much better than the first game, mostly because the backgrounds have lots of clay-animation.

Demon's Crest (Capcom/SNES), this publisher's best forthcoming game, has spectacular background graphics with a sinister mood. There's lots of running and shooting, often with unusual weapons like flamethrowers.

FireTeam Rogue (Accolade/Genesis, SNES) has an involved back-story that gets lost in tons of ordinary side-scrolling fighting and a primitive flying and shooting mode. The team members are large and well-drawn, though the animation could've been more detailed.



• **Bubsy II by Accolade**

The Flintstones (Ocean/SNES, Genesis, Game Boy), a side-scroller with sound samples of John Goodman saying, "Yabba Dabba Doo." Mark Rogers, designer/programmer, provides 15 main and 30 secret levels.

Iron Soldier (Atari/Jaguar) casts the gamer as a robot in a world so realistic that every shot fired damages something. Wild shooting quickly demolishes the scenery in this



• **The Flintstones by Ocean**

demolishes the scenery in this cyberactive stomper.

Itchy & Scratchy (Acclaim/SNES) revels in the same cartoon mayhem that makes the cat-and-mouse team so popular on *The Simpsons*. The death scenes are incredibly creative, and not just rehashes of the cartoons.

Justice League (Sunsoft/SNES, Genesis) uses superheroes in a street fighting game. There are six superheroes, including Wonder Woman and Cheetah, and three villains. Each character fights in the proper setting, but it's a flat concept that makes poor use of the crimebusters.

Kasuin Ninja (Atari/Jaguar) is a realistic fighting, kicking, punching, blocking fight-athon. This one is blood-rated; the red stuff spurts and flows and stays on the ground where it falls.

Mega Man X² (Capcom/SNES), heading to market right after the holidays, is Capcom's latest variation on this character. The backgrounds are the visual high note.

Mortal Kombat II (Acclaim/Genesis, SNES) is the home edition of the arcade game. There's more of everything, including the new characters and special moves. The death scenes will test Nintendo's new developer guidelines.

Power Instinct (Atlus/SNES, Genesis), based on the arcade machine, has eight characters who punch and kick. The characters are on the humorous side, including a deceptively fierce glamour girl.

SeaQuest DSV (TH*Q/SNES, Genesis, Game Boy) supplements Sculptured Software's graphics with visuals Amblin Imaging did for the NBC show. After choosing a vehicle, explore, rescue prisoners, and ultimately find and defeat a pirate organization.

The Shadow (Ocean/Genesis) is a fighting game based on the pulp avenger and new summer blockbuster movie. It disguises the fact that it's a standard platform shooter fairly well enough to be entertaining.

Sparkster (Konami/Genesis, SNES) outdoes **Rocket Knight Adventures** in every respect, especially the graphics. This is a hipper-looking, better-playing cart.



• The Shadow by Ocean

Terminator IV: Future Shock (Bethesda) will be ready for the fourth quarter. It features 360-degree movement and works with virtuality helmets like CyberMaxx. It may have the fastest animation of any computer action title.

Thunder in Paradise (Software Toolworks/SNES, Genesis) has nine levels of action, including side-scrolling platforms, first-person perspective, and boat racing. It's a good job with a difficult license—the Terry "Hulk" Hogan syndie TV series.

Virtual Bart (Acclaim/SNES) is a particularly creative use of the TV license. The player guides Bart, transformed into a variety of personae such as Pig Bart, through various contests, including the inevitable platform sequences.

Calling All Armchair Coaches

ESPN Speedworld (Sony Imagesoft/Genesis, SNES) puts 24 stock cars on the track. This produces a realistic crush of cars. An interactive pitstop, somewhat handicapped by an unpleasant play-mechanic, separates this from most auto race games. A Sega CD is in development.

GP-1 Part II (Atlus/SNES), a sequel, will be out in November. This motorbike race has twice the memory of the original, mostly devoted to improving the graphics.

Looney Tunes Hoop It Up (Sunsoft/SNES), for one to four players, turns gamers into Yosemite, Sylvester, Bugs, or Daffy. Players find jewels on the court to buy special plays, like a throwable pie, a bomb, or even an eclipse. The gamer regulates the degree of wackiness in this screwball basketball contest.

Quarterback Club (Genesis, SNES) proves that not everyone just talks about the weather, since it has more climatic options than any comparable cartridge. Full NFL rosters, multi-season play, solid graphics, and three play modes make **Quarterback Club** an appealing gridiron title.

Cartridges for Braingamers

Final Fantasy III (SquareSoft/SNES), arriving in October, is less linear than previous **FF**s. The upgraded graphics and animation are nearly as good as **Donkey Kong Country**, and the puzzles have matured away from obsession with the weapons.

Jigsaw Madness (Atlus/SNES) adds competitive play to this activity for up to five participants. Power icons provide various skills, such as a broom that sweeps away opponents' pieces.

Starfleet Academy (Interplay/SNES), uses the same interface as the publisher's computer adventures. This mission-based adventure draws five episodes from the *Star Trek* films. It offers space combat as well as questing.

Best Fall/WInter Multimedia Entertainment

CD in Action

Creature Shock (Virgin/CD-ROM) uses ray traced polygons. Most levels are first

person in this space shooter. In ground-based sequences, aliens rush out directly out of the screen, a hot angle for marksmen.

GEX (Crystal Dynamics/3DO) is named for a cheesy lizard who gets stuck in a TV set and has to endure satires of familiar shows. Exceptionally smooth animation, allegedly adult humor, and realistic animation are all big pluses.

PaTaank (PF Magic/3DO) is a pinball contest that presents a first-person view from just behind the "ball," actually, a flying-saucer shaped vehicle. One to four players can alternate turns.

Skull Cracker (Cyberflix/MPC, Macintosh CD) is a four-level, first-person action challenge. The male or female protagonist uses fist, guns, and special vials to battle the angry dead folks. The artwork and music are eerily appropriate.



in this science fiction adventure about a hero whose mind is transplanted into a capsule. After enduring a short tutorial, the player tries to gain control of the alien ship and steer it away from a collision with a star.



• SkullCracker by Cyberflix

Daggerfall: Elder Scrolls Chapter 2 (Bethesda/PC CD), the sequel to **Arena**, is set for first quarter delivery. This is probably the best attempt to use a **Doom**-like play-mechanic and perspective in an RPG context. The plot incorporates multiple endings that depend on events.

Dust (Cyberflix/MPC, Macintosh CD/March 95) sets human actors against ray-traced polygon graphic backgrounds. The player travels the Old West in action similar to the home version of **Mad Dog McCree II**. The accent here, however, is on character interaction and gripping drama.

Kings Quest VII: The Princess Bride (Sierra/CD-ROM), planned for December, is Roberta Williams' return to the series she created. With the rightful queen and the young princess separated, the troll queen controls the land and wants to destroy it all. The adventurer sometimes plays the princess, other times the valiant queen. The artwork is the best yet for this prestigious interactive epic.

Kyrandia 3

• **Pa Taank by PF Magic** (Virgin/Westwood/CD-ROM), due in November, is a major improvement in an already strong fantasy adventure series. You may even believe a horse can fly when you see the Pegasus glide into 3-D rendered motion.

Phantasmagoria (Sierra/CD-ROM) is about an illusionist who becomes possessed. Robert Miano stars, and Kronos did the special effects. The art is SGi renderings, and a 120-voice choir enhances the soundtrack. Some of the sequences are truly terrifying in Roberta Williams' dark fantasy.

Realms of Arkania: Star Trail (Sir-Tech/CD-ROM) provides fully animated outdoor and indoor views. Combat proceeds in turns, like the first program in the series.

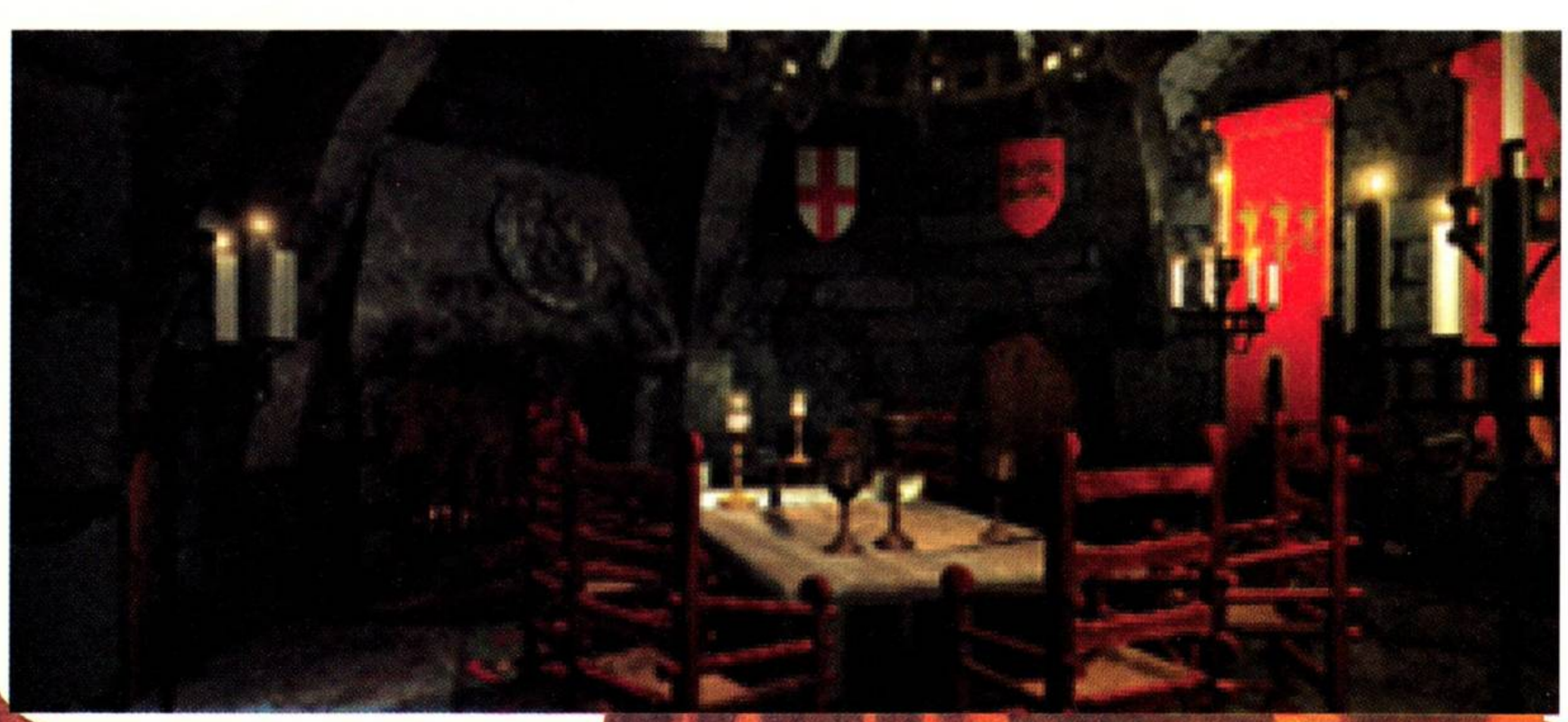
Star Trek: Deep Space Nine: The Hunt (Paramount/MPC, Macintosh CD), scheduled to land in November, was developed by Tachyon. Control one of four characters and interact with the *Enterprise* crew. Bit-mapped graphics true to the TV show, and the original cast members as voice actors guarantee true-to-the-license adventuring.

Wizecracks (Aris/PC CD), out this month, is an interactive sitcom on three channels. Viking channel tells the story with very raw emotions; Gen X channel is for losers, and

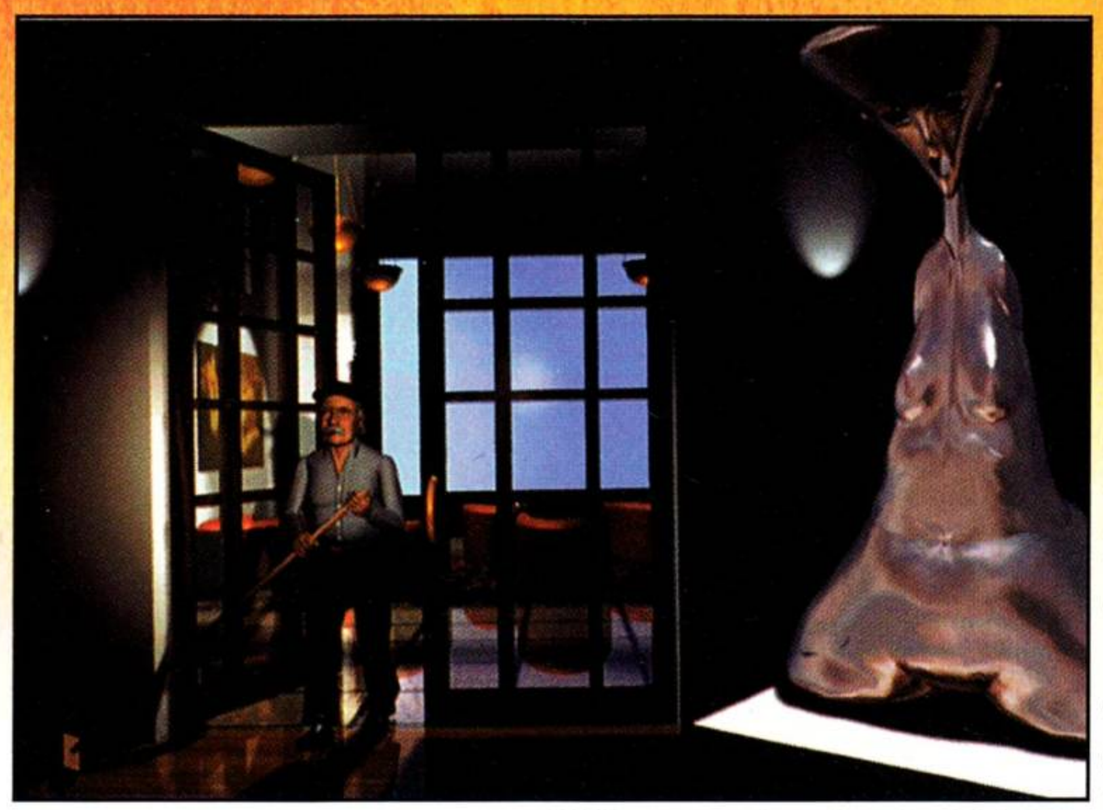
Passport to Adventure

Buried In Time (Sanctuary Woods/CD-ROM) starts six months after **The Journeyman Project**. Your future self returns to the past to get your help in finding the real perpetrator of a murder he is wrongly charged with committing.

Daedalus Encounter (MediaVision/CD-ROM, Macintosh CD) stars Tia Carrere



• Buried In Time by Sanctuary Woods



• Millennium Auction by Eidolon

Masterpiece Theatre has very controlled emotions. The same story is told in different ways, and the player can surf between them for infinite branching.

Wolf (Sanctuary Woods/CD-ROM) has survived the latest change of direction and will debut in October. The Manley Associates simulation of life in a wolf pack is still a fascinating and enriching experience, though the VGA graphics aren't up to multimedia expectations.

Mind-stretching Multimedia

Alien Legacy (Dynamix/MS-DOS) tests the ability to juggle resources and plan for a society. This open-ended fall release deals with building up planets and using the civilization as a springboard to explore and colonize more distant worlds. The theme is close to **Outpost**, but the implementation is strikingly original.

Command or Conquer (Virgin-Westwood/CD-ROM) uses real actors and a three-fourths overhead playfield, with ray-traced polygon tanks and hovercraft. The player chooses either side in 15-30 missions.

Iron Angel (Ocean/CD-ROM), launching this fall, sends a stunt pilot careening through the solar system to uphold justice. This space flight simulator has 200 missions.

EcoRanger (IVI/CD-ROM) simulates an African game park. It's a marked change for Viridis, which previously developed **Zelda**.

The player can tour the park or, as the ranger, attempt to run it.

Millennium Auction (Eidolon/PC CD) sets players against collectors in auctions to acquire treasures. Each bidding war uses a random group of the 140 items included in the program. The one to four-player contest takes about two hours. A supplemental disk adds more treasures.

Panic (Data East/Sega CD), Data East's debut on this platform, is an MA-17 puzzle. When a computer virus screws up the switches, Slap and his dog Stick must find the proper combination of button-pushes to solve each puzzle. Did we mention that each switch is attached to one of 30 world-famous monuments? Both right and wrong choices trigger spectacular animations.



• SimTown by Maxis

Phoenix Fighter (Software Sorcery/ CD-ROM) is a flight and combat simulator, rendered in 3-D Studio graphics. The space station has many locations to visit, such as the bar and weapons shop. The gamer constructs a ship from scattered parts. The intense missions feature a heads-up display surrounded by gauges and dials, to help the player survive the ferocious sky battles.

SimTown (Maxis/CD-ROM, Macintosh CD) departs from the complex metropolis concepts that had proved to be very successful for past Sim games. In this entertaining edutainment software for 8-12-year-olds things are not quite the same. Individual buildings are large and open like doll houses. Cute graphics help to dress up a very solid model of the average small town life. This game will be a great starter game for parents who want to introduce their kids to the Sim series.

Space Simulator 1.0 (Microsoft/CD-ROM), by Bruce Artwick Organization. The player can not surpass the speed of light, but is able to telescope subject time to reach distant destinations like other galaxies. There are 15-20 preset missions and assignments, and a dozen or so vehicles for the trip. Graphics on this are clear, intense, and take earth-huggers into space with high frontier authenticity.

VidGrid (Jasmine/CD-ROM, Macintosh CD) is a moving-picture puzzle contest with nine video artists and 50 levels of difficulty. Changing the size of the grid increases the level of challenge as well as the perspective to the puzzle. The solver sees the puzzle with a moving picture on each piece, and then assembles it to see the video.

Warcraft (Blizzard/PC CD-ROM) is a Tolkienish battle between orcs and warriors, for one or two players. The ruler cultivates farms to increase the peasant population, and then builds a city where they can be trained as soldiers. The speech differs depending on which side the participant chooses to lead in this hybrid of **SimCity** and **Civilization**.

Wild Blue Yonder (Spectrum Holobyte/ CD-ROM) showcases 20 artifacts from four eras, by the producers of the *Brute Force* television show. Values added include songs and stories about the subject as well as digitized mementos.



• VidGrid by Jasmine

CD Entertainment: Beyond Games

Coolsville Mystery Adventure (Media Vision, CD-ROM), due this fall, is for ages 10 through adult who want to explore jazz. There are four sections of Coolsville: Dixieland, Blues, Bebop, and Swing. Get "cooler" by talking to musicians and put together the pieces of the mystery.

ESPN Sports Shots (Moon Valley/MPC) includes video and audio clips. The user can also attach sound to any command, customize icons, animate icons, and use it as a screen saver.

Guiness Multimedia Disk of Records (Grolier/CD-ROM) is a workable encyclopedia of peculiarities. There are lots of videos, great search routines, and even options to print out the material. It's surprisingly enjoyable to check out the odd accomplishments.

Best Fall/ Winter Computer Software

Adventures on Disk



• **Heroes of Might & Magic by New World**

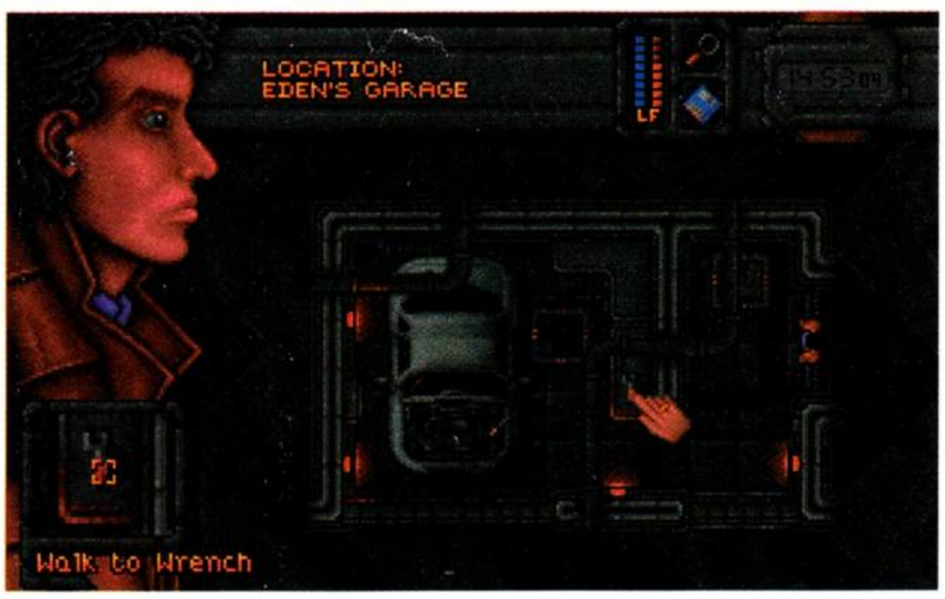
Celtic Tales: Balor of the Evil Eye (Koei/MS-DOS), out in time for the holidays, presents Celtic tribal warfare with mythos and magic included. This RPG is a refreshing alternative to the usual pseudo-Medieval fantasies.

CyberJudas (Merit/CD-ROM), the sequel to **Shadow President**, takes place entirely in cyberspace. This strategy adventure is a **Myst**-like clue hunt to find out who wants to replace the real president with a ringer.

Death Gate (Legend/486, with SVGA) is based on the Death Gate series. When magicians lose their bid for domination, they break the Seal into four worlds (earth, fire, water, air). The wizards also imprison their enemies, including the computerist, in a fifth world, the Labyrinth. Rendered graphics and an upgraded version of the **Xanth** game-system should make **Death Gate** a holiday season winner.

Dream Web (Empire/MS-DOS) shows its object-oriented puzzles in top-down perspective. The view of the action can be exploded for close examination of the screen in order to find objects. The moving, rock-tinged soundtrack is one of the best in interactive entertainment.

Heroes of Might & Magic (New World/MS-DOS) is based on a simple icon interface that eliminates all menus. Lots of animated sequences and atmospheric graphics are strengths of this RPG release for fall.



•**Dream Web by Empire**

I Jam (Cyberflix, MPC, Macintosh CD) is a follow-up to **Mega Rock, Rap 'N' Roll**. In this digital jam session, you choose a studio, view potential videos, and choose the instrumentation for the tune. It's suitable for non-musicians, and the results are enjoyable, even if they aren't great music. **Mega Rock, Rap 'N' Roll** was a surprising hit and it looks as though their follow-up should be as well.

Simulators: Nearly Virtual

Aces of the Deep (Sierra-Dynamix/MS-DOS, CD-ROM) is a historically accurate WWII submarine simulator. It incorporates rendered images done on an SGi work station. Career or single missions cast the player as a German commander in the Atlantic.

Dawn Patrol (Empire/MS-DOS) saves time and memory by putting its 50+ missions in a reference booklet. The pilot reads the background in the doc and then runs the scenario on the screen. Highly detailed graphics scroll smoothly as planes respond according to their actual capabilities.

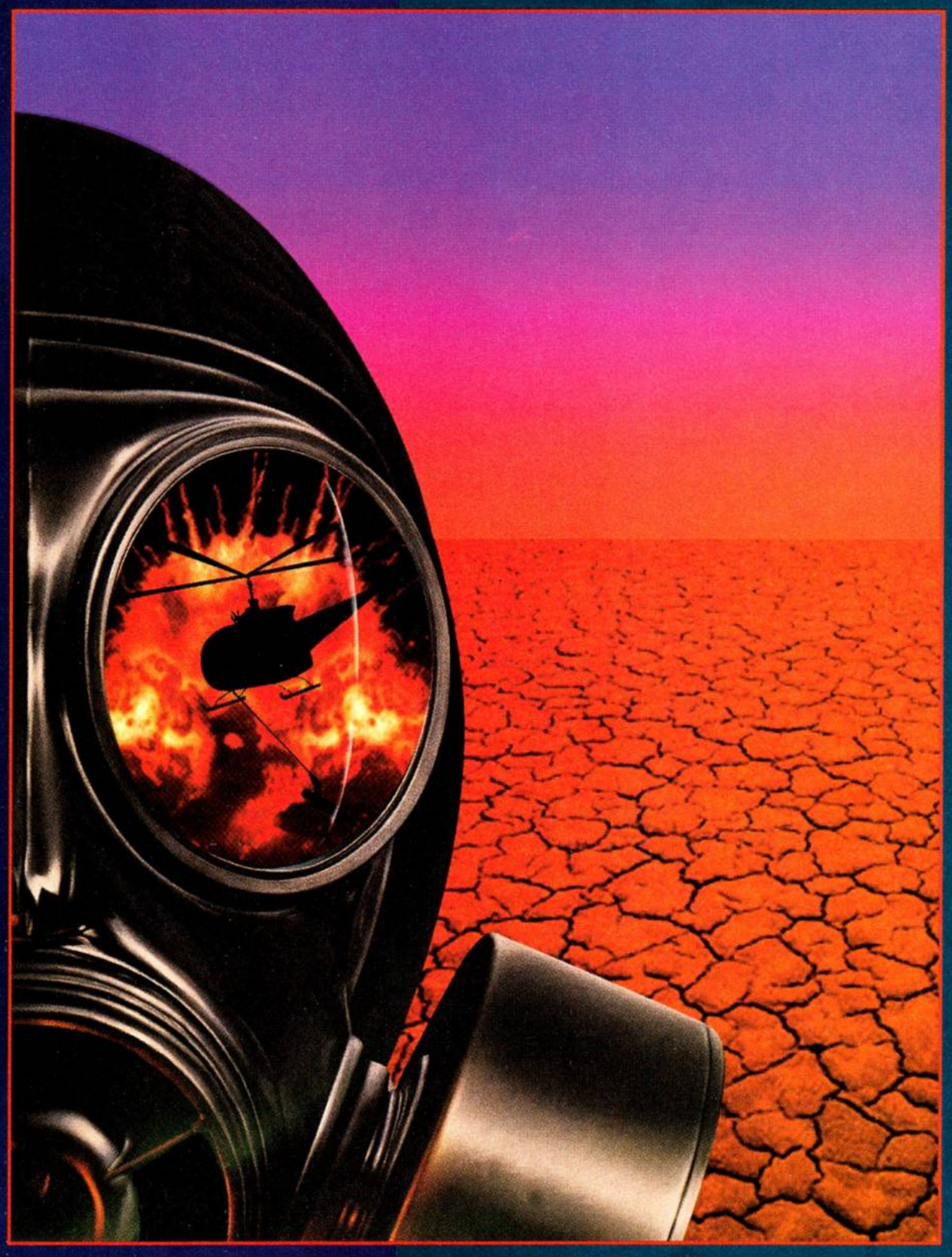


•**Death Gate by Legend**



• **Aces of the Deep by Sierra-Dynamix**

Sabre Team











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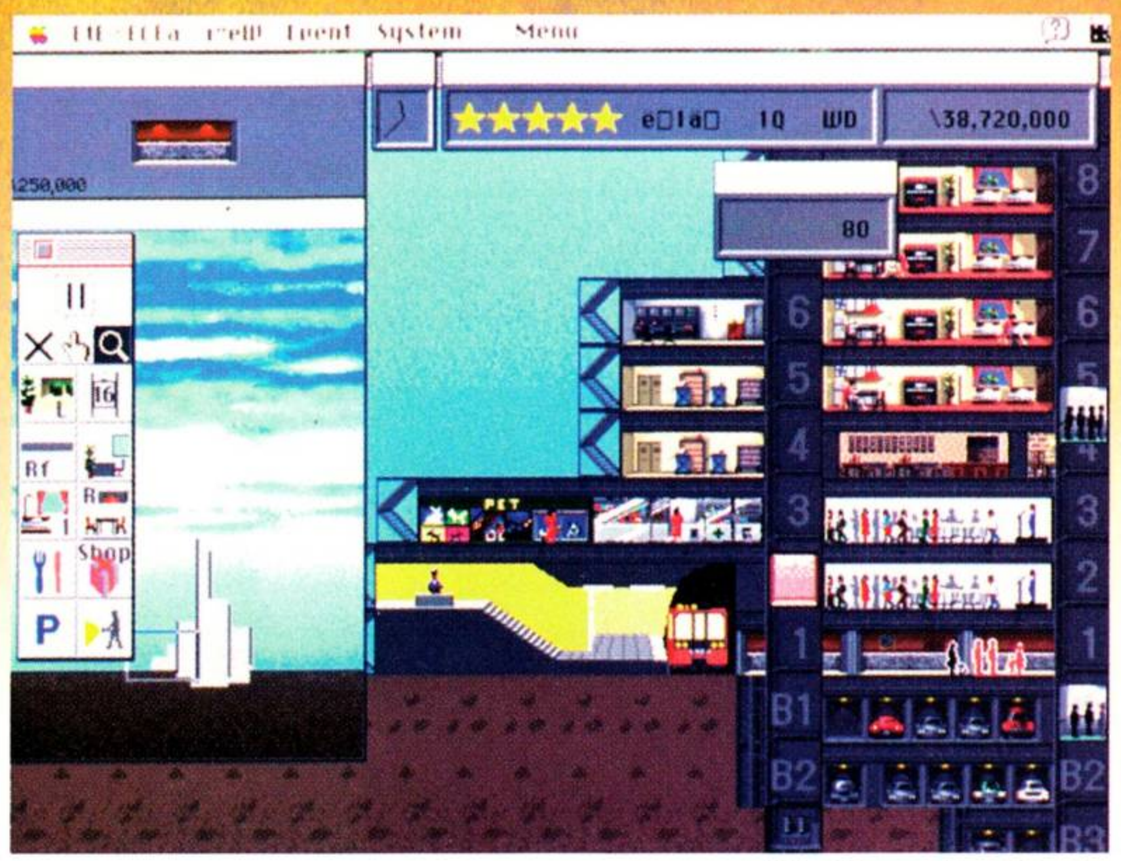
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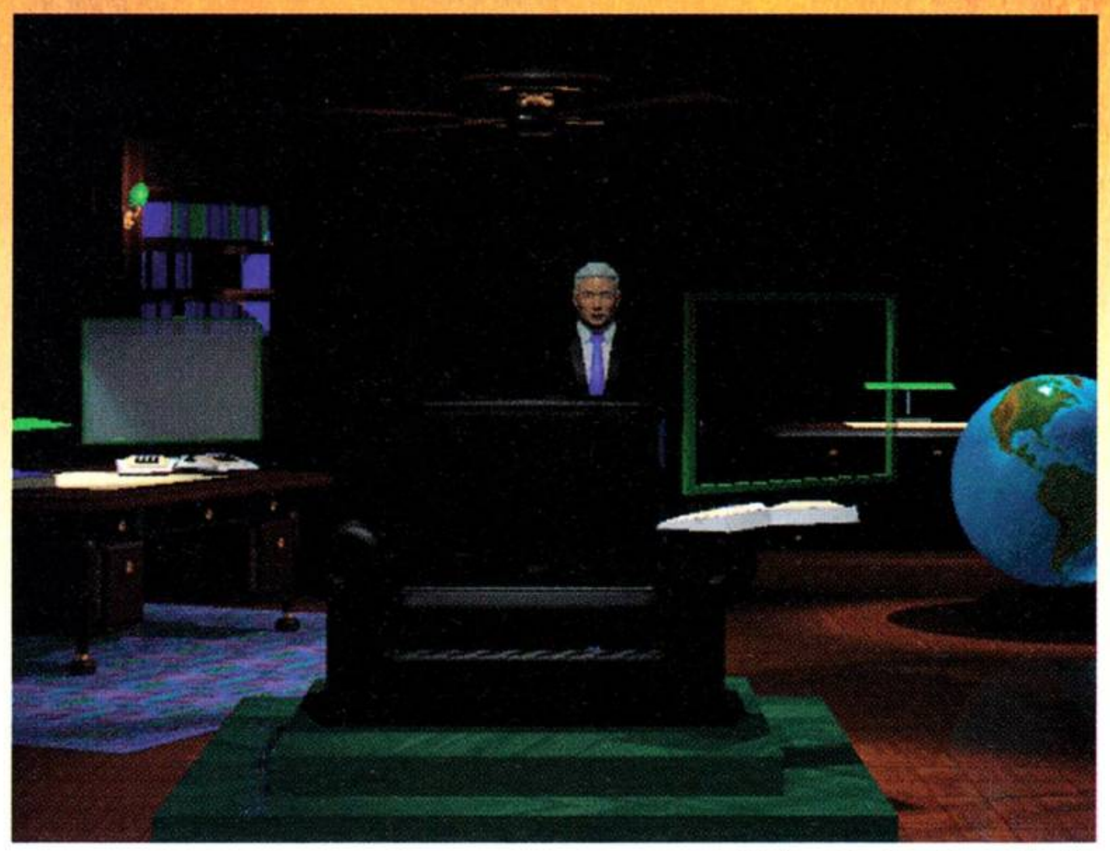
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• SimTower by Maxis



•CyberJudas by Merit

Spotlight on Strategy

BreakThru! (Spectrum Holobyte/MS-DOS) is the first of the Alexey Pajitnov line of puzzles, though he didn't design this color-matching contest. Graphics are mostly background pictures, as in earlier Pajitnov titles.

5th Fleet (Avalon Hill/MS-DOS) is an updated and redesigned version of the board game. The lack of real-time play hurts this fourth quarter entry.

Lemmings 3 (Psygnosis/MS-DOS) gives eye-relief to those who hated the small characters in earlier **Lemmings** programs. The latest incarnation of this durable strategy/arcade contest has new Lemming powers and ingenious obstacles.

The Incredible Machine 2 (Dynamix/MS-DOS) will deliver 150 more puzzle screens this October. This is the third game of the series, following **The Incredible Toons.** The graphics are both bigger and brighter, a hint feature breaks logjams, and there's the option of head-to-head showdowns. The Construction Mode is also enriched, and now lets users add background graphics.

SimTower (Maxis/Windows, Macintosh) turns building management into a game. As landlord, you must develop a balanced/profitable piece of commercial real estate by leasing space for apartments, offices, restaurants, shops, and entertainment centers.

Real-Time Excitement

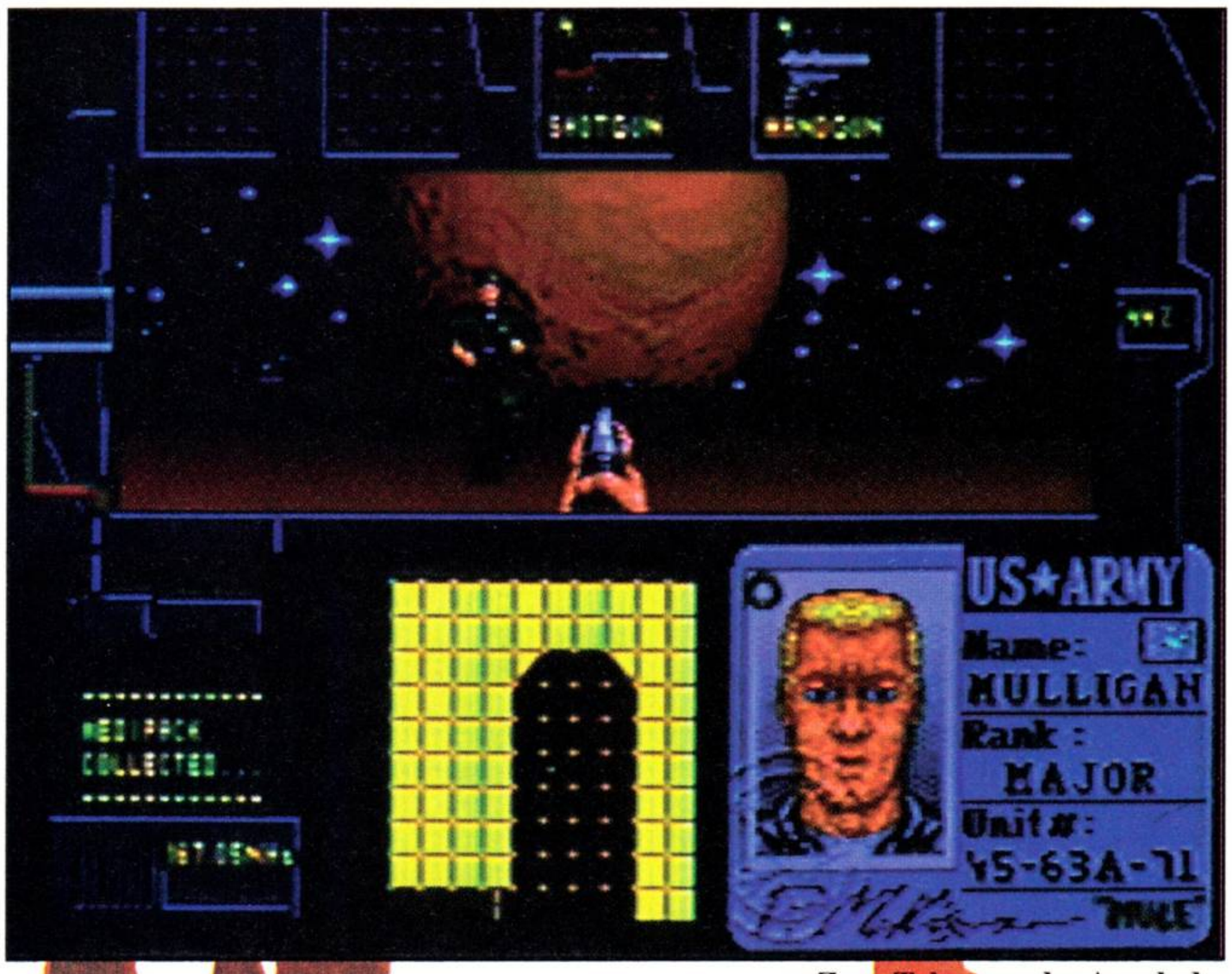
Capitol Punishment (Sierra/MS-DOS), by Al Lowe, turns political high jinks into riotous arcade action. Whitewater rafting, anyone?

Freelancer (Imagitec/MS-DOS) belongs to the booming first-person real-time action-adventure category. (The hyphen-weary call them "**Doom**-like.") In this one, a mercenary faces enemies who pursue down halls and into rooms. The fall release features graphics that mix live action and stop-motion animation.

Lode Runner (Dynamix/MS-DOS) continues the trend of bringing back the classic games from the depths of obscurity. The run-and-dig play-mechanic survives, but the playfields are much more imaginative, and there are lots of power-ups. The animation is also far more sophisticated and is on a par with **Prince of Persia**.

Zero Tolerance (Accolade/MS-DOS) is Accolade's first-person shooter. Though it isn't quite the same game-system as the hugely popular **Wolfenstein 3-D**, the connection is clear. **Zero Tolerance** has extra features, like automapping, which are very welcome, as is the addition of more strategy.

Zorro (Capstone/MS-DOS) is a September release that plays like **Prince of Persia**, but has the graphic set derived from the Old California world of the masked avenger. The game was so early in development that details were not available at the time of this printing, but we will be sure to keep readers informed.



• Zero Tolerance by Accolade

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Super-System Free-for-All

3DO vs. Atari vs. Nintendo vs. Sega vs. Sony

Forget all the big talk. Now, interactions must speak louder than words in the all-out war among five major companies. They all want to supply your next home interactive entertainment system.

Two units (the 3DO Real Player and Atari Jaguar) are already in stores nationwide. Anther three (Saturn, Ultra 64, and PS-X) will join them within a year. (Sega's 32X, the Genesis upgrade, is treated separately in this section.) Now five solid products will battle for two, or at most three, market niches.

Make no mistake, this could be a struggle to the death for more than one of the participants. Despite excellent hardware and vast financial resources, this quintet understands that a serious failure at this juncture will jeopardize future participation in electronic entertainment, at least for the rest of the decade.

by Arnie Katz

The Race Begins!

Which Systems Will Rule the Digiverse?

Silicon or Mylar?

How each company makes this decision could decide the war. Atari's Jaguar and Nintendo's Ultra 64 are cartridge machines. The 3DO, Sega Saturn, and Sony PS-X are committed to compact disk and the multimedia software it makes possible. Jaguar will have a CD-ROM peripheral next summer, but Atari plans to keep making cartridges. (The 32X will have cartridge and disk software.)

Software medium is such a crucial issue, because it speaks directly to the quality of the software. Ultimately, how good the games are is what will decide which platforms attract a viable audience, and which are back-of-the-shelf curiosities. That's why Nintendo's decision to stay with the cartridge for the Ultra 64 shook the industry.

The virtues of CD are well-known: beautiful graphics, full stereo sound, and tons of memory. Throw in FMV and a manufacturing cost less than 5% of most cartridges.

Access time is the CD-ROM drive's Achilles heel. The double- and triple-speed drives shorten waits while the machine retrieves the next hunk of data, but there are precious seconds of delay that none of the drives can completely erase.

Cartridges put all data "on line": at once. Games encoded on silicon jump onto the screen at first boot, ready to go. Video gamers are said to be an impatient breed with short attention spans. The manufacturers who've gone with cartridges don't want to make players wait when they could be blasting aliens.

First-wave cartridges for the super systems will look and play better than competing CD-based titles. After that, limited memory and the expense of extra chips makes it likely that CD products will catch up and pass the cartridges.

So expect cart-based super systems to leap out of the starting gate, but don't dismiss the true multimedia platforms. They'll show superior staying power and, if they can survive the first round, become increasingly potent starting in 1996.

Third-Party Support

All systems have great third-party publishing support. Just ask company executives, and they'll happily furnish lists that prove that 50 or 80 or 300 (for 3DO) companies are pledged to make products to work with their platforms.

Common sense suggests that these lengthy lists are no more than printed wish lists. Any company that could actually translate one of these imposing rosters into a torrent of first class interactive entertainment could steamroller the opposition for a quick, comparatively bloodless victory.

Putting a company on a manufacturer's list of supporters doesn't cost much. It generates a little free publicity and keeps the door open for future software activities.

Actually producing a game or entertainment represents a different order of magnitude. The cost of design, development, packaging, marketing, and advertising is high enough to keep all but the fearless from early commitment to an unproven platform.

The 3DO and the Jaguar have been hurt by third-party inability to get product to retail as scheduled. Electronic Arts' failure to get promised 3DO disks out for Christmas 1993 contributed to the system's sputtering start.

One problem besetting third-party companies has nothing to do with the economic justification. The hardware makers haven't gotten development systems and associated software into developers' hands as promised. It's close to impossible to do anything meaningful without development systems, which has put many projects far behind schedule with no hope of meeting announced completion dates.



Jaguar and 3DO suffered last year, and now it seems the same is true for the Saturn and Ultra 64. Sony has done well when it comes to giving third-party houses the tools they need, which may give the PS-X an unusually large starting library.

The Pricing Predicament

The platform with the best hardware and software doesn't always win. The Neo•Geo certainly had greater capabilities than the Genesis and SNES, but its audience was a sliver compared to the 16-Bit consoles. Only a handful of buyers felt the games justified the high hardware and software prices.

The biggest knock against the 3DO when it was introduced was the high list price. Cynics predicted that consumers wouldn't pay that much for black box entertainment machines.

Their dire forecasts looked all too accurate last Christmas, when Panasonic sold fewer than 20,000 systems in the U.S. The Jaguar made a stronger impression at retail during that quarter mostly because of lower cost.

Manufacturers are treating prices for their new systems like state secrets. One thing's for sure, the PS-X, Saturn, and Ultra 64 will all be priced substantially above Genesis and SNES introductory levels, probably $300-$400.

Prices will come down, says the common wisdom. The price of a system always decreases after the first year. These five systems will get cheaper, but not all have the same reduction potential. That could shake up market positions as soon as Christmas 1996.

Lower prices depend on two factors: chip integration and economies of scale. Panasonic is already making money-saving chip modifications on the 3DO player, and the Ultra 64 will most likely be a similar story.

The Saturn, unfortunately for Sega, reportedly will use chips supplied by five different vendors. Inter-corporate friction may make the Saturn more resistant to streamlining the configuration.

The impact of production savings is harder to estimate. They partly derive from lowering base cost and from running a more efficient operation. Nintendo has shown a talent for cost-cutting in this area, and the Tramiel family's business history includes the Commodore 64 mass-market computer.

Which system will be the price leader? Intra-brand competition will push the 3DO-compatibles lower than the Saturn, Ultra 64, and PS-X. The Jaguar, which starts with the lowest price, will either maintain its position or slide to second. If the past is any guideline, Sega and Nintendo will try to maintain price parity with each other, and Sony will try to stay in the same vicinity.

Who's Ahead?

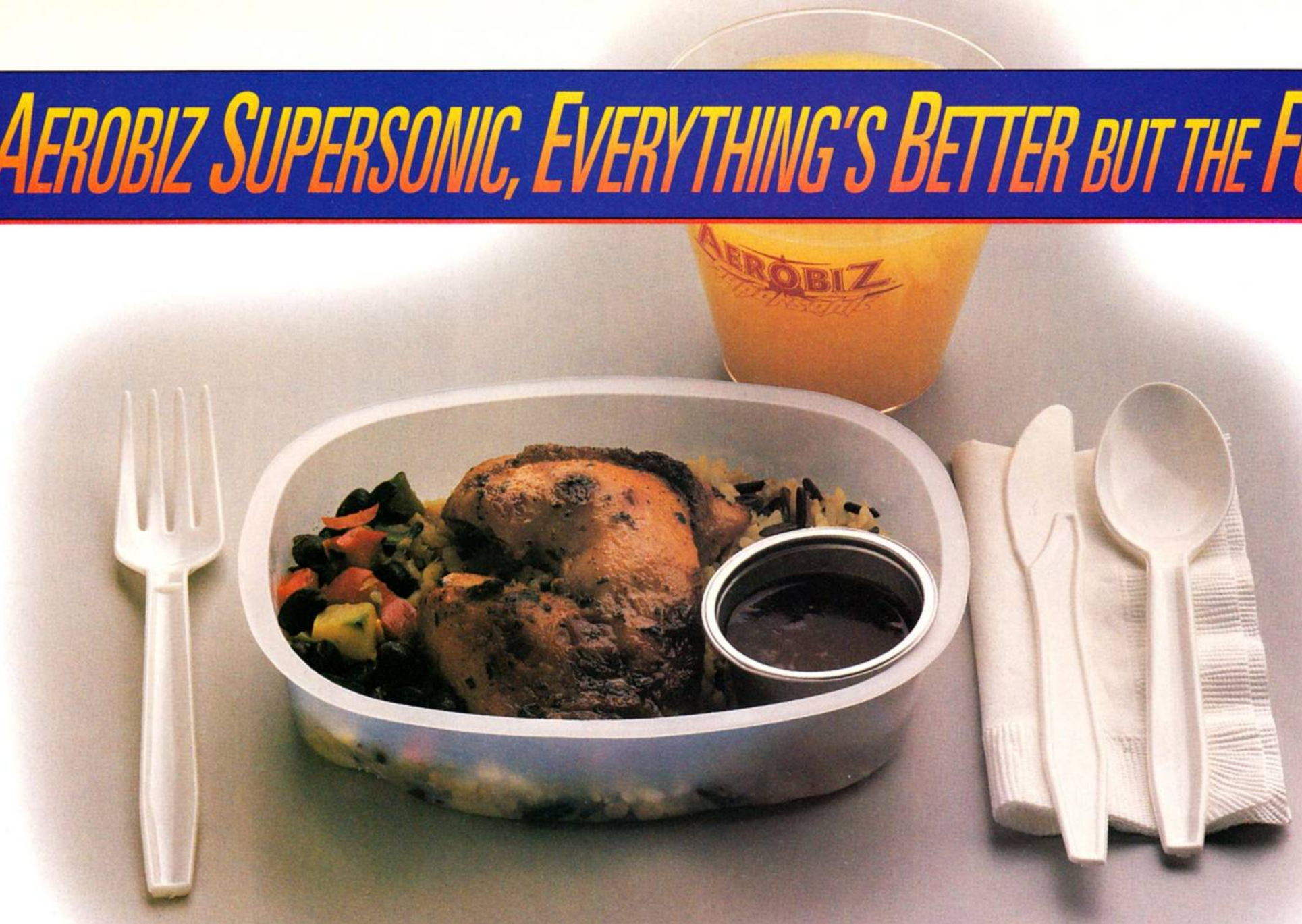
Since three of the five companies haven't sold their first unit yet, it's premature to talk about winners and losers. Any of the combatants could still finish first or last. But it's reasonable to wonder if any are scoring points and piling up an advantage that might lead to eventual triumph.

Suddenly looking much better is 3DO (see "3DO Strikes Back!"). The retail price is declining, the software is more exciting, and aggressive marketing by three console manufacturers (Panasonic, Sansung, and Gold Star) will create a lot of consumer awareness.

Atari has overcome some, but not all, skepticism. Retailers give the company points for the launch, but some still wonder aloud whether the Sunnyvale company will stay the course this time.

Future issues of *Electronic Games* will chronicle further developments in the five-way fight as they unfold.

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SEGA'S X MACHINE

Waiting for the "X" Factor to begin

by Bill Kunkel

They're calling it ... the "X" Factor. Within weeks, game enthusiasts everywhere will be deluged with X-Consciousness, as Sega pulls out all the stops in its latest bold marketing brainchild—a 32-Bit bridge technology that allows Genesis owners to trade up for less than $150, and improves Sega CD performance at the same time.

The toughest time for any video game hardware manufacturer is that vulnerable transition period from one generation of technology to the next—especially for a *successful* hardware maker.

Just ask Atari or Nintendo. Or Sega, which finds itself in the unaccustomed position of dominant force in the 16-Bit generation. But as the baton passes from one rev of hardware to the next, anything can happen; the runner can stumble, the baton can be dropped, or a runner from way back in the pack may suddenly explode into the lead, moving with the speed of a jaguar.

Sega is looking to beat the transition blues with a fascinating new compromise: a peripheral device dubbed the 32X that plugs into the Genesis cartridge slot and offers users a tantalizing glimpse at the next generation of planetary Sega software.

The Hardware Story

The 32X offers an interesting technological melange: twin 32-Bit RISC processors (working in parallel), incorporating the Hitachi SH2 RISC microprocessing chip. A newly fashioned VDP (Video Digital Processor), capable of cranking the Genesis 32X up to 40 MIPs, with 32,000+ colors, texture mapping, enhanced polygon rendering and 3-D graphics. How much has the polygon rendering really improved? The new configuration can generate 50,000 polygons per second, with hardware-based true-form scaling and rotation as lagniappe.

In the memory department, 4 megabit RAM is pumped into the Genesis and Sega CD. The A440 MIPS system can handle computer data at speeds more than 40 times faster than the slower Genesis unit.

The Software Story

All of the specs and techno- speed advancements of this seemingly solid new system caught your ear? Does the idea of an affordable add-on for your existing system sound so good that you may put off sinking the big money into that unproven gaming system you've had your eye on? All this sounds very impressive, eh? But the proof of the pudding is in the eating, and the proof of the hardware is in the gaming. So far to date, Sega has provided the anxious press with only brief glimpses of the much anticipated software—some of which may have consisted of images borrowed from coin-ops—but there is obviously a **Star Wars Arcade** title coming, based on the Sega coin-op, as well as **Virtua Racing Deluxe**, a much-improved version of the $100-a-pop Genesis hit. The 32X version of **Virtua Racing** adds three cars, six courses, and near coin-op level visuals to the successful Genesis edition.



From deep within the arcades, the classic Star Wars will be available for the 32X.

Also in the technological pipeline are 32X versions of familiar hits such as **Doom**, **AfterBurner**, **Super Motocross**, **Space Harrier**, and **Tomcat Alley Deluxe**, as well as new titles like **Cyber Brawl** (a 3-D fighting game likely to beat **Virtua Fighters** to the 32X punch), **Fahrenheit** (a *Backdraft*-inspired firefighting sim which is also coming to the Sega CD), **Stellar Assault** (arcade sci-fi 3-D fighter), **36 Great Holes** (golf), and **College**



Striking graphics featuring crisp and sharp colors are in line for Shadow of Atlantis.



Basketball (guess what?). Then there's **Tempo** (a "hip-hop grasshopper with an attitude"—doesn't *everyone* in popular video games "have an attitude" today?), **Midnight Raiders** (an Apache attack copter sim), **Metal Head**, **Wirehead** (with **Dynamite Headdy**—formerly **Dynamite Head**—in the Genesis mix, it's obvious that Sega is getting into head games), and **Surgical Strike**.

The Support Story

In late June, Sony Imagesoft became the 26th third party publisher to announce support for the 32X platform, joining: Absolute, Accolade, Acclaim, Activision, American Softworks Corp., Capcom, Capitol Multi-Media, Core Design, Crystal Dynamics, Domark, GameTek, Hi-Tech, Interplay, JVC, Konami, Playmates, Rocket Science, Software Toolworks, Sunsoft, Takara, Time Warner Interactive, 20th Century Fox Interactive, Vic Tokai, and Virgin.

In an effort to pump up the techno-volume, meanwhile, Sega recently struck a deal with The Duck Corporation to incorporate its TrueMotion "S" video compression algorithm and the Comprending interactive media engine. "TrueMotion compression and Comprending tools/interface will enable developers to pack more advanced computer interactivity and full-motion real video capabilities into our advanced hardware platforms," Sega's senior vp of product development reported. "And these technologies will allow those developing software for future Sega systems to program more authentic settings, characters, and details as well as more imaginative, boundless creativity into their games. Just as we did with 16-Bit, our future hardware will set the new standard for realism and playability. Graphics and image display should never impede the suspension of disbelief that is integral to great game play."



The blockbuster hit Doom, coming from the PC, is sure to be a hit on the 32X system.

The Long View

The 32X represents the first attempt to significantly upgrade an existing standard of video game technology. In the past, manufacturers have settled for producing a downwardly compatible peripheral for next-generation hardware, so that the user doesn't have to cope with the loss of an entire generation of software.

Now, for the first time, an upgrade peripheral is being offered to owners of the most popular current-generation video game technology. Will the 32X, as Sega hopes, carry the day until such time as the Saturn (see sidebar) drops to mass market price levels? Will the the 32X be able to hold our gaming interest with original, quality games even if it does successfully launch into the game market?

Keep watching the skies, readers. Keep watching the skies.



The 32X will offer striking graphics for its new game titles like Golf's Great 36 Holes.

Why Saturn is Not Rising Over America

While U.S. gamers avidly follow word on the release of the Saturn in Japan, the question of its eventual arrival on these shores remains unanswered. Until now.

According to an SoA spokesman, the much anticipated system will be released in the U.S. in the middle of '95. But what about the Genesis? And the Sega CD? And the 32X?

The Great Plan, according to SoA, is for the 32X to arrive this Xmas, build through '95, and eventually burn out, along with the carcass of the long-abandoned Genesis, after the '95 holiday season. The Saturn, meanwhile, will be a luxury item, priced far above the cost of even a Genesis, Sega CD, and 32X adapter combined.

Sega hopes that the 32X will provide the Genesis with enough support to keep it breathing until the price point on the Saturn reaches mass market levels (under $300).

What about the Saturn? Sega will generate enough software (it hopes) to keep early adopters satisfied, with assistance from several key third party publishers who have already signed on. After all, if one is producing software for the 3D0, CD-i, or Sony Playstation, it only makes sense to produce a Saturn SKU at the same time.

In fact, Capcom has already publicly announced its support of the Saturn. To help achieve this goal, it has also announced the birth of a U.S.-based R&D center to spearhead the development of 32-Bit product.

"The creation of an R&D division within Capcom USA is of tremendous significance to American-based retailers and to millions of game enthusiasts," remarked Capcom president, George Nakayama. "While our Japanese-based development efforts have given us tremendous market leverage over the past nine years with products such as the **Street Fighter II** series, our Disney-based lineup, the **Mega Man** series, and other prominent products, we believe that the U.S. R&D division can be even more responsive and in-tune with the needs of our consumers and with trends that shape the American market. With two key executives already on board, Capcom is well-poised to seize a larger volume of software opportunities available in today's booming marketplace."

Saturn is rising over the United States, after all—just *very* slowly. *(Bill Kunkel)*

3DO FIGHTS BACK

From Industry Darling to Pariah-and Back Again!

by Arnie Katz

"Definitely not dead," said RJ Michaels, whose ear-to-ear grin looked genuine. "3DO is looking great!" Even allowing for Michaels' legendary, irrepressible enthusiasm, it evidenced a rebirth of confidence that few attendees of the Summer Consumer Electronics Show would've predicted last winter.

RJ Michaels isn't the only smiling 3DO executive. With a successful introduction in Japan, and Bob Faber heading to London to captain the European roll-out, the reinvigorated project is poised for a major assault on the U.S. market this Christmas.

The Road Back

Straight-ahead analysis of 3DO troubles paved the way for the rebound. Approximately $50 million in new financing provided the fuel to implement the uncompromising conclusions. Among the steps taken to shore up weak points:

1. **Lower Prices.** The 3DO, down to under $500 at mid-year, is sure to go lower in the fourth quarter. It will still be higher than the 16-Bit machines, of course, but should be less expensive than a CD-i or the other super systems set to debut at mid-year.

2. **More Promotion of Consoles.** Panasonic has never gained fame for introducing new technology, and its promo efforts on behalf of the Real Player didn't improve that reputation. Now three manufacturers will be pumping the system at retail, which will translate into higher product visibility.

3. **Better Software.** EA's failure to release products for fourth quarter 1993 hurt both the publisher and the system. EA was supposed to provide qualitative leadership, as it did for third-party Genesis, and its absence created a vacuum. Not only is more and better software already in the stores from licensees, but 3DO has amended its philosophy to allow it to produce software of its own. "We'll do the cutting-edge programs that need to be done, even if they don't make money," promises Bob Faber. The company will also help products in important niches reach a wider audience than they would've gotten otherwise, like the forthcoming Soccer Kid.

The Creative Labs 3DO board, price still undetermined at press time, will spread the 3DO gospel to home computers.



For an investment no higher than a stand-alone player, computerists will be able to bring the excellent multimedia game catalog to their monitors.

The computer board should immediately increase the software customer base enough to spur development. Not that there won't be plenty of new products this fall and winter. Look for up to 40 new games in stores within four to six months.

Other peripherals are also in the works, including a modem, keyboard, and printer. The company is also field-testing a broadband cable service with U.S. West. It utilizes 3DO technology for the set-top box, and it will also offer subscribers a selection of games and entertainment based on the technology.

3DO's Performance Problem

It was "The Next Big Thing," complete with capital letters. When Trip Hawkins, freshly divorced from his beloved Electronic Arts, revealed his vision of a universal interactive technology standard, it caused an industry-wide epiphany. Hawkins showed them a way to the mass market future of their fondest dreams, and got there much faster than most ever dared hope.

The 3DO crusade became the glamourboy of interactive entertainment. They had the plan, the management, and the technology. No new system ever signed as many licensees, over 300 by the full-scale launch at the 1993 Summer Consumer Electronics Show.

Media hype followed the high-pressure CES launch. Story after story proclaimed the genius of Hawkins and his colleagues while anointing Panasonic's Real Player as—here comes that phrase—The Next Big Thing.

Christmas 1993 exploded the dream. Few Real players reached stores, and then only in major metropolitan areas, in time for gift-giving. Only about four software titles were available in fourth quarter 1993, and they were not impressive. Crash and Burn, packed with the console, was a B- despite sparkling 3DO visuals.

In a way, it was fortunate that Panasonic didn't ship more players. Consumers didn't exactly line up to buy the ones that were on the shelves. The exact number is conjecture, but it may've been as few as 15,000.

The Next Big Thing had stumbled out of the starting gate. The industry bet its financial future on 3DO, and the promised easy victory did not materialize.

Like disappointed suitors, industry and media turned cold. Now they hated what they had once loved with such embarrassing passion just mere months earlier. Many more than one red-faced pundit, anxious to put over-the-top praise for 3DO safely into the past, solemnly pronounced its death.

PROJECT REALITY GETS REAL

Nintendo Announces the Ultra 64 Back Again!

by Arnie Katz

Nintendo has finally unwrapped the secrecy that surrounded its Project Reality for the last 18 months. It staged its most successful retailer/press event of all time at Summer CES to unveil a 64-Bit cartridge-based video game console called the Ultra 64.

Developed in cooperation with Silicon Graphics, Inc. (SGi), the premium-priced machine is expected to hit the US retail market in fall 1995. A list price of $249.95 is the best guess.

The Guts

Project Reality had more design revisions than a game of Operation. At least two, possibly more, versions were proposed then abandoned when they didn't measure up to anticipated competition from the Saturn and PS-X.

Now the die is cast. Nintendo is banking on the super-hot SGi 3-D technology, embodied in the Ultra 64, to keep it competitive with consoles that incorporate CD multimedia technology.

The system is built around a 64-Bit MIPS RISC (Reduced Instruction Set Computer) microprocessor. (MIPS is a subsidiary of SGi.). Though once rumored to be a disk-based system, the Ultra 64's software will be entirely on a new form of silicon cartridge. Insiders insist that the Ultra 64, like the Jaguar, will eventually add a CD-ROM peripheral, but that won't happen until at least mid-1996.

Alias Research will provide graphics development tools for Ultra 64 product developers. The Canadian company participated in producing the special effects for movies such as Jurassic Park, Terminator 2, and The Abyss. "Alias Research is the clear leader in their field," Howard Lincoln insists, "Alias has developed software technology that allows artists and game designers to create next-generation characters, environments, and imagery for a new class of video game systems."

The Software Library

With the development system still months from release to third-party companies, all Nintendo has offered about software are tantalizing hints. Many more publishers and cartridges will be announced closer to the release of the actual hardware, probably at the 1995 Winter CES.

Two Ultra 64 designs far enough for a sneak peek are Cruis'n USA and Killer Instinct. Both are ready so early because WIlliams is taking them to the arcades as coin-ops. Despite demographic differences between the home and amusement center audiences, Nintendo hopes Williams will whet consumers' appetite for the home editions.

Cruis'n USA is a race game that uses the entire country as the track. Drivers start in San Francisco and finish at the White House.

Killer Instinct is a fight game by Rare Ltd. The British developer didn't spare the violence on this one, which indicates that Nintendo is serious about its relaxed content guidelines.

Acclaim's purchase of Voyager Communications, owner of Valiant Comics, has already sparked development of at least one Ultra 64 title. The company will turn Turok, Dinosaur Hunter into an interactive cartridge, probably for simultaneous release with the hardware. Turok will utilize Acclaim's much-discussed motion-capture, digital actor technology.

An Unfolding Reality

Nintendo's CES announcement ends the long dance of the phantoms as journalists vainly tried to pin down the nature of the system and its software. Now there's a machine, a development, and even the beginnings of a software catalog.

Electronic Games will fit additional pieces into the Ultra 64 puzzle as Nintendo puts them on the table.

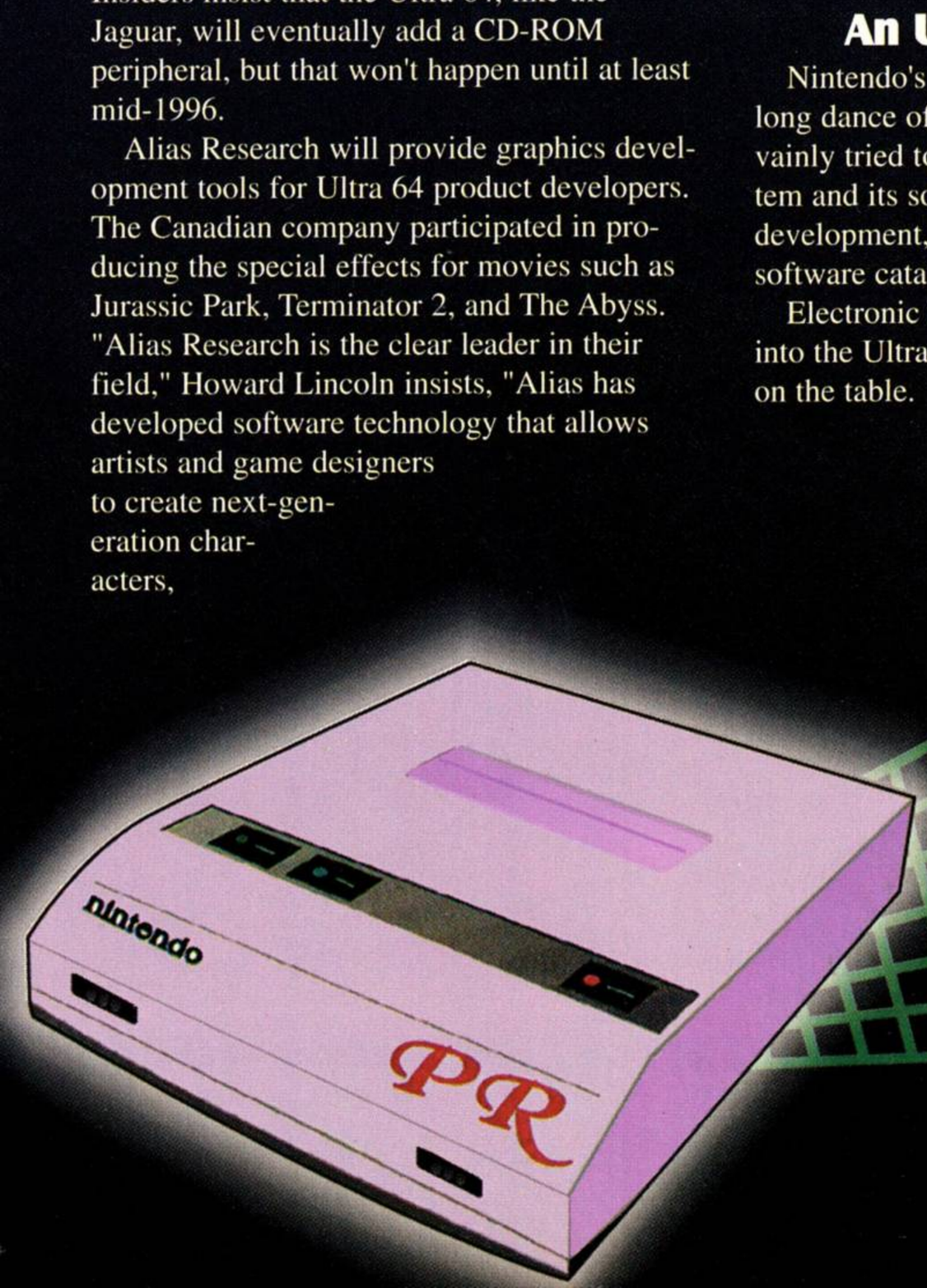
A Trip on the Rambus

The most notable aspect of the Ultra 64 is its breakthrough data transmission speed. Instead of moving information at 30-70 MHz, as in most of today's home computers, the Ultra 64 slams it through the system at 500 MHz! The technology, developed by Rambus, Inc., enables the new console to present high-speed 3-D images.

"It has been our intent from the start to put together an all-star team of technology partners to support Nintendo's Ultra 64," says Howard Lincoln, chairman of Nintendo of America. The addition of Rambus is a significant step because they not only make possible the processing speed we require to give consumers a totally new video game experience, but they deliver that technology at an affordable price."



Could the tremendous quality of Donkey Kong Country be a preview for Project Reality?



Disney's

THE LION KING™

By Laurie Yates

When Westwood's Louis Castle talks about **The Lion King**, his eyes light up like those of a small child who has just discovered something absolutely wonderful.

The Lion King video game, being co-developed by Virgin Interactive Entertainment and Westwood Studios, faces a pair of daunting challenges: to meet the expectations of gamers whose eyes are still glazed by Disney/Virgin/Sega's **Aladdin**; while also meeting the standards set by Disney's finest film in decades.



The Mane Event

Disney's summer blockbuster, *The Lion King* (the studio's first animated feature since 1970's *The Aristocats* to not have a strict literary counterpart) required 600 artists and technicians, four years, and an estimated $40 million to create for the large screen. Virgin and Westwood, designers and producers on **The Lion King** video game project, on the other hand, had considerably fewer resources. But once the key players saw the film's incredible first five minutes in a special November 1993 screening, they were committed to bringing Disney's creation to interactive life.

Patrick Gilmore, the game's producer and Disney representative, set very high standards for the development team assembled under Westwood's Louis Castle: recreate the story's plot and emotional elements; fashion an environment in which the players "become" Simba the lion cub and experience the trials and tribulations of growing up with him; and, finally, set new standards for fast-action and great game play.



Setting high standards is easy; fulfilling them is more of a stretch. According to Castle, "We basically were working on a property that didn't exist. The movie was evolving and changing, even as we were designing. [Plus,] the Disney animators who were working on the film weren't available for the game until March. In fact, some of the art wasn't available until *June*." One advantage: the script was available. "We knew we had to be true to the license; it's deplorable to just slap characters into a story line. When we saw the script, we knew that we could make the game follow the movie."

Disney animators drew over 2,200 frames of artwork and worked closer than ever before with programmers and game designers to develop a game that allows players to relive the key moments of the film. "We [the design team] told Disney what we wanted," Castle reported to **EG**, "and they either approved or disapproved. [In turn], the Disney animators would create [images], and we'd make them work."

It's Not a Movie… It's a Simba-ulation

The Lion King allows gamers to step right into the action of a multi-format action game with 10 levels of play and two bonus levels. Divided into two sections, the game encompasses Simba's life as both a cub and as the teen-age lion prince who must reclaim the Pride Lands and his birthright. Because Simba is a lion, and not anthropomorphic, he acts like a lion. He runs, rolls, jumps, roars, swipes at, and flips his opponents in the manner of a large cat.

Ultimately, the game is a training ground for Simba's final confrontation with Scar, Simba's uncle and the story's villain (as portrayed by Jeremy Irons, whose voice, along with that of other key players, is heard in the game).

The action comes alive through the use of unusual POV shots. On one level of play, Simba races to avoid being trampled in a wildebeest stampede. As in the film, the stampede is viewed head on, with the stampeding characters running directly at the screen. "The point of view was the real challenge," admitted Castle, adding with a smile: "but we have really good programmers. The image of each wildebeest charging over the player's head used 75 frames of animation." The result is flawless, without a hint of "pixilation."

Capturing the Majesty of Africa

Both the movie and the video game attempt to capture the majestic grandeur and mystery of Africa through a series of moods and artistic styles. The film tastefully handles serious subjects, such as the concept of the circle of life, and the power and logic that drive nature. Louis felt the game could address these subjects without trivializing the emotions behind the movie. "We follow the emotional beats of the movie," he explained, "and we use the actual movie animations to move along the story via cut-scenes."

The levels follow the sequence and art direction of the film, with scenes and portrayals that range from childlike to naturalistic. "Level eight, Scar's Lair, is slightly out of sequence," concedes Castle, "But the player needs Simba's adult skills." The story unfolds visually, with backdrop silhouettes within the levels so the characters can interact.



Each level also has its own distinct graphic set, ranging from lush, naturalistic grandeur, to the wildly colorful impressionism of the carefree "Hakuna Matata" period. In order to achieve the high-quality graphic standards desired, a different method was used from either of the **Aladdin** games. "The cels were processed right at Disney, and then they were scanned and [transmitted to us by] modem," Castle told **EG**. "A 27-step process was then used, which gave a closer representation of what we wanted. We then used Westwood and Disney software artists to give everything volume. All of the characters are fully realized."



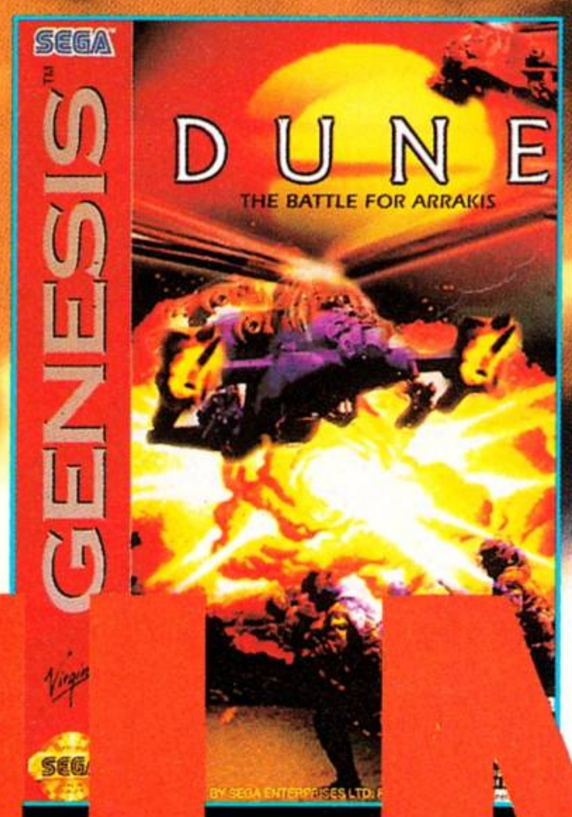
Hakuna Matata!

Even as he excitedly shows the game off, Castle still frets about his vision. "We tried to bring to the game what has never been brought [to a game] before. There will never be another *Lion King*. Even after the intense dissection that we've put it through, it still holds up."

If the Disney marketing campaign continues, therefore, Westwood, Virgin and Disney can adopt Hakuna Matata! as their official motto.

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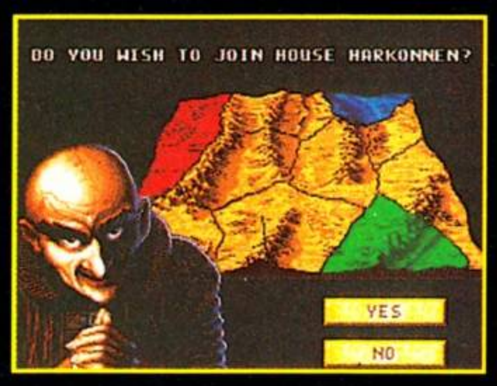
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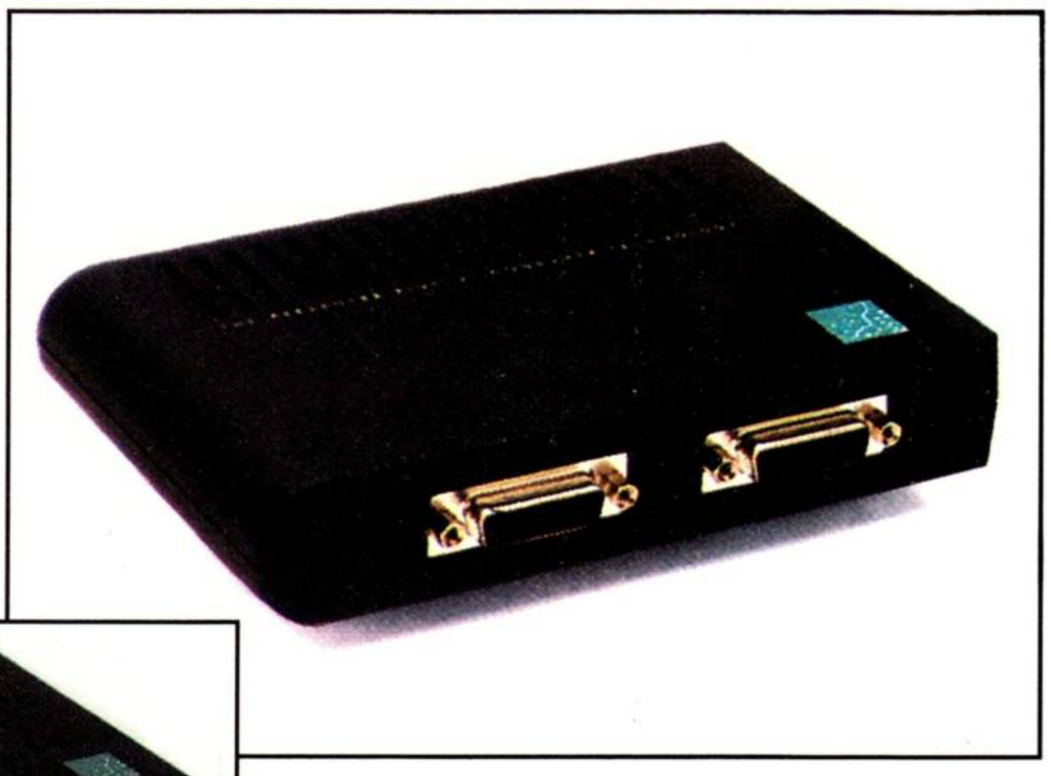
USE YOUR TV AS A COMPUTER MONITOR?

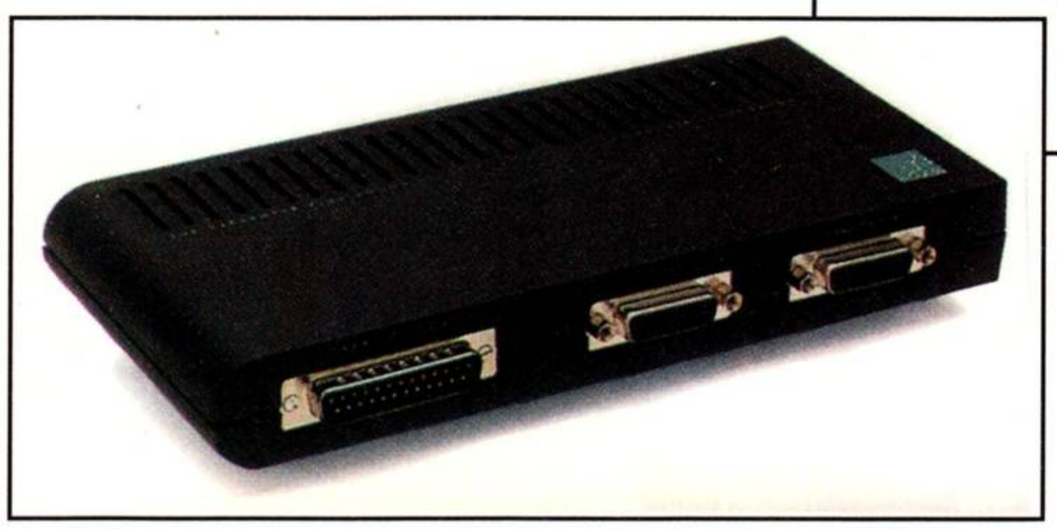
"But when it comes to putting down their car as collateral on a loan to actually purchase a mondo monitor, most have second thoughts."

The Presenter Plus/II
Consumer Technology Northwest, Inc.
TV Gamer Plus
SIIG

Computer users as a group might be generally nice people, but when it comes to hardware, never has there been a more contrary, opinionated, and generally unruly mob. UltraSound owners look down their noses at Sound Blaster fans. Trackball aficionados have problems being in the same room with mouse mavens. And, of course, Mac users talk only to themselves and God.

But one thing everyone can agree on without hesitation is monitors. Walk into a room of hardware diehards bludgeoning each other with their favorite technological Tinker-Toy and just say the word monitor. Suddenly all the commotion will cease and a dozen voices will sing the same chorus: Bigger!





There are few gamers who haven't looked in awe at the 21-inch monitor on some workstation and immediately flashed an instant fantasy about playing **Doom** on such a huge beast, jamming the joystick frantically, their nose mere inches from the screen.

But when it comes to putting down their car as collateral on a loan to actually purchase a mondo monitor, most have second thoughts. How many people can really afford a monitor that costs as much as the rest of their system combined? More importantly, how many have a significant other who is going to let them buy a monitor costing as much as a living room suite?

Televisions, however, are another matter. Comparatively huge screens cost a fraction of a large computer monitor. This fact is not lost on some hardware companies, who look to cash in on the constant fetish for bigger explosions by building VGA to the National Technical Standards Commission (that's TV to North Americans) converters.

Is such a thing possible? Aren't they an entirely different system? Will it work for game play? The answers are yes, yes, and a highly qualified possibly. But the best way to deal with all these questions is to first of all go back and explain, briefly, why television quality is not the standard we should be judging things by.

To create a picture a television moves a beam of electrons across a phosphor screen. When the electrons hit the phosphor, it glows in response. The more powerful the electron beam, the brighter the glow. A television then gets the signal for the picture and draws a line across the screen varying the brightness as it goes. Then it skips to the next line, and so on down the screen until the picture is formed. Actually, that description is somewhat misleading; television only draws every other line, then on the next pass gets the ones it missed. Persistence of vision, however, makes humans see a single picture.

Back in the 1940s it was decided by the NTSC that television was to be composed of signals having 525 scan lines. Today that number remains unchanged. What's that, you say, the resolution of today's televisions is based on 1940s technology? Yes, and further, of those 525 scan lines, only about 425 of them show up on the average TV for various other technical reasons. Computer monitors suffer from no such restrictions. The standards that created them are still evolving, and those standards have only been in existence for a few scant years. Hence the technology is better.

While computers still use scanning electron beams, they use them much more efficiently. Instead of the strength of the electron beam being a continuous analog signal, it is sent in discrete levels. For most VGA systems today, the equivalent of 480 scanning lines are

used and they are ALL redrawn every pass. In addition the rate of scan is much higher, often 72 Hz in better monitors, compared to 60 Hz for television.

Horizontal resolution, on computer monitors, is normally 640 pixels (or, in this case think of them as vertical scanning lines, though they aren't). The best a television can do is just over 400. Some computer monitors feature over 1000 vertical pixels.

What's the point? Computer monitors have much higher quality than a television, but with some hardware and a good attitude toward engineering, computer output can be converted to television. One company doing just that is SIIG, who makes the TV Gamer Plus.

The TV Gamer Plus is a slim, black box that attaches to the VGA output connector of a computer and then to a television's video input. Software is included, in the form of 50k of files, that help manipulate the image the unit creates on the TV. A 5k TSR is required for getting full use of the DOS software, but an install program is included.



The TV Gamer Plus has an S-video out, RCA out jack, computer input, and computer output for using a concurrent computer monitor. A brightness adjustment (which requires a jeweler's screwdriver that is not included) and a horizontal noise reduction switch also adorn this simple device. All connectors and cables required are included with the unit and it is easy to install the hardware.

So how does it work? The answer, unfortunately for those gamers drooling at the idea of playing Wing Commander II on their home theater system, is not very well.

First of all, colors are strongly attenuated by the unit. DOS letters are unbelievably dim, even with the brightness control on the SIIG unit turned all the way up. Color bleed, in color applications, is extreme. VGA can pack discrete colors side by side due to its digital nature. The analog NTSC signal is not up to this kind of task. Red and any shade thereof is a particular offender.

Next are resolution problems. There is just more information in a VGA signal than a TV can handle without a rack full of equipment much more finicky and expensive than the average gamer can afford. The loss of resolution makes reading any but the largest letters impossible. The standard 80-character by 24-line DOS screens are almost illegible, and Windows is equally impossible to make out. In addition the edges of the VGA screen just aren't in the TV view and a special scrolling feature of the TSR must be invoked to see them. This unit will also not handle anything over 640 x 480 resolution.

TV Gamer Plus isn't the only unit **EG** tested in the VGA to NTSC conversion ranks, however. The Presenter Plus/2, by Consumer Technology Northwest, also made its way onto the Test Lab bench. The Presenter Plus/2 does not claim to be for games; instead it's for business presentations, but conversion is conversion.

The Presenter Plus/2 slides out of the box and looks exactly like ... well, the TV Gamer Plus. With the exception of a small additional adjustment for the horizontal control it appears to be the same unit. It requires popping the cases open (where one finds that there is a horizontal control on the TV Gamer Plus also, just no hole in the case for it) and reading the chips to be sure that these are not just a slick repackaging job.

And the results using the Presenter Plus/2, not surprisingly, are identical to using the TV Gamer Plus. Same fuzziness, same color bleed, same 640 by 480 limitation on resolution. The software instillation is a bit less automatic, and a large Windows font is included for readability, but if these units were accidentally returned in the wrong boxes no one would be the wiser.

So is the whole glorious dream of inexpensive, big-screen gaming is a wash, a pipe dream for those with the bucks for giant monitors? Not entirely, for those with the right equipment and a willingness to compromise. The testing thus far has been using standard video output. In this type of output the color signal (chrominance and luminance) is combined with the image signal. However, there is another type of output, called S-Video, being used on some TVs and VCRs that has each signal separated. Both units have an output for those with a TV or VCR supporting this strange pinout. S-Video is not the solution to all the problems of the conversion. No matter what, line averaging and lower resolution are line averaging and lower resolution. But with a good television with sharpness controls and an S-Video plug, these units can provide acceptable resolution for those who are not picky. Games with anything but the largest text are going to be almost illegible, unfortunately. And if bars on the edges of the screen provide critical information, then there is a real possibility of the game not being playable. For some games, however, these units can add to the playing experience, provided one is willing to invest the time to make fine adjustments to the picture. Test Lab surprisingly found good results playing **Archon Ultra** on the units in S-Video mode after a great deal of television tuning and adjustments. **Warlords II**, however, with finer resolution in many points, did not fare up quite as well. A lot of what can be gotten out of these units depends on the game. The point to remember is that these units are not plug and play peripherals.

If one is looking for a cheap pot of gold, these converters are not going to be the end of the rainbow. But for individuals with an excellent TV and a willingness to experiment with the equipment, may find a silver lining in the video cloud.

by Ed Dille and John Withers

THE NET

TOTAL ENTERTAINMENT NETWORK

"So it's pretty. It's high res. It is easy to navigate, but on-line Space Invaders *is still going to be about as interesting as reading the back of a networked cereal box."*

The cyber-hype is incredible this season. To read the popular press, much less *Mondo 2000*, *Wired,* or *Morph's Outpost* (even this column sometimes) one would think there were punks behind every electronic tree. An entire world of super hip, ultra techno street spawned boys and girls are purported to punch deck into the Digiverse on a daily basis, and all one needs to join them are a modem and a very severe haircut.

But upon getting a modem and signing on to an on-line service, John and Jane Public find a wealth of information, yes, great interactive games, yes; convenient downloads and shopping, yes; hyper-cool, no.

So, they say, we will get on the InterNet, that's where the mysterious They say it's all really happening, the cutting edge. And what does our hapless public find there; a free information spirit, yes; a bunch of snotty wizards, yes; a mind-destroying weight of difficult to assimilate data on every topic imaginable, check; some very interesting text games, yes; good people, often; an entire community of ghost hackers so hip they have problems walking properly; no (not unless they spend a lot of time punching tickets and someone decides to show them where the action is).

So is there anyplace for the young, hip person who doesn't want to spend their whole existence learning techno to go and hang out in the electronic ether with others of like mind?

If Daniel Goldman and Janice Linden-Reed follow their vision there soon will be.

These are the two wonderkind behind the Total Entertainment Network (TEN), a cybernetic oasis of butch currently being alpha tested in the San Fran Bay area and scheduled to go national this winter.

"We want to do for the on-line world what MTV and FOX have done for the television world..." says Daniel.

How do you go about making that kind of an environment? Well, the first thing you have to do is pump up the volume on interfaces—640x480 is a good place to start. Then jack in some animations. Both of which are found in the TEN interface. And with the TEN network a user isn't just dealing with an anonymous screen name or a cartoon picture. Subscribers can send in a picture and it will be visible in their profile and used at some points in the system.

But the interface can also be customized to the user's interest. Sports overlays, science fiction overlays, and horror overlays are already definites. But that is just controlling an overlay. What is more important is making sure that a user ends up dealing with the right kind of people, the kind of people they happen to think are cool. To this end, the interface is also going to be customizable as far as content. The subscribers decide what they are interested in, and that becomes the template for their log-ons. They can go other places, but the overlay is their basic menu, unless they specifically decide to go outside of it. It is still being decided if premade menus are going to be issued for specific interest groups from the start, kind of a jump-start on topic specific tunnel vision, to ensure the user will see things that interest them.

Getting around to those interesting things is another cool barrier on many services. Steve Case, president of America Online recently complained in a letter to AOL subscribers that one of the most frustrating things for the staff is users complaining of wanting a service when in actuality it really does already exist; yet no one can locate it.

TEN uses a geographic paradigm to show available



• TEN, WIZ WAR

areas. While still hierarchical, by seeing things as if on a map as opposed to nested file folders, at a glance people can see where they are and build a mental picture of the "landscape" of the service.

So it's pretty. It's high res. It is easy to navigate, but online **Space Invaders** is still going to be about as interesting as reading the back of a networked cereal box. Content is the name of the game. But the problem with content is there can be so much of it. Yeah, there is some cool stuff out there, some obscenely rococo data that kills on contact, but how do you SORT it?

"We are doing a lot of interesting things with InterNet access and managed information," says Janice.

Managed is the key word here.

"We are going through and making the information more accessible and easier to sort through because the InterNet is basically a big confusing mess."

A combination of a friendlier interface and plenty of tools for navigation are inherent in the new system. Also, the information is presorted. This system is tailored for entertainment, not as a general database system, so interesting things can be extracted from the general world and filtered into the system.

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CD-i

Virgin

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• TEN NETWORK

And, of course, there are the games.

Right now, all TEN has on-line are a chess game with fully configurable boards and **Wiz War**, a board game variation of **Wizardry**. They're currently busy developing a number of other offerings, including, according to press releases, an adaptation of "one of the most popular computer games of all time." While Daniel and Janice are mum about the details of this game, it isn't exactly rocket science (not to be confused with Rocket Science, the programming team) to see they both worked for Maxis for most of their professional careers and make a pretty good guess. Look for more details on this on-line conversion in this column as they're made available.

In the future, TEN hopes to implement virtual development tools to allow users to make 3-D worlds in which they can freely interact and script events. Authors can open up their worlds for others to view and interact with, much like a graphical version of the MUD and MUSH environments: some of the more fascinating jewels on the InterNet. If this vision can be realized, the network world will be one important step closer to St. Gibson's vision of cyberspace.

If it can be realized from its conceptual state all the way through its completion, this is an ambitious project, both technically and financially. Janice and Daniel are working almost constantly on the programming details and also looking into original and innovative marketing concepts such as being the entertainment provider for older more established on-line services that seem to be neglecting their gaming responsibilities.

But in the end, cool always comes down to the users, and David sums up the goals of the service well.

"We want to not only provide a total entertainment environment, but also allow our users to guide the direction of the service, both with feedback and with tools to provide content based on their interests and talents," he stated.

This is a very laudable goal and on-line game enthusiasts should hope they can pull it off successfully.

by John Withers

Sonic Dissonance: Searching for music In The Digiverse

Attitude simply requires musical accompaniment. Where would any self-respecting shockwave riders be without their personal soundtrack?

While current technology doesn't allow the direct transmission of music through the bitstream, info about music and groups abounds. Anyone with a modem should be able to keep up on almost any musical topic imaginable, if they just know where to jack to.

For fans of the on-line services, music isn't a neglected topic in the pay-per-connect world. America Online users will find plenty to hold their interest in the Music Forums of the Lifestyles and Interest section of the service. Rocklink and other information is available here, as well as the Grateful Dead Forum, a veritable cornucopia for Deadheads. Tour schedules, ticket ordering info, over 11,000 posts, info on newsgroups, and mailing lists, as well as files from sound bites to info to screen savers related to the Dead can be found here. Keyword: Dead (what else?).

Certainly not to be outdone, Delphi has handily snagged the Rolling Stones for cyber distribution, running contests to win Voodoo Lounge Tour tickets and offering chat areas, trivia contests, polls, forums, and downloads from video clips to information files.

And for those people who think anything without an incomprehensible header is for sissies out with Daddy's modem, there are many InterNet direct options for toning down that musical jones. The best place to start is in the Usenet Newsgroups.

Alt.Fan gives access to groups about many musical notables, including Frank Zappa, Jimmy Buffet, Madonna, and U2. But like most anything on the Net, it would be way too easy for all music-related info to be in one place, so music information will also be found under Alt.Music and Rec.Music.

In one of these groups you can find everything from concert info to wandering ramblings on obscure theories about the group to information about how to subscribe to on-line and off-line newsletters. Of, course, most areas will have the ubiquitous FAQs covering the area and the band in question.

Billy Joel sang ,"You can't get the sound from a story in a magazine" and the same thing is true of the net. But you can get the facts.



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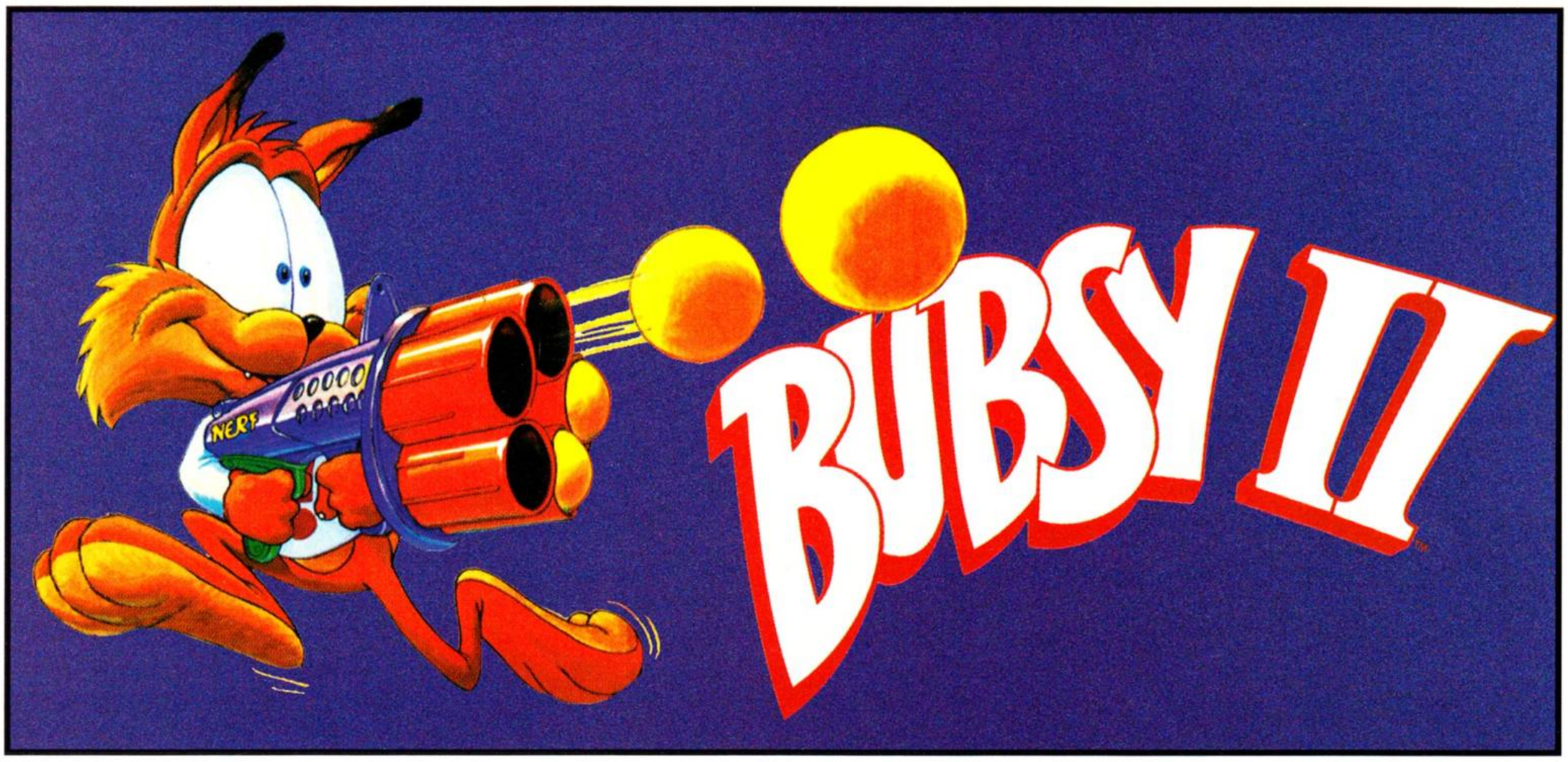
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BUBSY II

Bubsy and the twins go for all the marbles

Electronic gaming's most famous feline is back for an ambitious return engagement on the SNES. Where **Claws Encounters of the Furred Kind** charmed players with fast play and irreverent wit, **Bubsy II** bombards them with options, huge levels, and tons of puns that are so bad they're good. Bubsy is still a charmer, but now he exudes the charm of a cat who knows he's on top.

This time Bubsy is playing for all the marbles. In **Claws Encounters**, Bubsy was on a mission to save all yarn balls from alien invaders. Now, Bubsy is collecting marbles in a multi-level, multi-dimensional museum called the Amazatorium.

There are four ways to play. The Economy Tour takes the player through the first five levels (first floor) of one wing of the Amazatorium. Here, the opposition is weak and easy to bump off. They are more alert and dangerous on the Deluxe Tour, which sends gamers through the second five levels (2nd floor), while the Luxury Tour pits players against the third five levels. Now the barnyard animals gone bad are on full alert, and it takes several blows to disable them. At the end of these tours, Bubsy faces a boss that stands in the way of final victory.



The Grand Tour separates the bobcats from the house pets. It takes the player(s) through all 15 levels, progressively, from the forgiving early scenarios, through two intermediate bosses, to the last, ultimate boss, Oinker P. Hamm.

He's the uber-porker behind all the mayhem and foolery at the Amazatorium. By stealing various parts of history and reassembling them in his Amazatorium, Oinker plans to make a fortune by charging people to see their own history.

The Amazatorium has five separate areas. These are Egypt, Medieval, Music, Space, and Aerial. There are two wings, the East wing and the West wing, where each area is duplicated (with some changes), making for a total of 30 levels. Where does Bubsy come into this? First, let's introduce two new characters; Terri and Terry, the Bubsy twins. Terry and Terri are Bubsy's niece and nephew. They've been turned loose in the Amazatorium and it's up to Bubsy to keep them from destroying the place, *and* protect them from Oinker.

The twins allow for a great variety of play in **Bubsy II**. Beyond the one-player game, where the twins just drive the plot, there are the Two-player Modes. Two-player Friendly allows two players to take turns controlling Bubsy. While one

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER:	Accolade
SYSTEM:	SNES
THEME:	Action
MEGABITS:	16
PLAYERS:	1-2
LEVELS:	15

controls the bobcat, the other takes control of one of the twins and helps out in collecting treasure and bopping baddies.

Two-Player Feisty is the opposite of the cooperative game. Here, it's every bobcat for himself as one gamer controls Bubsy while another plays one of the twins. The twin drops bananas at strategic points to make Bubsy's life miserable.

A well placed banana can send Bubsy careening into walls, fires, or bottomless pits. The first player in a level can throw switches that open pits or activate other hazards, making it that much more difficult for the incoming player.

Bubsy isn't defenseless. This time out, he has a number of items he can use to get out of, and into, trouble. These can be found lying around, and a special screen allows Bubsy to purchase more after he has completed an area. There is a Diving Suit that allows him access to watery areas, a Smart Bomb that turns all on-screen enemies into collectible marbles, and a Ballzooka that shoots nemesis nullifying Nerf balls.

Last is the Portable Hole. It acts as an escape out of any area or screen. Press the button, and Bubsy pulls the hole from his pocket and shakes the wrinkles out of it. Press the button again and he pastes it to the wall, jumps through it, and pulls it closed after him.

The Portable Hole symbolizes the nonlinear nature of the game. There is truly no wrong or right place to begin. Each of the Amazatorium areas is independent, and if one grows tired or frustrated with an area, simply whip out a portable hole and go wherever.



There are multiple routes through the different areas. They are all very large, and full of things to explore. Taking the Grand Tour allows the player access to even larger, expanded levels.

There are some real hidden gems in **Bubsy II.** Three extra-fun minigames are available to players who look in the right places. These are good for a change of pace and skillful gamers can earn points and extra lives.

Frogapult allows the player to launch frogs (who seem to be enjoying it) at targets in a pool. This is a blast and some players will want to play it just by itself. No problem; the designers have thoughtfully provided an option that lets one or two gamers play just the minigames. The other two games are Armadillo drop, a maze game, and Liquid Lunacy, an underwater game.

The graphics are, inevitably, colorful, and very cute. There are many clever animations. The dancing, floating marbles provide eye candy throughout the Amazatorium, and Bubsy has a lot of amusing sight gags.

Bubsy also has a lot more to say in **Bubsy II**, courtesy of digital speech. The quips are mostly kind of funny, but some of them don't wear well. The music is much the same. It's not unpleasant, but it is a *little* bit too cartoonish for extended listening. Younger kids will probably love the music, and the comprehensive Options Screen allows for it to be turned off.

The music typifies what's wrong with **Bubsy II**. It's very funny, but it would be so nice if a few of the jokes aimed higher; if there were any sarcasm or hip, pop culture references. If *Animaniacs* can do it, why can't Bubsy?

Despite this, **Bubsy II** is a special game. It's funny and unique and loaded with long hours of play. Here, a platform game has completely broken away from traditional, linear play. That's significant, and the fact that it's fun to play is significant as well. Fans of the first game should love it. **A-** *(John Wesley Hardin)*

BUBSY II PLAY NOTES

Bubsy II Producer Cyndi Kirkpatrick listened to players of **Bubsy I** to get vital feedback about what was good, bad, or ugly about the first game. "A lot of analysis went into it. We read every review we could get our hands on, we talked to players within the company, and did focus groups with them."

Originally, Oinker was going to be named Oinker P. Spamm, but Cyndi explains that scheduling pressure made it impossible to submit a game to the Hormel company for approval. "Besides," Cyndi says "we didn't want to have to get their approval to make a joke. Now, we've got a really wonderful license." In this game, Bubsy is armed with a Kenner Ballzooka that fires decidedly non-lethal Nerf Balls at the bad guys. "It was interesting making sure that it didn't come across as Bubsy having a real gun." The Nerf projectile launcher will be in stores for Christmas, and **EG** readers can expect a big marketing tie-in with Bubsy and Nerf products. This is the first time that a toy has been debuted in a video game.

Cyndi says the two-player Feisty Mode has more depth of play than is first obvious. "When two players were competing against each other for the best time, that's when we really started hearing whooping and yelling coming from the playtesters."

There are two good pieces of information Cyndi would like players to know: the first thing, "In the Music world, put on a diving suit and jump into an upright horn to find a minigame." The second, "Our focus was to make an entertaining game. They're all supposed to be entertaining, but we wanted to make **Bubsy II** something more."



THE DEATH AND RETURN OF SUPERMAN

Will Superman Survive Doomsday?

Attention Superman fans: the popular comic book story of Superman's apparent death and return is now a high-action video game for the SNES. Following the plot of DC's long-lived hero's final battle and subsequent demise, Sunsoft's **The Death and Return of Superman** is shown as a side-scrolling combat game that makes the player feel able to leap tall buildings and out-power any locomotive.

The player controls the various incarnations of Superman while they battle evil supervillains and their henchmen with pummeling fists, energy blasts, and super-weapons. With the demise of the original Man of Steel, the fate of Metropolis now falls to four mysterious successors.

The introduction gets the player ready for hardcore, super-powered combat as the original Superman takes on an array of generic thugs in his quest to find Doomsday, the alien supermenace that threatens the Earth. Alas, although Doomsday must die, so must Superman. The plot must follow the comic book, and Doomsday invariably delivers the killing blow to the Vaunted M of S, who dies in the arms of a grieving Lois Lane.



With the help of cinematic clips to unfold the story, the new characters are introduced. After the original Superman is defeated the story moves on to the Cyborg (half-machine, half-Superman), the Man of Steel (or just Steel), the Eradicator, and the teen-age, leather-jacketed clone of our favorite Kryptonian, Superboy.

Each character has his own fighting style, different special attack, and super-weapon. Each of the various Supermen must complete a different task before the player moves on to each of the next 10 levels, and the next Super-impersonator. Superman must overcome Doomsday, The Cyborg must break through Cadmus' defenses to throw Doomsday into space, etc., until the entire story is played out.

Each level has its own challenges. Ground combat gives way to fast-paced, high-speed flying sequences, where the player guides Superman, above, around, and through the super-powered grunts and high-tech obstacles.

All the characters have a wide variety of moves and maneuvers to choose from. The moves include anything from heat-vision blasts that momentarily stun opponents, to earthquake punches that eliminate all the bad guys on the screen.

The difficulty level is not hard and with unlimited continues, most players of any age should be able to complete the game. The combat maneuvers are easy to learn and once they become reflex the experienced gamer should progress quickly through the first few levels without even breaking a sweat.

The graphics are true to the comic book depiction of the DC mainstays. The backgrounds are well done and detailed enough to give a feeling of the destruction wrought by the battles between Doomsday and the Justice League.

The music accompanying the action adds a driving quality but lacks the punch that should go with a powerful action experience, which anything having to do with Superman ought to contain.

A major flaw in this game is the relative ease with which Superman, or any of the Supermen, is beaten. It's a bit disappointing when Superman can be run down by a non-super-powered street punk on a motorcycle. Veteran combat gamers might not find this game very challenging, and may become bored with the rounds of eliminating the canon fodder.

Concerned parents, who might normally approve of a game about Superman, a hero whose usual tactic is to solve problems and stop crimes with a minimum of violence, should be aware that this Superman epic is filled with flying energy blasts and super-body slams.

Despite a few flaws, The **Death and Return of Superman** should be a hit with hardcore Superfans, since it remains fairly



true to the whole death and return story line, and the artwork and characters are detailed and exciting to see. On the whole, it captures the Superman feel nicely. Up, up, and away... **B-** *(Christy Johnson)*

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER:	Sunsoft
SYSTEM:	SNES
THEME:	Action
MEGABITS:	16
PLAYERS:	1
LEVELS:	10

BEHIND THE STEEL

Dan MacArthur, designer of **The Death and Return of Superman**, has been playing video games for most of his life. He was excited at the prospect of designing this game because he felt that there had never been a good Superman game. The idea of a combat game might seem a little odd for Superman, who is regarded as an example of restraint to many comic fans, but the combat format was chosen because of the limits of platform games and role-playing adventures. The designer wanted to capture the intensity of the story and the action of the comic. Also, the combat format offered greater replay potential, as no situation would be completely the same as in a platform game. MacArthur explained that **The Death and Return of Superman** was designed with no specific age for a target market. Even young and less experienced players should quickly pick up the skills necessary to finish the game. Unlimited continues also add to the player's ability to finish the game. "I think the word for the game is fun," MacArthur said.

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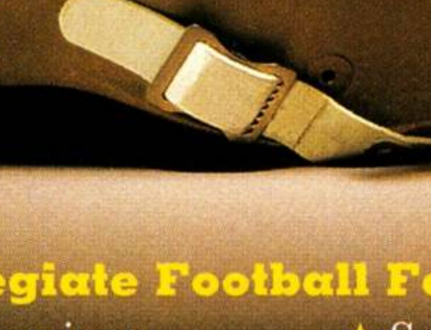
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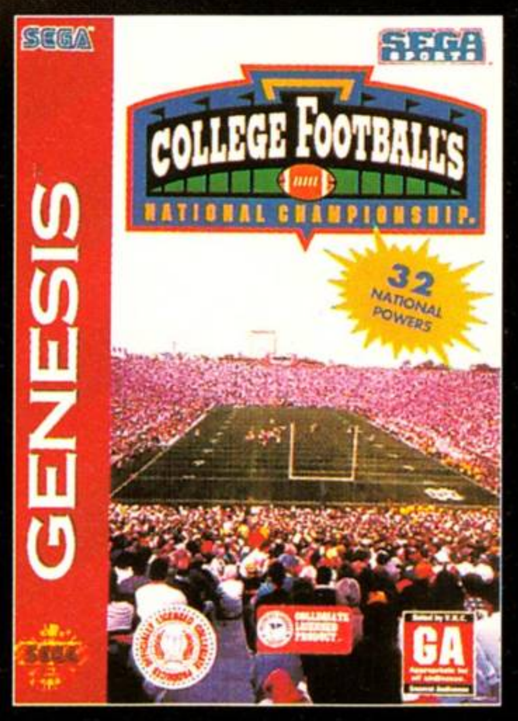
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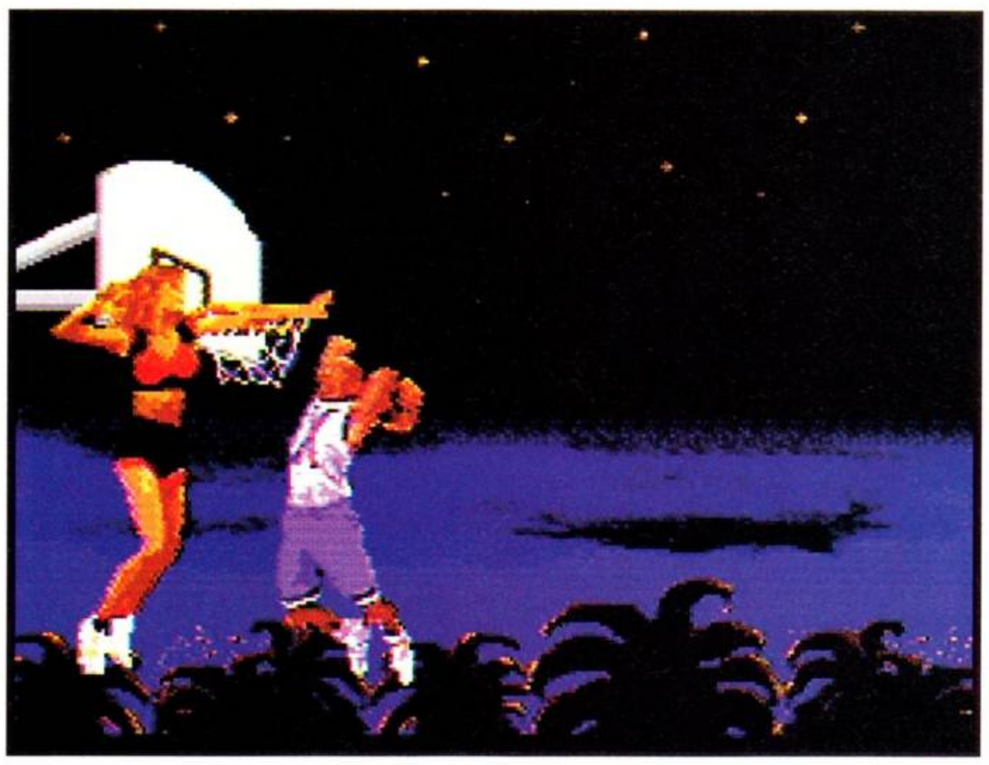
JAMMIT

B-Ball for Rude Boys and Girls

Basketball is getting ruder. First there was **NBA Jam**, which featured NBA stars doing things no one would ever expect to see professional basketballers doing. Then came **Barkley: Shut Up and Jam**. Now Virgin is telling us to simply **Jammit.**

"No stars" is one of the selling points of this down-and-dirty hoops contest. Players control one of three neighborhood champs in a contest played on inner city courts and playgrounds.

From the sampled putdowns to the graffiti on the walls, **Jammit** is about attitude. The hoopsters are free with the insults, always telling the player, "You're not so tough" or other, less polite things.



Chill is the smallest of the competitors at 5'11" and 185 lbs. He's a good defensive player and is also good at making slam dunks. Roxy is a statuesque 6'1", a tough opponent who is fast and can jump higher than any of the other players. Slade stands 6'2", is the fastest player and also has the greatest stamina.

They all eventually face the Judge. He's the ultimate king of the urban courts, the Basket-Boss. After playing through all of the competitions, players must confront the Judge on his home court, playing the game of his choice.

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER:	**Virgin**
SYSTEM:	**SNES**
THEME:	**ACTION/SPORTS**
MEGABITS:	**16**
PLAYERS:	**1 OR 2**
LEVELS:	**N/A**

Jammit has eight ways to play, each made different by exotic rule variations. They are; one on one, Sweat, 2 Hot, Poison, Slams Only, In 2 It, Frenzy, and Cutthroat. All are one-on-one save Cutthroat, which is a three-way free for all. Cutthroat can only be played after the player has survived seven furious rounds in the one-player competition, and then it doesn't exactly feel like a reward.

That's not true. The three-way action is a fun change from the one-on-one games, but it's not easy at all. Cutthroat could be a game all by itself. It's a tough competition where the single player goes up against two computer-controlled opponents. Players get three free throws on a score. Fouls aren't enforced, but scoring 13 or 20 automatically reduces the player's score by 10 points. This introduces some strategy into the slamfest, and makes for longer games as well.

Single gamers must play the games tournament style, in order, one game at a time. Players start at one-on-one and can't play any other game until they take all of their opponent's money. Then it's on to the next game in the lineup, no matter what game the player might want to see. The only way to see the games is to watch them in Demo Mode, or play with another person.

Players have the option to wager on the games. Everyone starts with $300 to gamble with. The minimum bet is $100, and the maximum is whatever amount the opponents have to lose.

In an innovative twist, the betting system works like a difficulty setting. Bet $100 and the computer won't try too hard to win; bet the whole wad and the opponents will be out on the court showing their best, and they'll be nastier too.

Nastiness plays an important role in **Jammit**. A timely elbow to the solar plexus can mean the difference between winning and losing, and aggressively shoving the opponent face first into the asphalt is not only gratifying, it'll make him let go of the ball.

About half the games let this kind of stuff go unpunished, but in the other half, fouls are enforced. Fouling the opponent gives him two free throws. Each player only has five fouls, so it's best to hit the other guy early, and get those free throws out of the way.



Two menus set up games. The Choices Menu lets the player determine one or two players, and to see a computer-run demo game. From the Choices Menu players can access the Options Menu. Here the player can set Trash Talking, to determine just how much digital dissin' goes on. The music is toggled on or off from here and players can also try out the Sound Test, to hear all of the sampled voices, sound effects, and music. The music and the sound effects are clear and loud, unfortunately Nintendo guidelines prevent the use of sampled swear words which would add that final touch of street credibility.

Options also contains the password feature. Passwords encode the players money and last game won.

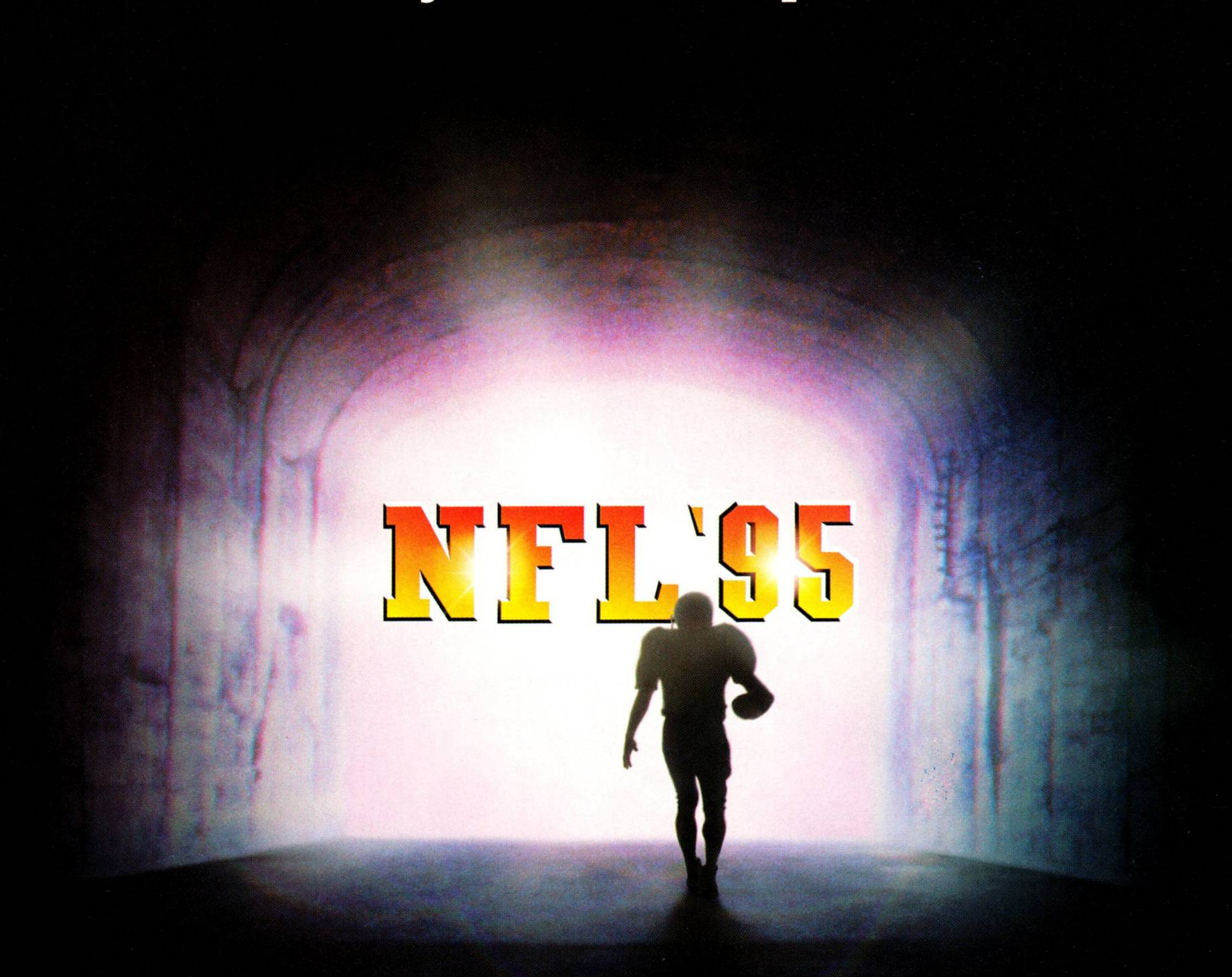
Graphically, **Jammit** is colorful and appealing. The sprites are large and their movement is almost smooth enough to seem rotoscoped. A unique feature is the Slam Cam. Whenever anyone goes up to make a dunk, the usual angled perspective switches to an on-court, close-up view of the basket and the athlete(s) soaring through the air. This isn't just a cut scene. The player controls the character and can move, block, and slam in this fast screen.

That pretty much describes all of **Jammit**: fast and exciting. There are noticeable flaws, like the inflexibility of single-player options. Also, the characters are forever running into the post that holds the basket. The documentation and the game disagree on what the controls do, and the docs themselves are a little sketchy in a couple of areas. These are annoying, if minor, flaws.

Jammit doesn't break the mold of action/sports contests, but it does knock it around and rough it up a little. It's a different game that is challenging, entertaining, and satisfying. **B-** *(John Wesley Hardin)*

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BALLZ!

If you've got the Ballz!, we've got the game

The fighting genre has had a long list of participants, from the normal humans in **Karate Champ** (Data East/NES) to overtly supernatural beings *à la* **Street Fighter II** (Capcom) and **Mortal Kombat** (Acclaim). There have also been non-human contestants, including the animals of **Brutal** (Gametek/ Sega CD) and the blobby animates of **Clayfighter** (Interplay/SNES).

In **Ballz!**, however, a new life form has entered the arena: 16 unique characters, including fighters and bosses, consisting of colorful and differently sized ... balls.



Being billed by Accolade as a "bruising, amusing brawl for all," **Ballz!** brings gamers into an arena environment that allows contenders to move from the left to right of the screen, but also from the front of the arena to the rear. This makes **Ballz!** the first home video game to offer players the 3-D fighting environment of Sega's **Virtua Fighter** coin-op.

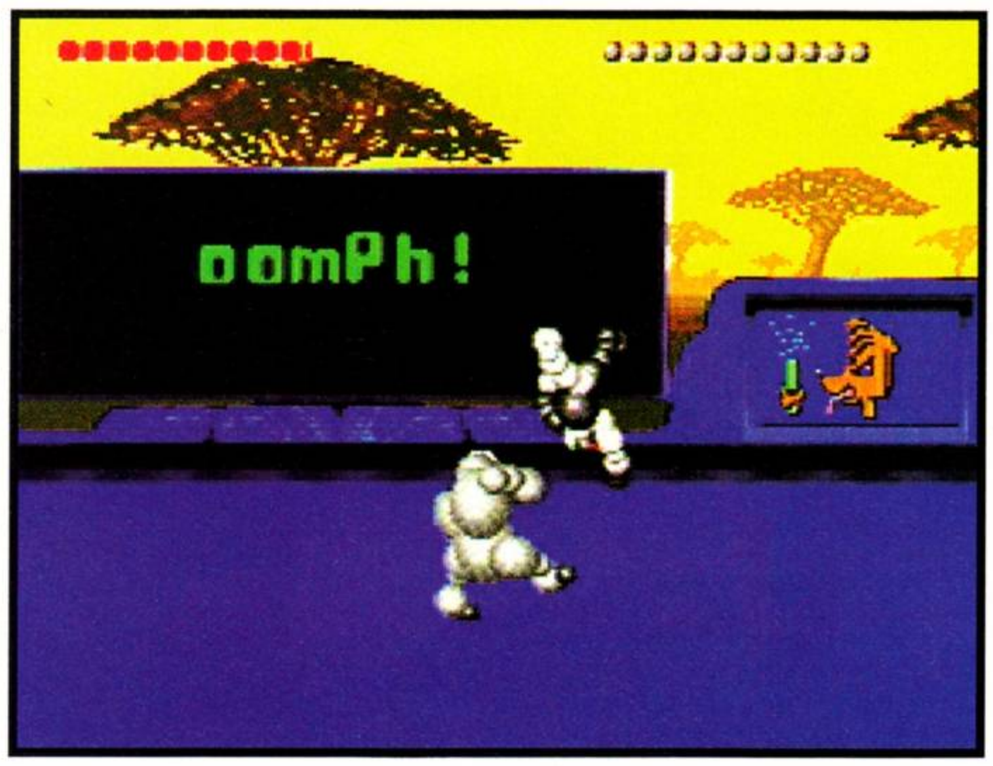
The eight combatants each have 15-20 unique fighting moves. However, since **Ballz!** is a game not only about fighting, but humiliation, the moves span a far wider range of physical possibility and combat logic than similar contests. For example, Kronk the Caveman has a cute maneuver that gamers won't find in any of the traditional martial arts: he spits at opponents, launching a "lobber loogie" that does minimal damage but causes extreme mortification. Divine, a ballerina, grabs and spanks her opponents; and Yoko the gorilla will fart upon an adversary.

The humiliation aspects of **Ballz!** come in two flavors: begging for mercy and rude gestures. When characters beg for mercy, they regain valuable health points, but are also vulnerable to attack. Performing a rude gesture, on the other hand, increases the damage points of the next strike by *either* fighter. That's right; rude gestures can work against the player.

P.F. Magic has hidden many surprises in **Ballz!**. With over 10 secret special moves per character, players have a lot of button combinations with which to experiment. Also, each boss has unique defenses, animations, and soft spots. Each fighter provides a fascinating and unique payoff at the end of the game: comments from the character's original designer, credits, and a chance to play as a boss.

The use of the scoreboard with the Jester's cynical and sarcastic comments also help extend the game's play value. The smaller television screens on either side of the scoreboard provide positive feedback on moves performed and even suggestions on moves to try.

Characters can morph into other characters at any time. This is part of the strategy, since each of the eight fighters has a unique set of moves. There are also seven passwords, which can be earned to allow gamers to start at higher levels, play as bosses, or change the speed to "Hyper."



Ballz! is one of the first games that is compatible with the AT&T Edge-16. The Edge-16 is a peripheral which allows point-to-point communication and custom game enhancement. **Ballz!** players will be able to update statistics, create new characters, and even create new stages.

The animation of the character sprites is superb. Animating creatures composed of spheres requires special attention to keep the physics realistic. P.F. Magic utilized over 1000 separate animations, equaling approximately 7000 frames of footage.

The background settings, especially in Yoko's arena, are appealing and well-rendered. However, determining the scrolling depth is difficult and can be frustrating when planning attacks.

The music soundtrack laid down by Mark Miller and Jason Scher of Neuromantic Productions captures the flavor of the challenge and provides a nice backdrop that does not take over the action. At times, though, the soundtrack is overwhelmed by the sound effects. Unfortunately, there doesn't seem to be consistent sound effects for each action, and this lack of definitive audio feedback decreases game enjoyment.

The game play however, is where the problems surface. The control is sluggish, to the point where some of the characters seem to be fighting simply in order to move, therefore adversely affecting a character's response time. It's also too easy to trap an opponent in a move that does not offer a chance to escape.

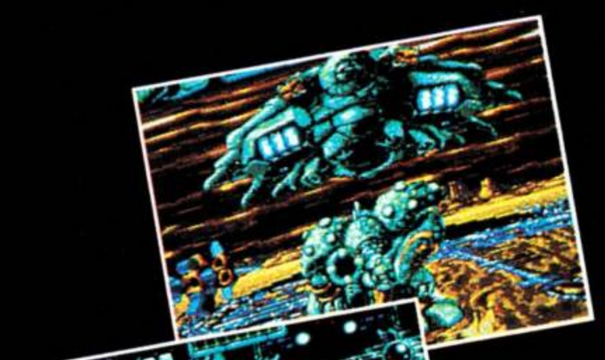
The biggest challenge is, of course, defeating the bosses. While each boss has a weak spot, that Achilles' heel is not intuitively guessable. For example, the ostrich can only be defeated by performing a sequence of eight rude gestures in a row (and, since the ostrich spends extended periods with its head in the ground, this does not exactly require world-class arcade skill), then simply walk up and hit it. The ostrich will then shatter into its component balls, and the gamer will have won. But by what logic would a gamer arrive at the conclusion that they should sass the boss twice, five, or eight times? This becomes pointless and frustrating trial-and-error quickly. While the game is about humiliation, this puzzle component seems arbitrary and non-intuitive.

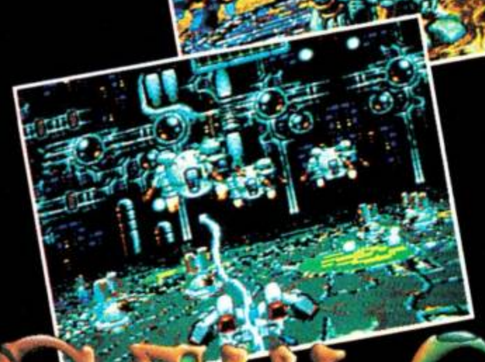
Ballz! has many features that set it apart from other fighting games, and the potential exists for this to evolve into a great game. But its flaw may be a fatal one, or at least do the game as much damage as five heavy farts. **EG+** (*Laurie Yates*)

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER:	Accolade
SYSTEM:	Genesis
THEME:	Fighting
MEGABITS:	16
PLAYERS:	1-2
LEVELS:	N/A

2 COSMIC GIANTS TO HAVE IN YOUR SIGHTS





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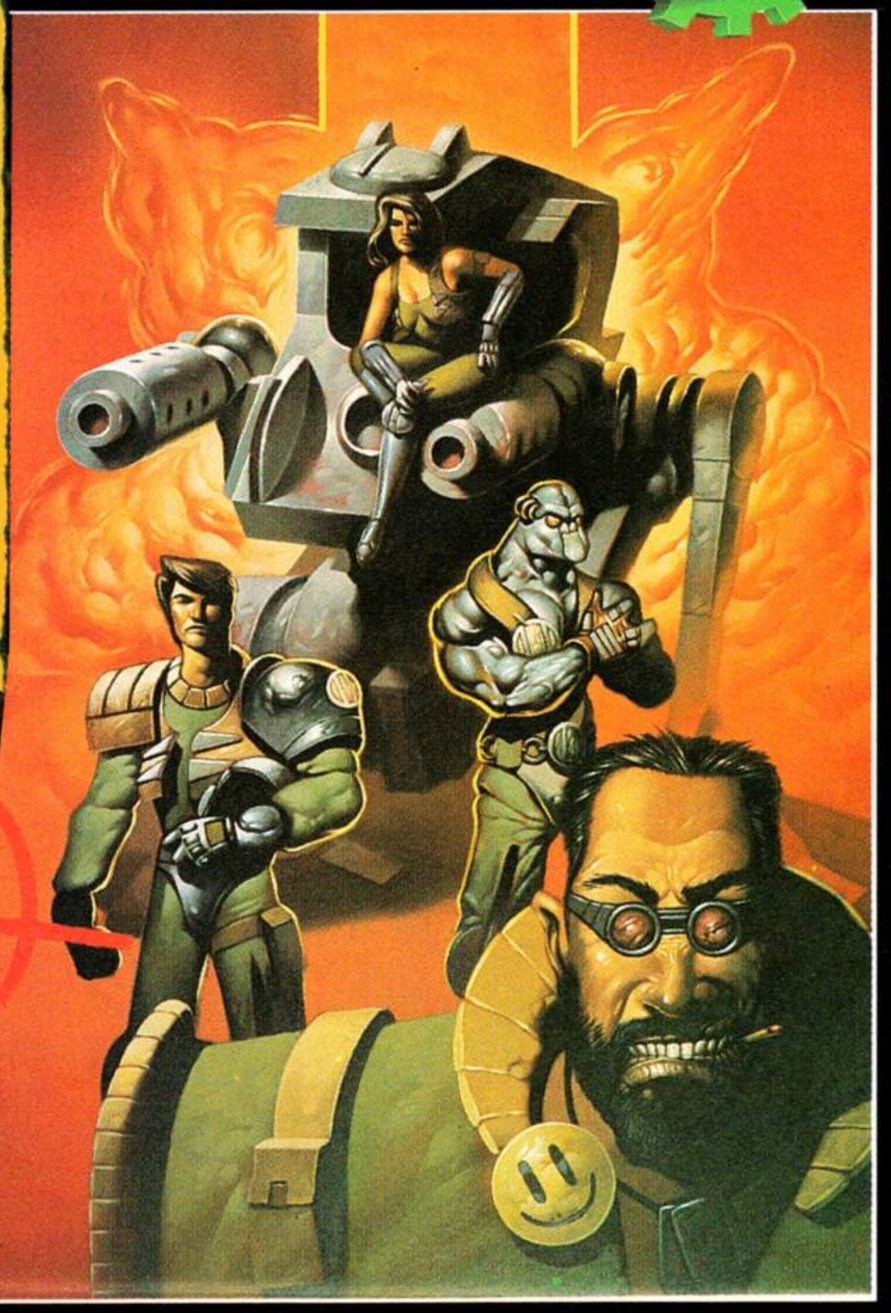
" The use of three different vehicles, a good behind-the-spacecraft perspective, 3-D graphics and dramatic music intensify the action."
GamePro, CES Showstoppers, April 94

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Game Fan, April 94





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" The first Core game is an incredible mech-simulation game entitled Battlecorps "
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NYR Not Yet Rated

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BATTLETECH

Pilot a giant fighting machine into battle for the Clans

There's more to **BattleTech** than shooting everything in sight but, meanwhile, that's the primary occupation of the player in charge of the "Madcat" Heavy Omnimech, a seven-story-tall battle robot (or BattleMech). The action takes place in FASA Corporation's copyrighted BattleTech universe, events in which are recounted in a board game and in a series of paperback novels and comics (Malibu Software's logo appears among the opening credits).

It is the 31st century, and interstellar war has been under way for two and a half centuries between the fragile confederation of the Clans and the armies of the Inner Sphere. The player takes on the role of a member of the Clan Wolf, placed in charge of the Madcat to accomplish a series of five missions. Passwords allow returning to the beginning of the last four missions.



The inexperienced player will discover that, despite a seemingly foolproof method of guiding the Madcat (pushing the direction pad in appropriate directions) and utilizing its weapons (pressing A, B, or C), it will take a few p-c lives' worth of practice to get it right and get on with the missions. Optional control techniques (which are simple, but it's important to learn how to control them) allow the weapons to be fired in any direction while the Madcat is still walking. In the Two-player Option, both will operate the mighty machine—one guiding it, the other handling the weaponry. Sharing the load greatly simplifies the task: an example of the virtue of cooperation, pretty rare in video gaming.

The Madcat carries three varieties of assault weapons, Heavy Ordnance, Main Gun and Tactical, each of which has three options to select from prior to embarking on a mission. Players must learn through trial and error which ones to choose for each operation (this might well differ from player to player). The selection is made on a three by three grid; as the cursor moves across the grid a digitized voice identifies each weapon by name, and a printed description appears on the screen along with the weapon's placement on an animated wireframe chart of the Madcat.

A couple of years ago the game's graphics would have been considered phenomenal; now they are merely very good. The 3/4 angled overhead viewpoint allows the player to see a substantial area surrounding the machine, though not quite as far as the player would like. There are enough different background tiles for each of the five worlds that the areas appear randomly formed, whether it be grass, desert, or snow-covered, and only occasionally (in forestland, the sides of walls) does it carry that giveaway repetitive patterning seen in most video games. Subtle animation, as with waving fronds in the vegetation, enhances the sense of place.

The many opposing battle units, whether vehicles and 'Mechs or buildings and ground-based offensive units, are well modeled; shadows aid the 3-D effect. Only the mysteriously round shadow that accompanies the angular Madcat itself strikes an odd note, once noticed.

The articulation of the walking Madcat is effective, if the splayed feet don't always exactly match the passage of the ground scrolling beneath it. This doesn't complicate the action, except maybe on Ridderkerk, the iceworld, where the surface traction is frequently less than ideal for the movement of the machine.

A talking-head briefing outlines the several objectives of each mission, with recommendations as to the sequence in which they are to be taken. Ignore these instructions at peril! They are logically set up; for example, in the first mission, on Alshain, it's necessary to knock out a radar installation first to prevent ground weapons from automatically locking on to the Madcat.

In addition to status indicators on screen (including a set for enemy 'Mechs when engaged) there are information screens available in Pause Mode. The A button brings up the radarscope that identifies the mission objectives and other enemy units in the vicinity, as well as locating ammunition and coolant caches. The latter are vital since the Madcat (as with all BattleMechs) tends to overheat under battle conditions. This is especially a problem on lava-covered Satalice.



The B button conjures a 'Mech Status Monitor Screen, which advises the unit's success in battle, pilot's rank, lives remaining, damage level, enemies destroyed, and marksmanship level. Finally, C provides a mission briefing recap screen.

The computer, a digitized woman's voice, warns the player of overheating or overcharging (with certain weapons) and when an enemy 'Mech approaches. These are among the 100 sound effects including 20 such separate words or phrases, plus a couple of renditions of the word "BattleTech" in a male voice. The latter also are heard a few times during the main title track. There are 13 different music tracks, most of which are the standard driving, twanging, action soundtrack themes, but they blend in with each other almost seamlessly yet carry varying levels of suspense.

Action, strategy, and tactics all blend together to make this video game a cut above the average. **B+** *(Ross Chamberlain)*

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER:	**Extreme Entertainment**
SYSTEM:	**Genesis**
THEME:	**Strategy Shooter**
MEGABITS:	**16**
PLAYERS:	**1-2**
LEVELS:	**5**

AEROBIZ SUPERSONIC

Run an airline, see the world

Aerobiz Supersonic is an expansion of Koei's **Aerobiz: Global Network**, which **EG** reviewed in May, 1993. Part of Koei's Executive Series of games, the idea is to build an international airline, and not only make it profitable, but develop it into dominance in two decades. A total of four airlines will compete, so up to four players may participate—the computer fills in for places not taken. A Demo Mode allows the computer to operate all four airlines, but many important behind-the-scenes activities, like board meetings and the process of plane selection, are not demonstrated.



The original version offered two scenarios set in two 32-year time frames: 1963-1995 or 1983-2015. **Aerobiz Supersonic** provides four 20-year scenarios: 1955-1975, 1970-1990, 1985-2005, and 2000-2020. Each turn is a fiscal quarter (three months). The player must achieve success within the 20-year period time frame, or 80 turns. One may quit sooner; the option is then offered to see how it might play out from there—i.e., for the computer to take over, in Demo Mode. Two saved games can be stored.

There are 89 cities worldwide, compared to just 22 in the earlier game, and the world is divided into seven regions: North America (U.S. and Canada), South America (includes Mexico, Cuba, and Jamaica), Europe, Africa, the Middle East (includes India), Southeast Asia (includes the Philippines and Guam), and Oceania (Australia, Tahiti, the Fijis, etc.).

As in the original game, there are five difficulty levels, ranging from beginner to expert, but in a slightly off-center attempt to fit the airline theme they're now called Glider, Prop, Turbo, Jumbo Jet, and Supersonic. The player chooses a base region and city. Two players may select cities within the same region, but cannot be based in the same city. Only cities specified as major can support hub facilities, and of course the airline's base will be the hub for that region. All flight routes for a region go through the hub.

Each airline has a default color code, and each major city has a default airline name, like Air Tex for Dallas, Dixie for Atlanta, or Windy for Chicago, but these may be altered at the start of the game.

The player begins as CEO of an airline which already has capital and a few planes, but no routes. To establish a route, the CEO sends one of four managers to a city to open up slots at their airport. The negotiations may take from six to 12 months (two to four turns) depending on relationships with the region. The CEO is responsible for selecting planes, establishing routes, picking hub locations in other regions, purchasing support businesses, and even starting promotional activities. Some of these jobs are handled by the managers, but it is the CEO who initially sends them off to do it.

The CEO also may call a board meeting at will, at which the four managers and the vice president offer their advice. (All attend, by the way, regardless if they're presumably conducting negotiations on the other side of the world. Their travel expenses don't seem to affect the budget.)

As the airline expands, the advice can get lengthy, but no interior record is kept, so it's wise to take notes. Not all of it has to be followed; indeed, unforeseen events can make some recommendations poor in retrospect. But that's business. Ultimately, the burden falls on the CEO's shoulders.

The graphics are much improved over the first edition. The managers' faces are clear, with simple animation as they speak (in text boxes; there's no digitized speech). Non-animated vignettes, illustrating various world events that may affect business, are nicely drawn. (War is announced with red flashes on the screen.) Images of the planes are different for each major model (there are over 50 models all together), and there are a couple of animations of newly purchased planes being towed into a hangar and planes taking off when a new route has been established,



that, while repetitive, adds to the sense of being part of a working process. They may be toggled off.

There is a nicely modeled world map and regional close-up maps which show route lines (and moving planes if the animation's on) between the connected cities. Lines are red when a route is losing money. Each region has its own musical theme as well, with an Oriental flavor for Southeast Asia, vaguely Arabian for the Middle East, etc. Scenario themes play when the world map is on-screen. All are listenable but can get over-familiar.

On the minus side, some aspects of the game can make for impatience. Opening Title Screens cannot be skipped, including three pages of credits to the plane manufacturers (real model names and specs are used). Once in the game, messages print out letter by letter. This can be set faster or slower, or sped up with the X button, but they cannot be responded to until the message is completely on-screen.

Aerobiz Supersonic is only slightly more complex than its predecessor, but no more than a good game of **Monopoly** or **Risk**. It's ideal for those individuals who enjoy good competitive strategy, and it could be a great geography lesson as well.

B *(Ross Chamberlain)*

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER:	**Koei**
SYSTEM:	**SNES**
THEME:	**Business Simulation**
MEGABITS:	**8**
PLAYERS:	**1-4**
LEVELS:	**5**

MAXIMUM CARNAGE

The good, the bad, and the ugly—the battle rages on

Clothes may make the man, but when Spider-Man donned a new costume that turned out to be an alien symbiote, he made several, spawning an entire generation of creepy, arachnid-based heroes and villains. All three primary players in the Spider-Man symbiote menage turned up in Marvel Comics' 14-part series, *Maximum Carnage* on which Acclaim's **Spider-Man & Venom: Maximum Carnage** is based.

Here's the skinny: remember that spooky, black costume that Spidey wore a couple of years back? It was actually a symbiotic alien life form which began to transform him into a raging, violent psychotic, so he spurned the sentient spandex for his old outfit. Ah, but a symbiotic



costume eventually finds someone else to wear it; in this case, Eddie Brock, a raging, violent psychotic who feels total compatibility with the supersuit from space. Eddie became Venom, an urban antihero, and Spider-Man's own personal nightmare.

Carnage, the unfriendly neighborhood supervillain, began his career as convicted serial killer Cletus Kasidy. His proximity to Brock (they shared a prison cell) gave him access to a small residue of alien symbiote, which transformed Kasidy into Carnage, a satanic-looking supervillain with powers even greater than Spider-Man and Venom.

Both the comic book series and the game deal with Carnage's escape from Ravencroft—a fortress-like asylum designed to imprison super-powered lunatics—and his subsequent partnership with Shriek, a former street punk who can now shred a man's sanity with her psychic scream; the Doppelganger, an eight-limbed duplicate of Spidey left over from the Infinity Wars; Demogoblin, who sold his soul to become a supernatural mercenary; and Carrion, a living dead man whose touch can kill.

With this many villains (as well as the 11 super good guys, 10 of whom make it into the game), the comic book was essentially a protracted series of fight scenes framed by an introduction and an epilogue. The high action content proves especially suited to video game translation, and the SNES edition proves to be up to the challenge.

This angled side-scroller makes good use of lateral space, while beautifully capturing the sense of being Spidey or Venom—the most important mission of any superhero-based game. Not only is **Maximum Carnage** the first game to successfully simulate web-slinging and other arachnid-type powers, it also offers a satisfying array of combat maneuvers without forcing the gamer to spend all summer at the **Street Fighter II** school of infinite controller options.

The first five levels can be played only as Spider-Man, but once the story line gets going—supported by a liberal use of illustrations and panels from the comics during cut scenes—the plot branches depending upon gamers' choices of surrogate. If they select Venom, the action shifts to Eddie Brock's home base of San Francisco, where he learns of Carnage's escape and heads for New York. Throughout the remaining levels, the player can assume either role at preset access points, but in order to experience each and every level, several replays will be required.

While exploring the two dozen-plus levels, both Spidey and Venom collect icons representing the other available superheroes which can be invoked as needed. The superhero icons serve as an intelligent update of the smartbomb: Cloak transports the player-character to the end of the level, while Dagger fires spearheads of lethal light at the bad guys. Morbius, the vampire spawned by science, swoops in and paralyzes any on-screen enemies; Black Cat cartwheels across the playfield, delivering blows to anyone in her path; Deathlok uses a super weapon; Firestar creates a flurry of microwave mayhem; Iron Fist restores an injured p-c to vigor; and, of course, Captain America slings his mighty shield.

Software Creations' character sprites in **Maximum Carnage** are cleanly animated and recreate the visual energy of the characters (when Venom throws a punch, his fist is exaggerated as it swings toward the screen, in the style of the late Jack "King" Kirby); the background graphics generally recreate the comic book layouts.

The music by Green Jellÿ really captures the tempo and attitude of **Maximum Carnage** with a spicy series of grooves. The music is pulsating, invigorating and memorable, with special themes keyed to the appearance of bosses or superheroes. The sound effects are mostly pedestrian.



Software Creations and Acclaim's producer/designers put a large amount of effort into this game. The transitions from non-interactive cut scenes to the game levels are nicely delivered. And, while hardcore gamers may look askance at the level count (several of the longer cut scenes are awarded level status), there *are* half dozen or so secret rooms scattered among the levels (hint: even when you think it's over, it isn't).

The only serious complaint with **Maximum Carnage** is its lack of pass codes. With 26 levels of extremely difficult play, it is unrealistic to expect a few continues to make up for the absence of the all important game saves.

Comic book purists may be dismayed that some aspects of the maxiseries did not make the game; the gruesome scene of Carnage digging up his mother's grave, for instance, was edited out. However, the omissions do not detract from the overall game play. **Spider-Man & Venom: Maximum Carnage** is an addicting outing into the world of superheroes.

A- *(Laurie Yates)*

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER:	Acclaim/LJN
SYSTEM:	SNES
THEME:	Fighting
MEGABITS:	16
PLAYERS:	1
LEVELS:	26

SUPER ADVENTURE ISLAND II

Master Higgins returns for a lackluster adventure



Explorer extraordinaire Master Higgins returns to action in Hudson Soft's latest in its long-running series of side-scrolling adventures, **Super Adventure Island II**.



This action-based SNES quest is heir to approximately half a dozen earlier Adventure Island/Master Higgins titles. But unlike **Mega Man,** and others, which have created an ongoing mythos, where each installment is built on the earlier escapades, this episode of the Hudson Soft saga falls strangely flat.

In a convoluted plot twist, Higgins's much sought-after contentment with his new love, Tina, has been tragically interrupted. The luxury raft on which they were floating through the tropical waters was capsized by a hurricane. Higgins wakes on a deserted island, with a case of amnesia. He sets out to regain his sense of self, his past, and, eventually, Tina.

Tina, it seems, has also survived the storm, beached on Waku-Waku Island where (surprise, surprise) she also had no memory of her past, including her relationship with Higgins. She was rescued and tended to by the king, who fell in love with her (natch). On the king and Tina's wedding day, a still clueless Master Higgins arrives on Waku-Waku Island. He hears a scream, which triggers a memory flash. When Higgins enters the castle to find the source of the scream, he learns that the royal bride-to-be was captured. The king, of course, charges Higgins with finding and returning their mutual (if confused) love object to the castle. Higgins agrees, and the adventure begins.

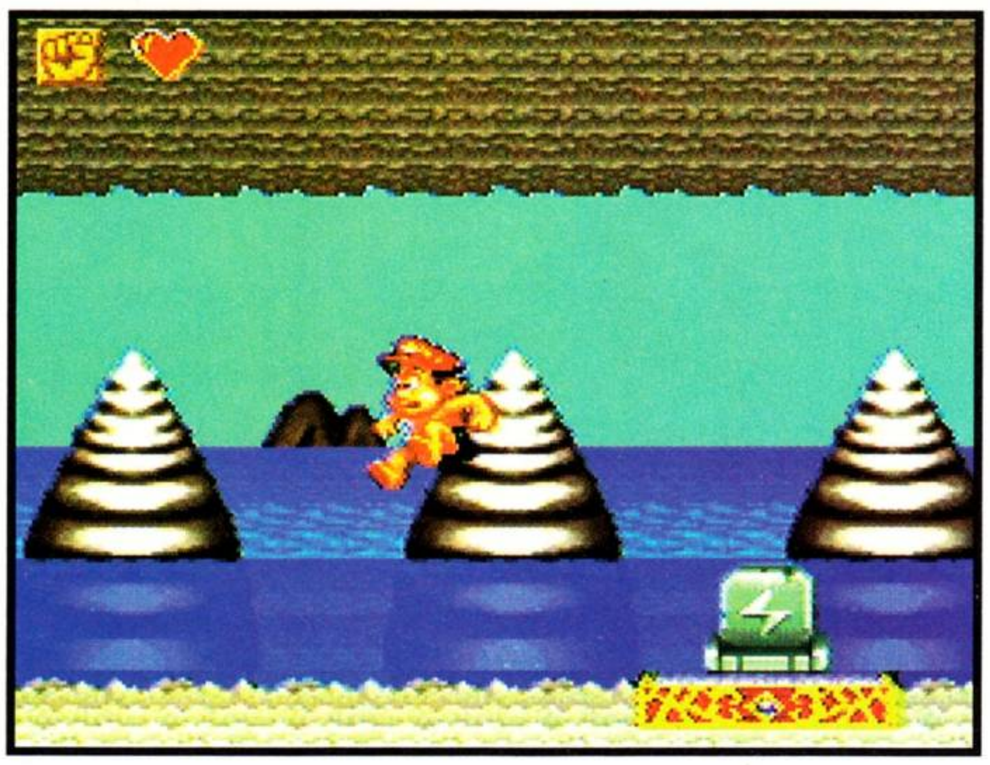
While the majority of play is conducted in a traditional platform environment, several additional POV screens are employed to tell the story. The World Map allows gamers to guide Higgins' journey; while the scrolling, main display shows the action that Higgins is performing (fighting meanies, exploring islands, reading legends, etc.). The RPG-style menu screens keep track of weapons and armor, standard and magic equipment, plus game saves. These screens provide individual island maps as well as a "you-are-here" world map, in addition to information on (frequently bizarre) skills which Higgins must learn, such as shoving (it was a *very* bad case of amnesia).

Of course, buying an Adventure Island game for its plot development is akin to viewing Shakespeare for the fight scenes. No, the real problem is the game play. For starters, unless the player is loading a saved game, there is no way to avoid the lengthy introductory sequence between Higgins and the king. Even at a rapid scroll, the text interlude is a time-wasting drag, especially after the first few plays. Invoking a saved game, however, merely allows the gamer to keep the weapons and coins they have earned to that point; despite the cart's battery back-up, gamers cannot save the p-c's progress after a challenging scene, then return to that spot. Instead, the player is returned to the level milestone, to duplicate previously accomplished tasks.

There's no shortage of enemies on the game's various levels, and plenty of power-ups, but the game's learning curve is out of whack, with very difficult scenarios placed up-front in the adventure, instead of being further into the game.

Even with the niceties of textured graphics, the visuals are only a slight improvement on the look of 8-Bit technology. The sprites are bigger than they were on the NES, and the individual animations, like those of the tree boss, are clever and whimsical. But there are too few animations overall, and many make no sense. For example, why are birds flying underground? And penguins don't fly, so how can they attack Higgins's raft at sea?

The background musical tracks are some of the best TV sitcom-style pop music since the demise of *I Dream of Jeannie*. The tempo is a lighthearted, quasi-calypso melody spiced with occasional whistle blows. The sound effects, however, are disappointingly bland.



Perhaps bland is the best way to describe this game. There is little to do, and the action there is repetitive and boring. The non-intuitive feel to the interface does not help players' confidence.

Super Adventure Island II is a trip that even hardcore **Adventure Island** fans may want to skip. **C-** (*Laurie Yates*)

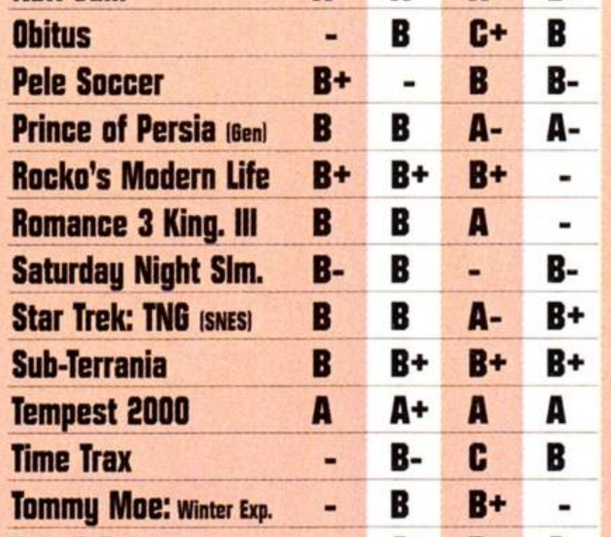
TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: Hudson Soft
SYSTEM: SNES
THEME: Action Adventure
MEGABITS: 12
PLAYERS: 1
LEVELS: 6

THE FINAL GRADE

The following chart details the thoughts and opinions of several different *EG* editors on some of the latest software. In the future we will feature guest reviewers from around the country.

	Arnie Katz Editor	Marc Camron Senior Editor	Bill Kunkel Executive Editor	Russ Ceccola Associate Editor
Astrix & The Great Rescue	B+	A-	B	B
Blackthorn	B+	B	B+	B
Breath of Fire	A-	A+	A-	A+
Bubba 'N' Stix	B-	B	B	B
Castlevania Bloodlines	-	A	B+	A
Champ. W.C. Soccer	A	-	B-	B-
Chester Cheetah	C	C-	D	-
Daffy Duck: Marvin Miss.	B	B+	B+	B
Disney's Aladdin (Gen)	A	A+	A	A
Double Dragon V	C+	C	C+	B+
Eye of the Beholder	B	B	B+	-
Fido Dido	-	B-	-	B
Flashback	A-	B+	A	B-
Flintstones: Treasure...	B	B	B	B-
Goofy's History Tour	B-	A-	B	-
HardBall '94	B	B-	B-	B+
The Jetsons	C+	C	B+	C+
Jungle Book	A-	A	A	B+
Lord of the Rings	A	A-	B	B
Mario Andretti Racing	B+	B	B+	-
Megaman Soccer	A-	A-	B-	B
Mega Turrican	B-	C	A	-
MLBPA Baseball '94	B-	B	B-	-
Mutant League Hockey	C	C+	D	B+
NBA Jam	A	A	A+	B+
Obitus	-	B	C+	B
Pele Soccer	B+	-	B	B-
Prince of Persia (Gen)	B	B	A-	A-
Rocko's Modern Life	B+	B+	B+	-
Romance 3 King. III	B	B	A	-
Saturday Night Slm.	B-	B	-	B-
Star Trek: TNG (SNES)	B	B	A-	B+
Sub-Terrania	B	B+	B+	B+
Tempest 2000	A	A+	A	A
Time Trax	-	B-	C	B
Tommy Moe: Winter Exp.	-	B	B+	-
Turn & Burn: No Fly Zone	-	C+	B-	A-
Wizardry V	B+	B+	B+	B
World Heroes	C-	C-	D	-



Star Trek: the Next Generation features actual cast members for role-playing realism.

Art of Fighting *(By **Sega** for Genesis)* Hardcore fans are bound to be disappointed by this feeble translation of the popular coin-op hit. The elimination of the scaling and rotation features and slower character movements transform this excellent arcade fighter into another run of the mill, wimpy home wanna-be.



While the Vs Mode allows gamers to choose from among several fighters, including two bosses from the arcade game, the Story Mode restricts the player to only two fighters.

Save your quarters. **C** *(Laurie Yates)*

Fighter's History *(By **Data East** for SNES)* With Capcom's injunction out of the way (stay tuned for the trial this fall), fighting game fans can finally see the excellent home translation of Data East's strangely controversial coin-op.

The usual collection of semi-realistic martial artists are tested in order to find the greatest fighter of all time. Given its seven difficulty settings, this fighting cart is actually playable by everyone. The graphics do a wonderful job of showing off the SNES' color palette to perfection, and the music and sound effects are well done. The moves are also more intuitive than those offered on most fighting games, allowing players to concentrate more on the action than on the controller.

Players only have nine fighters and two bosses, but the Set-up screen allows them to extensively customize the game (select locales, fighters, etc.).

It may not be the best fighting game in the field, but **Fighter's History** offers perks that could open up the genre to fans previously thwarted by the high skill levels required to join in the fun and action. **B** *(Laurie Yates)*

The Great Circus Mystery Starring Mickey & Minnie *(By **Capcom** for SNES)* Players choose between the two title characters in this side-scrolling platform romp, in which Mickey and Minnie right the wrongs they encounter on their quest through the Haunted Circus, the Frozen Plains, and other interesting locales.

The background graphics and character animations are adorable and meet Disney's usual high-quality standards. Power-ups include coins, which can be used at the General Store, and a series of special suits (cowboy duds, a vacuum suit, and so on). Capcom's newest mouse outing is great family entertainment, with three difficulty settings, so everyone can play. **B** *(Laurie Yates)*

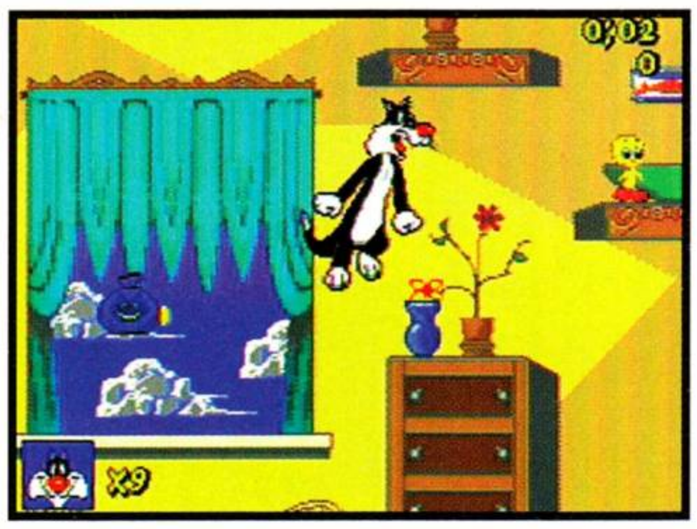
Jungle Book *(By **Virgin** for Genesis)* Mowgli may only have the "Bear Necessities," but there is a lot more than that available to game enthusiasts in this delightful collection of post-**Aladdin** platform eye candy. There are also plenty of collectibles and cool nasties, while the music includes favorite tunes from the movie, as well as the more traditional jungle mood music.

Although the Disney name might scare off hardcore game platformers as being too kideo, **Jungle Book** is a real challenge. **A-** *(Laurie Yates)*

Star Trek: The Next Generation *(By **Sega** for Genesis)* This is basically the same game that Spectrum-Holobyte released for the SNES. Game players check the conn, report to the ready room, and selectively man all the stations on the bridge of the genre's most popular spaceship. Not a heavy action game, but lots of strategy and trekker role-playing. The average graphics are not enhanced by the largely bogus interaction with the **Next Generation** cast members. For fans only. **C+** *(Laurie Yates)*

Sylvester & Tweety in Cagey Capers *(By **Time Warner Interactive** for Genesis)* One of TecMagik's last products, TWI has rescued this unique side-scroller from an undeserved oblivion.

Gamers guide Sylvester through a number of toon-type locales in pursuit of the



elusive Tweety. Lots of strategy and puzzle solving in this surprisingly compelling contest, with graphics and music that are very successful in bringing the player into the Loony Toon World. The electronic animation of Tweety and Sylvester is nicely done as well. **B+** *(Laurie Yates)*

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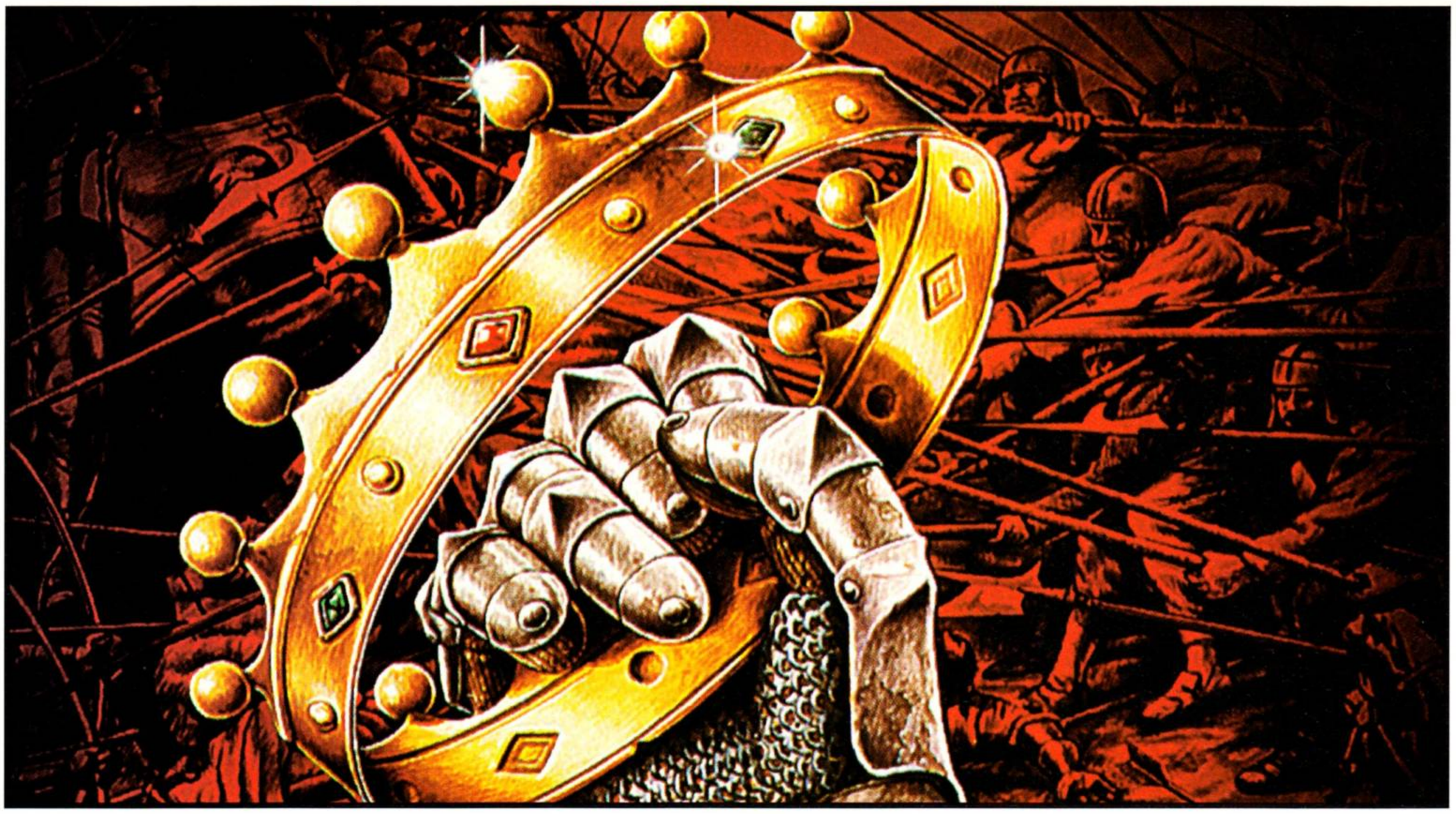


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HMPJ5



KINGMAKER

Do it yourself War of the Roses kit puts on heirs

Avalon Hill has come back as the new, improved Avalon Hill. **Kingmaker** is part of the opening salvo in their current assault against the software games market.

It's going to be a long war.

Kingmaker began as a pen and paper game of political intrigue set during the English Middle Ages. Along with its more contemporary cousin, **Diplomacy**, it established that Avalon Hill was just as good at translating political in-fighting to the game world as it was at turning dining room tables into tactical combat zones with games like **Squad Leader**.

Kingmaker is set in one of the most fascinating periods of Western history, the years of the second English civil war, more commonly known as the War of the Roses. This 40-year period (1450-1490) saw the death of three English regents and the extinguishing of the entire Plantagenet line. Only after a series of small but fierce battles spanning two generations, and the final establishment of Henry Tudor on the throne, did the kingdom rest relatively easy once again.

In **Kingmaker**, the player assumes the role of a faction trying to put a ruler friendly to themselves on the throne. The game proceeds, roughly, in two phases. In the first phase, the objective is to capture one of the many different potential heirs to the kingdom. In the second phase, the goal is to kill everyone else who has any claim to the throne. Bloody, but accurate for the period depicted.

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER:	Avalon Hill
DESIGNER:	McNeil, Lilley, Cockburn
SYSTEM:	PC/MS-DOS
THEME:	Historical Strategy
HD SPACE:	5 Meg
PLAYERS:	1
LEVELS:	N/A

Actual game play is almost identical to the board game. Counters showing various nobles and their armies are depicted on a map of Great Britain. At the start, the player is randomly assigned a number of nobles, offices and titles. Each of these assignments has a specific number of troops that go with them. This initial grouping forms the player's faction.

Players move their troops around the board attempting to capture or kill possible rulers, depending on the phase of game play. As the game progresses, more assets are added to the player's faction. Random factors are also introduced, such as plagues, weather, and foreign raids that force various nobles to return to their home castles.

The one major element included in the computer **Kingmaker** not available in the pen and paper version is advanced combat. In advanced combat the player has the option to directly control troops on the field of battle. The sequences are virtually identical to some of the early, ground-breaking Cinemaware games or, more



recently, those of Edward Grabowski through Impressions Software.

Troops are shown in three-quarter view lined up on the field like Napoleonic miniatures. The aspiring general can then give orders to each unit, assigning directions and missions to individual elements of an army. While this option doesn't allow even the most brilliant of commanders to win in the face of overwhelming



odds, taking direct command of troops allows the player to have a much higher chance of inflicting a specific casualty in a battle, such as killing a particular noble or member of the royalty. Otherwise, however, manual battles tend to generate almost exactly the same results as allowing the computer to resolve the engagement.

To Avalon Hill's credit, **Kingmaker** does more to engender a real historical interest in its chosen milieu than almost any other game on the market. Few Americans (and not all that many Britons) are truly conversant with the details of the War of the Roses. At first the substantial historical guide included in the box appears to be a mere stuffer to add value to the product. After the first couple of games of **Kingmaker**, however, many players will find themselves pouring through the meaty historical data to find out how the battles they are fighting turned out in reality.

Although this game plays much like the board game, there are fairly serious flaws to the overall product; some philosophical in nature and some very concrete. The first question a designer must ask in converting a board game to the computer is how much like a board game to make the final product.

One path is a one to one conversion. Chess simulators are one example of this type of thinking. The other path is to take the board game's premise and use the power of the computer to attempt to make it more of an overall gaming experience. **Auto Duel** and **BattleTech** are good examples of this kind of conversion. These games are anything but straight board game conversions. They take the premise of the board game and put the player in the middle of the action.

The design team on **Kingmaker**, with the exception of the Advanced Combat option, opted for a straight conversion with some basic multimedia hooks. One has to wonder how much different this product might have been with more of a role-playing feel to the action.

But the question of design philosophy is not a damning flaw, in and of itself. A good board game that is well executed on the computer can still be a great game. The key words in that last sentence are "well executed." Unfortunately, this program isn't.

One of the first things the player notices is that this a single-player game only. No modem play, no multiple players from the keyboard, just the player and the computer. In today's market this a fairly glaring sin of omission. But as long as a strong AI drives the game this is still a survivable flaw. Unfortunately the AI in **Kingmaker** is not strong at all, and also contains a number of outright oversights.

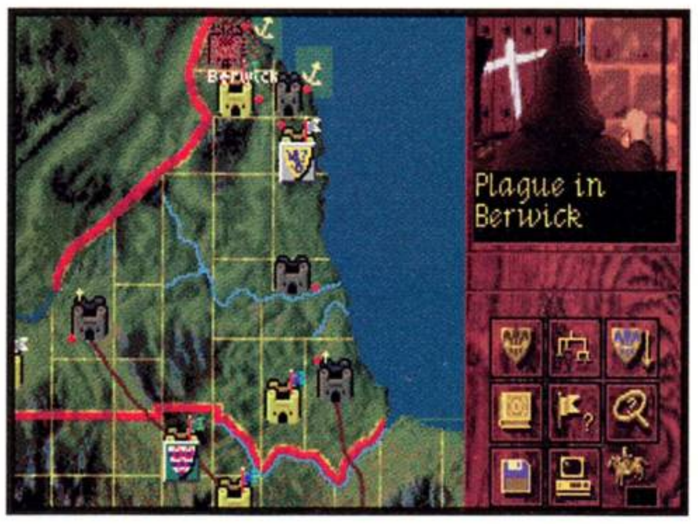
The biggest problem with the AI is it contains one of the dreaded "automatic win" strategy loopholes. If the player can obtain an heir, all that's needed to win is to take the heir to sea near a port their faction controls, and stay at sea. If the boat is forced to port by rough weather, simply put it back out to sea immediately. With enough patience, this simple move is all that is required, as all the other heirs will sooner or later be killed by plague. If the player has sufficient armies on land they can speed up this process, but even that isn't required.

A human player would see this strategy for what it is and attempt to take over the nearest port. However, the AI fails to grasp this subtlety.

Late in the game, the AI also appears to fail to comprehend the concept of overwhelming force, which would surely not be lost on a human player. Due to the nature of **Kingmaker** (and somewhat like the nature of the reality of the Wars of the Roses), troops killed in a battle are automatically and immediately replaced as long as none of the nobles leading the stack are killed. Hence a stack with 200 troops will keep 200 troops, regardless of battle casualties. A human player would know not to stay near such a group with inferior forces. The computer, on the other hand, seems to think nothing of keeping stacks in easy stomping distance, allowing a simple war of attrition to work with unreasonable ease.

And then there are the outright oversights. On more than one occasion the computer was witnessed trying to send a group to an overseas destination without a ship, keeping the computer faction spinning its wheels in port to no avail. Win conditions also seem to be frequently mystifying to the AI, with the player winning the game but getting a screen lamenting their loss approximately 50 percent of the time. Whether these are design flaws or out and out bugs is irrelevant; the point is that they devalue game play.

Kingmaker has many good points. The interface is sound. Play mechanics are almost identical to the board game, and the limited multimedia elements are used to great advantage. Nevertheless, the lack of human opposition is a serious flaw which, when combined with an inept AI, precludes **Kingmaker** from escaping the Intensive Care Unit. If AH supports this game with revision patches that fix the AI and provide some possibility for head to head play, this game could become one of the "great" board game conversions of all time. As it stands, however, Avalon Hill has definitely missed the brass ring, or the gold crown. ◧ *(Ed Dille)*



BEHEADED

Avalon Hill plays up the historical feel of **Kingmaker** using limited multimedia techniques. The introductory segments are narrated by an animated William Shakespeare, who wrote four plays about the period. Later in the game, pictures of real castles and cities are used on information screens.

The single most memorable part of the entire game is one of the multimedia "period pieces," a particularly nasty segment showing captured prisoners being beheaded. Viewed once this scene would be disturbing, but in the average game it happens roughly 20 times, making even the most hardened political infighter a bit nervous.

QUARANTINE

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DELIVERANCE

Standard side-scrolling fantasy fare for the Macintosh

No, this is not the movie with Ned Beatty and Burt Reynolds, or a quote from a Jimmy Swaggart tent revival fund raiser. It is the equally exciting Macintosh arcade game from Arcadis Software in Belgium. **Deliverance** is a colorful, fast-moving, fantasy epic, first seen running on a Macintosh Powerbook and licensed immediately by Inline Software's president Darryl Peck, whose hobby outside of Macintosh computers is watching professional autoracing, such as Indy Car, Formula One, and Stock Cars.



The StormLord receives the task of freeing Llyn Cerrig, a land of wonder and great natural beauty. The fairies, the good guardians of the land, have been imprisoned in Tnarom's Palace, from which the StormLord must free them and return them to the safety of Llyn Cerrig. The task takes the StormLord

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER:	Inline Software
DESIGNER:	Arcadis
SYSTEM:	Macintosh
THEME:	Arcade Fantasy
HD SPACE:	3.3 Meg
PLAYERS:	1
LEVELS:	7

on a journey through seven monster-filled levels, each one with an evil guardian to defeat. The story is an old, overplayed, predictable, fantasy plot with little interest or charm.

The side-scrolling interface (filled with platforms, up and down ladders, and solid flooring), has different environments and challenges on each of the seven levels, including a castle dungeon, a jungle, and an enchanted forest. On the final winged warrior level, the now flying StormLord must battle flying monsters in the ultimate battle before the entrance gate into Llyn Cerrig and safety.

The StormLord is a well-muscled, grey loincloth-clad warrior, with a steel helmet, a two-handed battle axe, a pair of brown calf-length barbarian boots, and long blond hair. He comes into the game with three lives, and must preserve those lives throughout the game. Seven Opal gems and many coin power-ups, which restore the life energy lost by the StormLord, wait in various places throughout the game. The coins may be found in each level's maze and appear after defeating certain stronger monsters. Dropping gems to mark the StormLord's way results in a loss of energy, while picking up those gems restores the lost energy.

The graphics display in three different screen sizes. The smaller 320x200 pixel x 256-colors high resolution graphics look fantastic at about one-fourth full-screen size, but are too small to play well, since the player will miss the small gems, coins, and keys. Watch for the beautifully drawn and rendered flesh-colored, frontal nude, female statue that Apple products wanted Inline to clothe before they would recommend the product—Inline prevailed.

The other two larger display sizes use graphic scaling to display a medium and a large size (the default, at 640x480 pixels x 256 colors), where the resolution is proportionately more and more primitive, and not at all like the clear and concise graphics seen with most Macintosh products. Changing the display size from the options screen or the install routine is sufficiently flexible for most players.

The game has the charm of a two-dimensional puzzle maze, with keys to find that open doors to treasure or other portions of the maze that may or may not be needed to finish the game. There are no buttons to be pushed or levers to be pulled in this Macintosh game.

Character control is with the keyboard or joystick. Closets and drawers that can hold keys, coins, gems, or enemies open when the character jumps up, while the down control picks up coins.

Another way of restoring lost energy is by standing still and letting the game time progress. Considering the three-life limit for such a lethal game, the inconvenience of lost time is minimal compared to the progress toward winning the game.

Combat is by real-time melee and ranged combat with monsters. The StormLord must jump, dodge, run, and throw his magical axe with unfailing accuracy. He must throw the axe many times before the stronger beasts succumb to this subtle appeal to reason.

While the StormLord moves, the background also moves in an almost flawless, smooth scroll that keeps the StormLord roughly in the center of the screen. The hand-drawn character and background animations become more out of sync with the character on the larger scaled graphics, and with lower horsepower or older Macintoshes.

The game saves only just before and after each level beast. It provides a unique resume code calculated from logarithms based on each user's registration number. This means that no two games will have the same resume codes unless they have the same registration number. According to company spokesperson Robin Lane, "To ensure a maximum satisfaction and challenge for each customer, no two users share the same resume codes."

The fantasy music is silent during game play, but it plays between levels when a



screen pops up to tell the player about the details of the next level. The game has no human speech and no cut-scene animation. There are few but effective sound effects, such as fire and weapon sound. The movement is fluid, though with some occasional jerkiness. Yet because of the great variety of things to do in the game, many players will forgive **Deliverance** for its minor flaws. **B–** *(Al Giovetti)*

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BEAUTY AND THE BEAST: BE OUR GUEST

Disney's magic captures puzzle fans

While the current Disney darling, *The Lion King,* is capturing box office dollars, the merchandising of past Disney hits has hardly been abandoned. **Beauty and the Beast: Be Our Guest** hopes to garner different attention than its side-scrolling platform video game cousins. This is a wonderful collection of puzzle games that should prove challenging and entertaining for adults, but wrapped in a package certain to appeal to kids.

In the Beast's dark castle, it is a very special day. After many long years of waiting, he finally has the opportunity to reverse the spell that holds him captive in the body of a monster. If the Beast can win Belle's love before the last petal falls from the the enchanted rose, he returns to a human state. If he is not successful, he must remain a beast forever.



The Beast is not the only one hoping he can successfully win Belle's love. Lumiere, Mrs. Potts, Wardrobe, and the rest of the Beast's formerly inanimate friends have decided to do all they can to encourage the growing relationship. However, it is up to the gamer to assist the *Beauty and the Beast* characters if their efforts are to be at all successful.

Mrs. Potts' kitchen involves the puzzle enthusiast in creating an egg drop cake. To do this, the eggs must be guided down the kitchen shelves into the batter bowl on the counter. This sounds easy, but it's a challenge that combines kitchen gadgets (ala **The Incredible Machine**) with object manipulation in the **Lemmings** style.

In the bustling activity of Wardrobe's laundry, Wardrobe (the Beast's animated closet) attempts to sort through fabric as it emerges from the dye vats, while simultaneously crafting Belle's gown. The gamer's task is to sort the fabric by color, so Wardrobe can fold them and put them away. Flashing on-screen windows in the upper right corner of the screen indicate the colors that Wardrobe needs to complete the gown. As the clothesline fills up, it can be emptied by switching colors until four pieces of cloth match. Wardrobe will then remove them and get on with the dressmaking. This puzzles are broken into three sections: bodice, skirt, and bow; when the puzzles are finished, Belle's dress is then complete.

Up in Cogsworth's library, Cogsworth is bustling around, searching for special music to set a romantic tone for the evening. However, he's having difficulty finding what he wants and remembering where he put it. Puzzle enthusiasts are then given a variant of **Simon**: search for the symbols and click on them in the correct order. When the task is finished, the music is ready for the ball.

But what is a ball without flowers? Feather Duster's garden will provide the beautiful color for the evening, that is assuming the player can find matching bouquets, in a nice twist on the classic **Concentration** game, with snow covering the flowers. Successfully completing these puzzles guarantees that there will be lots of flowers at the ball.

In Lumiere's dining room, Lumiere (the candle) is happily rehearsing for the ball. He wants to collect the cherries that appear on stage (which are shaped like a giant cake), but he's placed too much dancing tableware in too little space. To gather the cherries, Lumiere must climb the cake levels, step on the cherries, and avoid the dancers, thus insuring that the show will go on as scheduled.

Once all of the tasks are completed game players are cordially invited to the lavish ballroom to watch the festivities taking place. Belle and Beast will enjoy a waltz in the gamer's honor.

Be Our Guest offers two difficulty levels: easy and adventure. The puzzles on the easy level are shorter and less complicated. It's a good way to warm up, since gamers can experiment with rules and strategies. Two modes are also available



on each level, Practice and Normal. The Practice Mode is untimed, while the Normal Mode requires the gamer to complete all five tasks before sundown.

The graphics are absolutely splendid, and the animations duplicate the look and ambiance of the film to near-perfection. **Be Our Guest** has clearly been polished by Disney artists and, as a result, the product shines like the Beast's silverware. The musical score is also taken from the film, but if the theme becomes a bit too annoying after prolonged gaming sessions, the sound and music can be toggled off at any point. The voices add to the charm of the game and also assist pre-readers in enjoying the puzzles.

The intuitive interface definitely makes this a family puzzle game. Not only do the designers accompany the text with pictures, but the characters also speak their lines. The castle map is presented as a collage of gorgeous stained glass windows. From here, players can select one of the five puzzle rooms, the ballroom, or return to the Main Menu. This screen also shows the sundial timer so that gamers can see how much time remains.

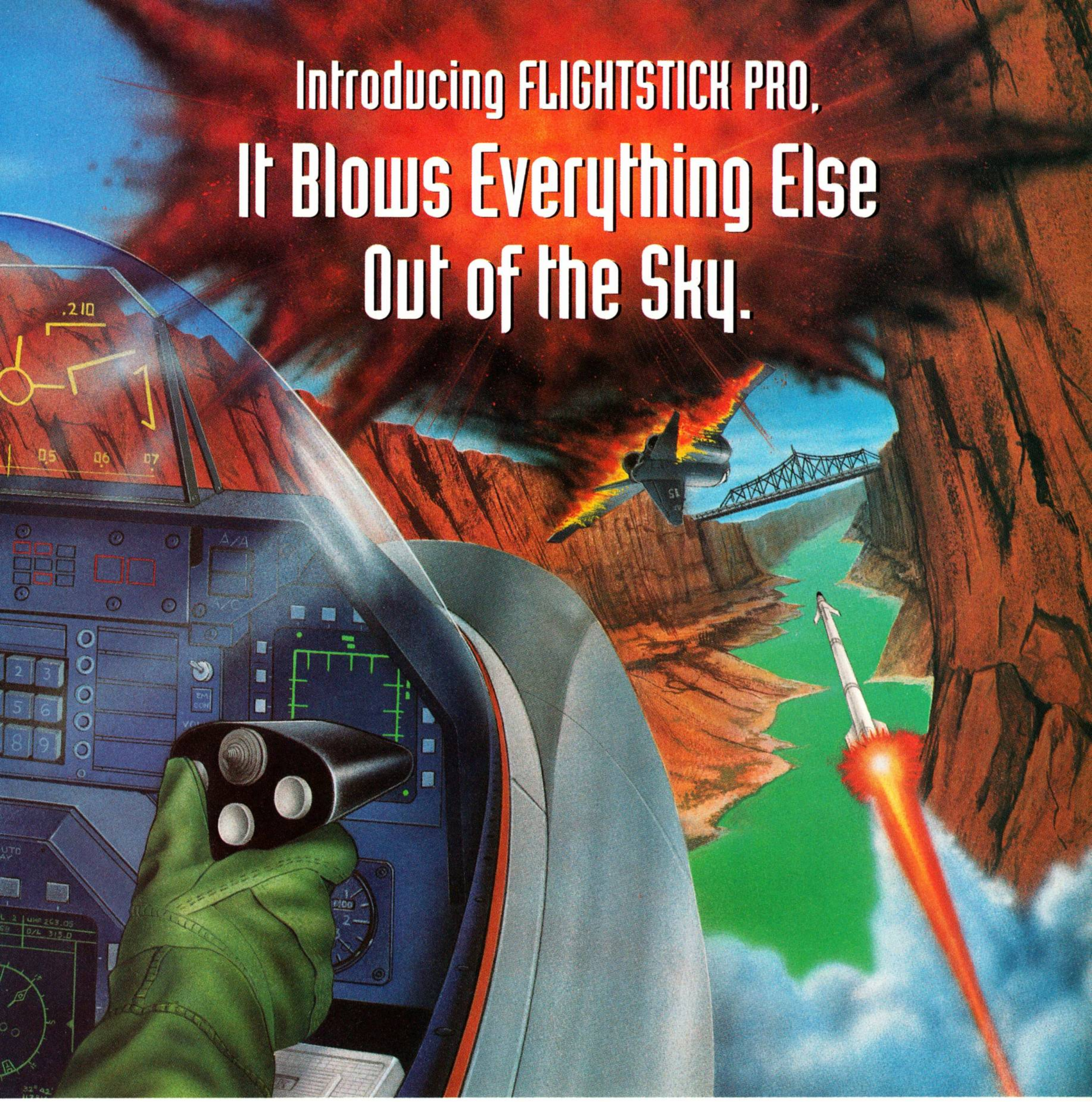
Disney has definitely scored a big hit with **Beauty and the Beast: Be Our Guest**. Disney fans and puzzle lovers of all ages will want to drop in frequently on this ball. **B+** (*Laurie Yates*)

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER:	**Disney Software**
DESIGNER:	**Disney**
SYSTEM:	**MS-DOS**
THEME:	**Puzzle**
HD SPACE:	**5 Meg**
PLAYERS:	**1**
LEVELS:	**5**

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X-COM UFO DEFENSE

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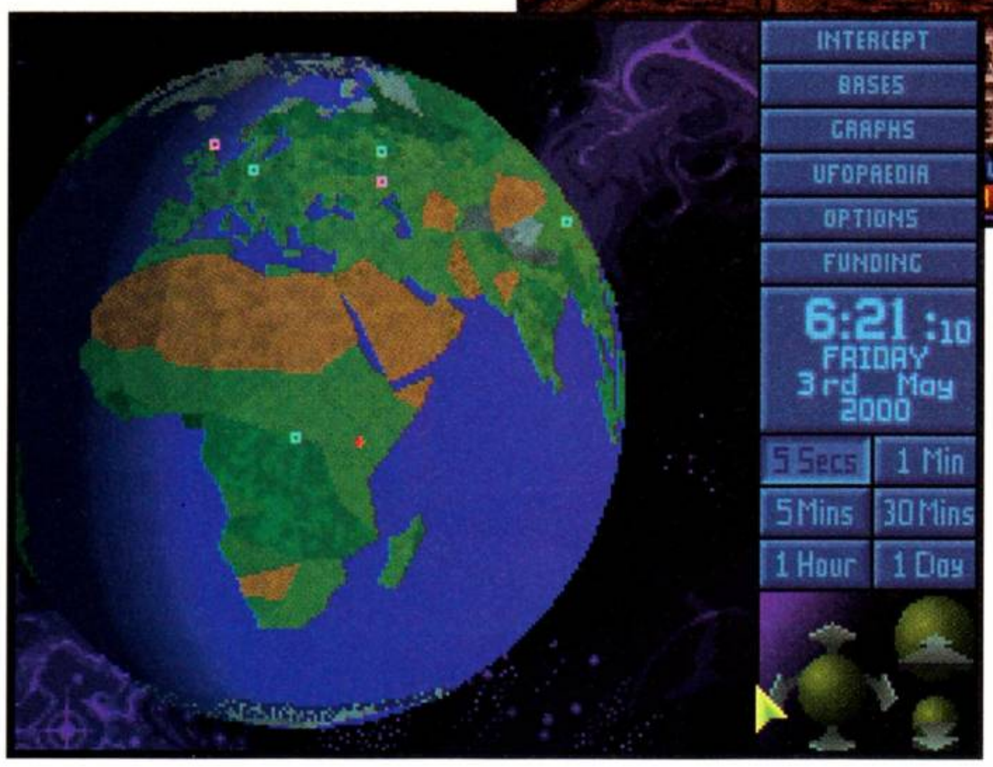


The best strategy games are those that you can replay from scratch and get a completely new and totally entertaining game, because of random game elements and smart game design. MicroProse has had a string of successes with such strategy games as **Civilization**, **Railroad Tycoon**, and **Master of Orion**.

X-COM UFO Defense is another winner that will appeal to many types of players because of its strong action sequences and far-reaching strategic control. Science fiction fans and war gamers will gravitate to **X-COM** because of its UFO conquest theme, but anyone who likes a challenge will enjoy **X-COM** from the first UFO sighting to the alien base invasions.

The player controls X-COM, a worldwide organization set up to stop the growing invasion of Earth by aliens. The countries of the world fund X-COM as long as the guarding group protects their country from outer space attacks and landings. The campaign takes place starting on Jan. 1, 1999, and continues until the aliens take over the Earth or X-COM successfully stops their imperialistic aggressions. It will take tens of hours to finish, but the designers set up the game to give players a wide variety of decisions to make and tactics to pursue on each game turn.





The action starts on a 3-D world view called the Geoscape. Players must choose a location in the world to erect their first base of operation. Eventually, it will be necessary to construct additional bases around the world in order to detect UFOs wherever they appear.

In-between the ground-based missions, all the game action and planning takes place at the bases.

Players will need to research new weapons and technology, develop their forces, and track their success against the aliens. The commands given to the bases determine how successful and prepared X-COM soldiers will be in their missions. The Geoscape view is also a major part of tracking and downing UFOs, as well as accessing the X-COM bases. Through a simple interface, players click on and target UFOs in the atmosphere and shoot them out of the sky over land.

Once UFOs have crashed or, in later stages, sneakily landed and set up bases or terrorized the population, the major part of the game begins. Players must send soldiers to the landing site or base and infiltrate it in a three-quarters perspective, 3-D view called the Battlescape.

Game play in these ground-based segments of **X-COM** is much like a board game and takes place in turns. This piece of the game will especially appeal to war game fans because of its similarity to that genre, but anyone who likes exploration of a new environment with some combat thrown in will appreciate **X-COM**'s missions.

This view and game play will remind many computer gamers of Bullfrog's **Syndicate**, but the subject is different and the strategy elements are much deeper than that European hit.

The most satisfying aspect of **X-COM** is that players can move at their own pace. If they want to let the aliens take Germany and liberate the country later, they can do that. Gamers can ignore research for a few missions, but must eventually engage in it because later missions will require stronger soldiers and a better arsenal.

The placement of the bases makes a big impact on game play because the UFOs will land in different environments and attack in a different pattern. **X-COM**'s UFO forces adapt to their human opponent's tactics in a way that keeps the game challenging and exciting.

Over the years, strategy games have always lacked strong graphics and sound effects because some designers thought that such things detracted from the game experience. In **X-COM**, the cartoonish graphics and 3-D environment enhance the game. The music and science fiction movie sound effects establish a campy attitude that fits right in with the UFO decor. **X-COM** can hold its own against strong action and adventure games with its special effects.

X-COM is one of those exciting and captivating products that comes out maybe three or four times a year. Like its close cousin **Syndicate**, **X-COM** is supremely easy to learn, but its subtleties appear only after a few hours of play. Players will not be disappointed by this clever combination of strategy and action in which the "War of the Worlds" story has become reality. ■ *(Russ Ceccola)*

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: MicroProse
DESIGNER: Mythos Games Limited
SYSTEM: MS-DOS
THEME: Strategy
HD SPACE: 13 Meg
PLAYERS: 1
LEVELS: Nearly Unlimited

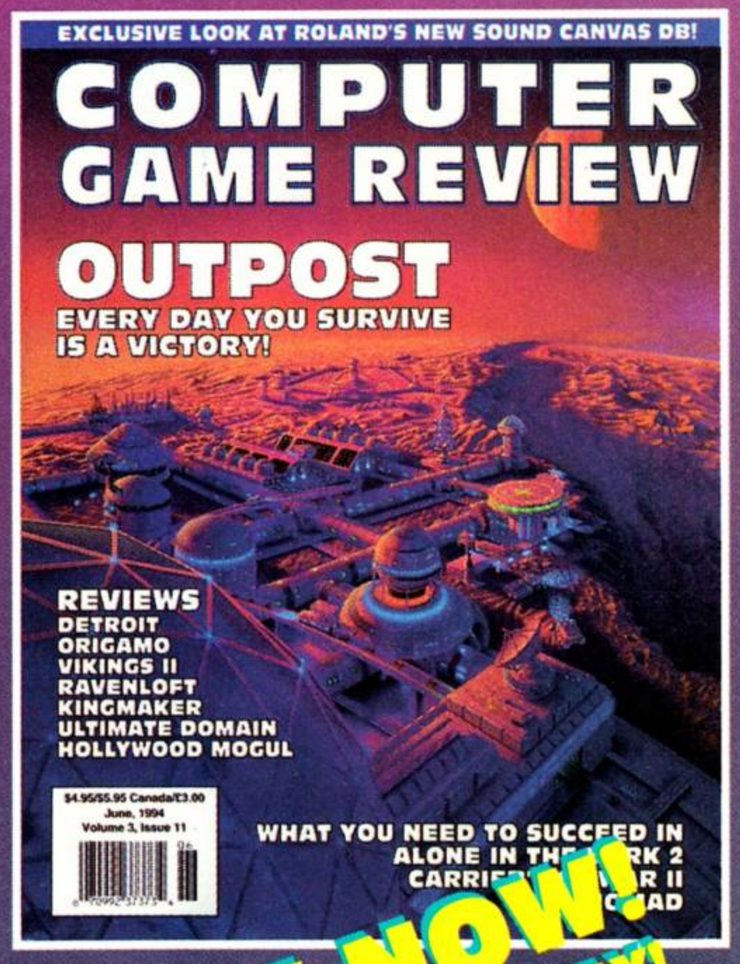
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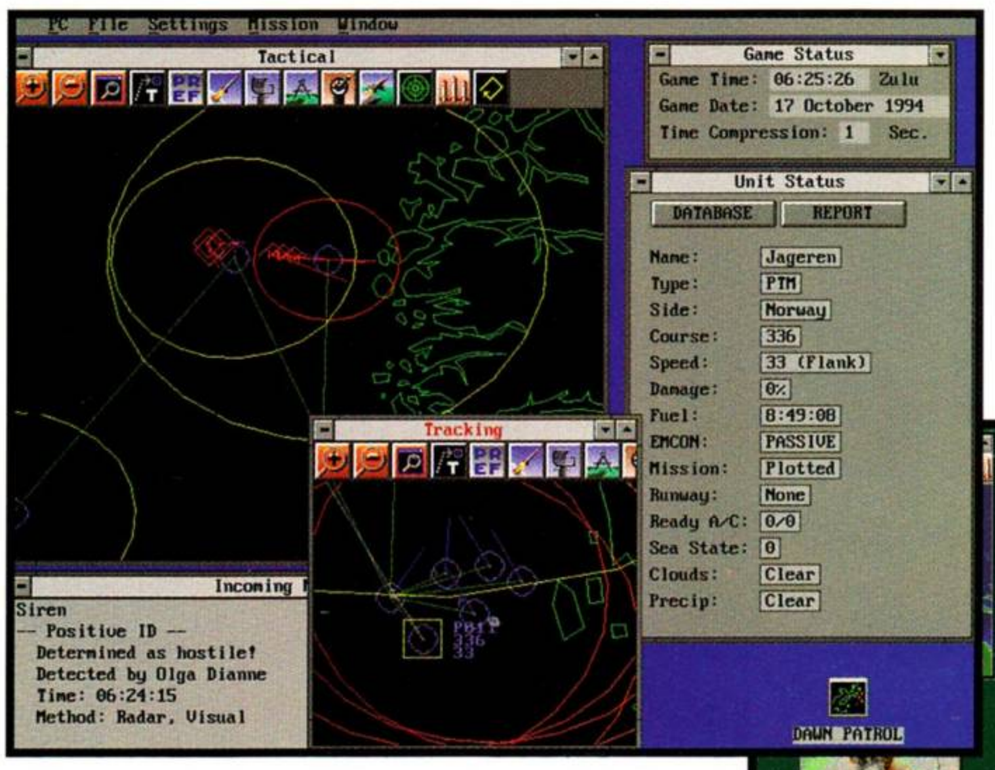
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HARPOON II

Reach new depths and heights in naval simulation

Harpoon II is a call to arms for every simulation enthusiast who has ever dared to wage silicon warfare! Further, it is a two front war, one for glory, the other sheer survival. On the first front, **Harpoon II** is Three Sixty's way of throwing down the gauntlet for strategy players everywhere. In essence, they are saying, "If you think you're good, tackle this one head on." Is that a challenge worthy of the import it is being given here? Absolutely.





It is obvious that Three Sixty has poured their collective hearts and souls into this product. Unfortunately, they have also included their collective pocketbooks, hence the second front of the war.

Three Sixty has filed Chapter Eleven bankruptcy proceedings at the time of this writing, and their future as a creative source in this industry is in question. Broderbund will continue to publish **Harpoon II** regardless of Three Sixty's fate, but the degree to which the gaming system will be supported by additional Battlesets and a Scenario Editor is largely market driven. In other words, the ball is in the court of public opinion ... your court.

If anything, the current situation is the by-product of ambition, not mismanagement. **Harpoon II** was envisioned as the most comprehensive simulation ever devised. Although not all of that vision survived the development process to reach the player, enough of it did that the original statement remains valid. **Harpoon II** is, without question or hesitation, the most solid, realistic military simulation ever published. End of sermon.

The **Harpoon II** interface is one of the most creative play environments ever devised. In essence, it is a virtually limitless windowing environment in which the player can specify their exact command & control needs and assign them to individual windows.

This simple (on the surface anyway) innovation solves what has been one of the fundamental failings of this type of game all along: the failure to properly integrate strategic and tactical decision making within a single framework. As such, the ability to experience the interface alone is worth the price of admission.

Beyond the opening structure, **Harpoon II** commanders will find 23 missions, seven of which are training scenarios designed to indoctrinate players to the new interface. These are a critical inclusion because, though the interface is as good as was just described, it is also far from intuitive. **Harpoon II** carries a steep learning curve, and players must be prepared to commit themselves to invest either the time to master the system or the additional funds for a good strategy guide.

The artificial intelligence that controls the computer opposition is very strong (sometimes too strong). The area that needs to be called into question is the knockdown ability afforded the computer against inbound missile raids.

In the real world, enemy defenses are saturated by calculating their total salvo capability against an inbound attack that arrives all at once (i.e., simultaneous time on top, or STOT) and adding a few leakers for good measure. By limiting the player to missile stream attacks, *vice* allowing them to plan STOTs, efficiency is lost and enemy defenses appear more capable than they would actually be in the real world.

Aside from this concern, **Harpoon II** should be lauded for its handling of Command & Control, Communications Links, Electronic Warfare, Anti-Submarine Warfare, and Strike Warfare. The latter's use of Tactical Air Launched Decoys (TALDs) is exceptionally realistic, once the player wades past the mechanics of deploying them properly.

Harpoon II offers solid game play and cerebral stimulation for any simulations fan. **A–** *(Ed Dille)*

FROM BLACK-AND-WHITE TO GREY

The original Harpoon portrayed a perfect cold war world, in which the pivotal information such as sides and objectives were clearly delineated. **Harpoon II** brings players into the '90s in every way possible. Nothing is clear cut or definite anymore, and the tactical picture can change by the minute. **Harpoon II** forces players to deal with both the innocent bystanders and potential opportunists that ring the fringe of every modern conflict.

By emphasizing limited intelligence and the fog of war, **Harpoon II** reinforces how easily tragic incidents like the downing of the Iranian airbus by the USS *Vincennes* can occur. This is the meat that makes **Harpoon II** suitable fare for die-hard strategists. Spice this up with a stirring score and video clips of missile launches, intercepts, and explosions, and one finds the end product quite tasty indeed.

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: Three Sixty Pacific
DESIGNER: C. Norman, M Steele
SYSTEM: PC/MS-DOS
THEME: Simulation/Strategy
HD SPACE: 20 Meg
PLAYERS: 1
LEVELS: N/A

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EMPIRE SOCCER '94

One way to get your sporting kicks

Although immensely popular in Europe, soccer took a long time to gain respect in the United States. However, the recent battle for the World Cup changed that; soccer has suddenly become all the rage. In **Empire Soccer '94**, the computerist can participate in the excitement by vying in his own quest for the World Cup, pitted against the best teams on the planet.



The game runs in three main modes. In Training Mode, the player competes in a single match against a generic team. Before the game, the player selects the difficulty of his own and the computer's team, and so learns the game's controls at his own pace. In addition, the player can select a special move that remains in effect for the current game. These moves include Power Drive, Snap Shot, Banana Shot, Super Barge, Speed Burst, and Super Dribble. Regular moves include kicking, tackling, heading, passing, backheeling, and overhead kicking. The player can also select 1-, 3-, 5-, or 10-minute halves, as well as choose a control device (mouse, joystick, or keyboard), pick among five different player formations, and choose a Novice/Pro setting. In the Novice setting, the ball appears to "stick" to the player's feet, which does make control easier, but decreases the game play realism overall.

After mastering the game's controls and functions in Training Mode, the player moves on to the Exhibition and selects one of 32 international teams against which to play a single game. An Equal-Skill setting determines whether all teams are equally matched or whether they all have their own playing styles and skills.

Finally, in World Cup Mode, the player competes in a race for the championship, with the teams divided into six groups of four teams each. Up to three human players can participate in the tournament. This mode is designed for the hardcore game enthusiasts who are very serious about electronic soccer: they will have to survive over 50 matches against various teams around the world.

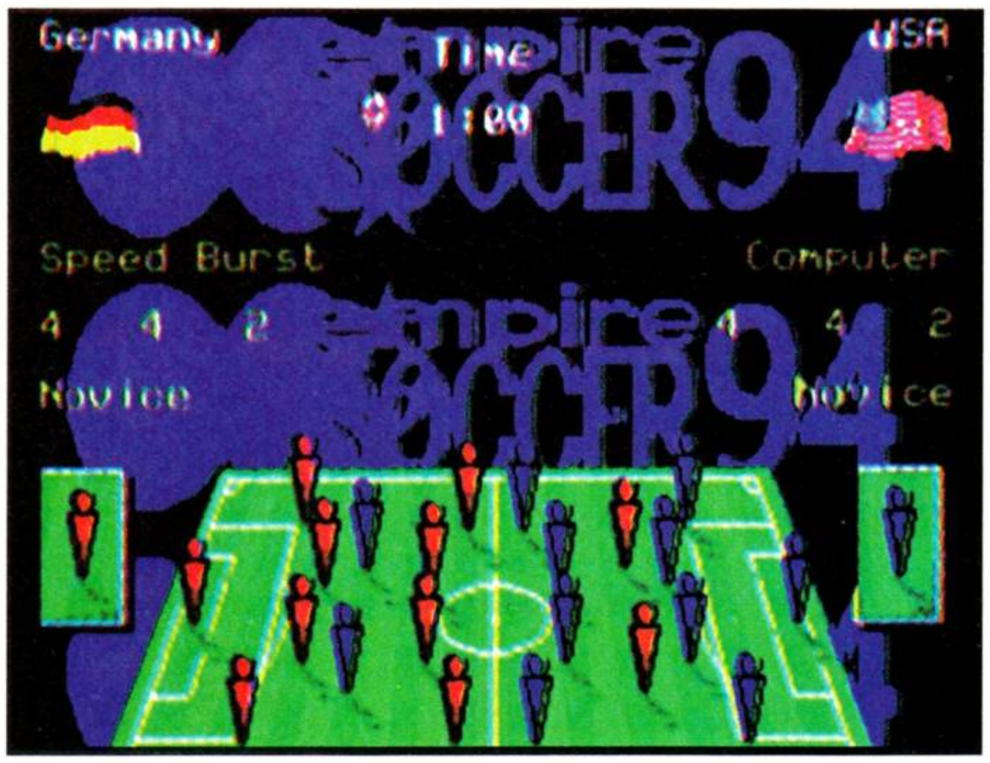
However, every game does not actually need to be played. The player can choose to see only the result of any game, rather than wait for the game to be played out. This option is the default for contests between two computer players.

Any time during a game, the player can bring up a menu of in-game options for viewing, including replays, formation changes, and substitutions.

Replays display the most-recent 10 seconds of a game, with the player using VCR-like controls to move forward or backward through the action. The Formation Option enables the gamer to choose a new player formation, while substitution gives the computerist a chance to pull out tired team members.

All in all, the game's graphics and animation sequences are nicely rendered, albeit a bit cartoonish. The sound effects, on the other hand, are sparse and often unrealistic. The program simulates a cheering crowd, for example, by a whooshing sound that evokes images of a strong wind rather than a stadium filled with enthusiastic soccer fans. Other sound effects include whistles, kicks, and bounces, all synthesized by the sound board. The game woefully cries out for digitized sound effects.

Empire Soccer '94 is for action-game enthusiasts only, rather than for those who like to dig into the statistical side of sports. Outside of selecting general skill levels, the player has no control over team members—or even over the teams in general. The lack of strategic elements makes this more like an action arcade video game than a computer game. Still, those people who like electronic sports games they can jump into without reading a manual will delight in **Soccer '94**'s simplicity. ■ *(Clayton Walnum)*



CHOOSE YOUR GENRE

These days, sports games can be divided into three categories: strategy, action, and hybrid. Strategic (or statistical) sports games concentrate on the player's ability to assemble powerful teams and handle the managerial side of the game.

Action games, on the other hand, eschew the statistical approach, and feature on-field action that the player can control via a joystick, mouse, or keyboard. While action games may provide some strategic elements, the game's draw is the actual game play, not a team's statistical information.

Finally, hybrid games combine the best of both worlds, enabling the player to choose exactly how they would like to play. Often, hybrid games can handle every type of gaming experience from the purely statistical approach to full-fledged arcade action—and almost everything in between.

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER:	**Empire Software**
DESIGNER:	**Graftgold (S & J Tuner)**
SYSTEM:	**MS-DOS**
THEME:	**Sports**
HD SPACE:	**1.4 Meg**
PLAYERS:	**1-3**
LEVELS:	**N/A**

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THE FINAL GRADE

The following chart details the thoughts and opinions of several different EG editors on some of the latest software. In the future we will feature guest reviewers from around the country.

	Arnie Katz Editor	Marc Camron Senior Editor	Bill Kunkel Executive Editor	Russ Ceccola Associate Editor
Al Qadim	B	B-	B+	B
Alone in the Dark II	A	A	A+	-
Arena Elder Scrolls	B	B	A-	A
Astro Chase 3-D	A	B+	A	-
Com. Adv.: Starship	B-	B-	B	B
Disciples of Steel	-	B-	C+	-
Doom	A-	A	A+	A+
Formula One	B-	C	C+	B
Front Page FB Pro	A	A	A	A
Geekwad Games	A+	A-	B+	B
Genghis Kahn II	B	A	A	-
Global Domination	B	B	A	B
Goblins Quest III	B+	B+	B	A+
Heirs to the Throne	C	C	-	C+
Hired Gun	C	C-	-	B
Indy Car Racer	A	B+	B+	B+
Lands of Lore	A-	A	B+	A
Leisure Suit Larry 6	-	A-	B	B+
Merchant Prince	A-	A+	-	-
Metal and Lace	C+	D	D	C+
Microsoft Arcade	A	A	A	A
Mortal Kombat	B	B+	C-	B+
Nigel Mansell's	B-	C	C+	-
Pacific Strike	A-	B	A-	C+
Ultima VIII: Pagan	A-	B	B+	A-
Pea Shootin' Pete	B+	B-	B	B+
Police Quest: Open Season	B+	B	B+	A-
Quarter Pole	C+	C	C	-
Ravenloft	B-	A-	C+	B+
Return to Zork	A	A	A-	A
Sam and Max	-	A+	B+	A
Shadow of Yserbius	B-	C	C	A+
SimCity 2000	A	A+	A	A+
Specter VR	B	B+	B-	B+
Star Trek: Judgement Rites	B+	B	B	B+
Terminator Rampage	A-	A-	B+	B
TFX: Tactical Fighter	B-	C+	C+	A
Ultimate Domain	B+	B+	B+	B
Unnatural Selection	B+	B+	B+	B



Serf City: Life is Feudal offers a graphically intense worldbuilder set in the middle ages.

Lamborghini American Challenge *(By **Titus** for PC)* Auto race games generally do not do as well on the PC as they do in the arcades or on home gaming systems. Of course, there are a few notable exceptions (primarily Papyrus' **Indy 500** sims). Titus' **Lamborghini** isn't your typical wiped out video game vehicle being sold in computer format for Blue Book value. On the other hand, it isn't going to win any state of the art races either.

The game offers average sound, solid but uninspiring graphics, and fair play value, with horizontal split-screen visuals that hold up well for two-player competition format. **B-** *(Bill Kunkel)*

Theme Park *(By **Bullfrog** for PC)* How's this for High Concept: users construct their own amusement park, hire personnel,



select and design their own rides, go to arbitration with employees, and even play the stock market and stage financial takeovers.

You got it: **SimCity** meets Six Flags!

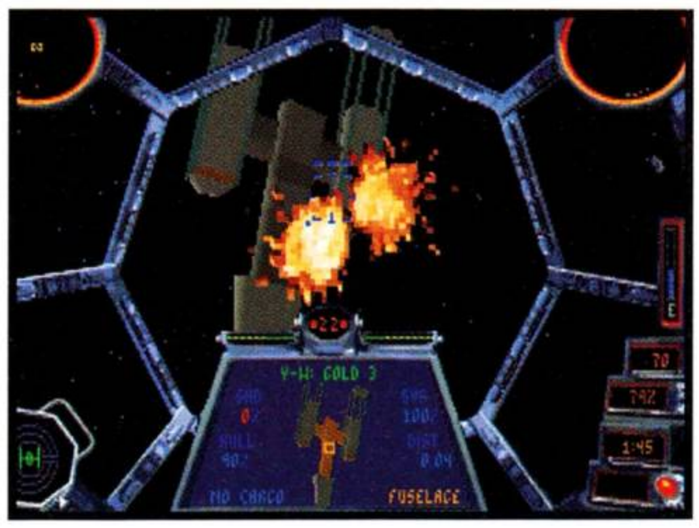
The concept is an original one when it comes to unique and fresh game ideas, but Bullfrog forgot the most important rule of electronic simulations: only reproduce the entertaining stuff. While designing hair-raising rides and setting up the park can be sufficiently amusing by itself, one wonders if there is any person out there who really yearns to dicker with employees, set prices in the gift shop, or attempt hostile takeovers of other amusement parks?

Lots of potential here, but overall you're likely to have more fun at the local carnival. **C+** *(Bill Kunkel)*

Prehistorik 2 *(By **Titus** for PC)* Sequels to computer side-scrollers are not exactly plentiful, so the very fact that there *is* a **Prehistorik 2** tells us that quite a few gamers enjoyed the first one.

The graphics in this follow-up are somewhat muddy, and play control isn't perfect. But the pseudo-Stone Age universe has consistency and the eponymous lead character (yeah, his name is Prehistorik), while not exactly Mario, has an undeniable appeal. **B-** *(Bill Kunkel)*

Star Wars: Tie Fighter *(By **LucasArts** for PC)* Is there any way in the universe that this game could *miss* becoming a mega-hit? Every other release in the **Star Wars**



series has offered superb, state of the art, 3-D visuals; solid computer-level game play; and one of the strongest licenses this side of Disney's lions—and **Tie Fighter** is no exception. The spin here, of course, is that Tie Fighters are Imperial craft—so any player not prepared to give their all for the Evil Emperor should stick with **X-Wing**. Six types of Tie Fighters and 50 plus are available for the gamer's amusement. **A** *(Bill Kunkel)*

Serf City: Life is Feudal *(By **SSI** for PC)* Developed by Blue Byte for SSI, this icon-based worldbuilding game is set in the Middle Ages, with spectacularly detailed visuals, 24 building types, 21 different occupations, and a Two-player Option, among other value-added features. If they wish, player-gods can even wage war on rival settlements.

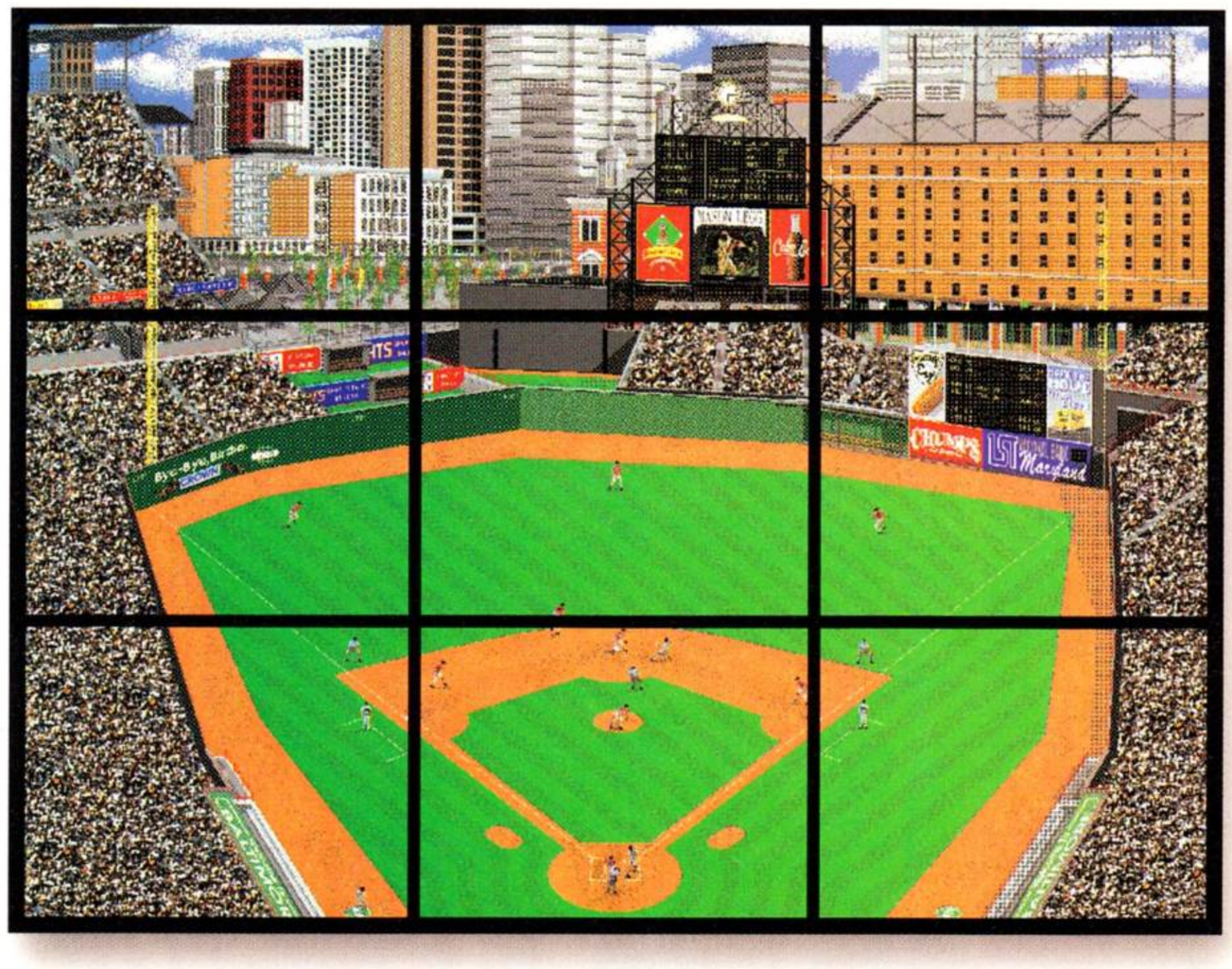
The title is slightly deceptive, however, leading users to expect a laugh-filled parody on **SimCity/Populous** type games, when, in fact, the product is fairly straightforward. **B+** *(Bill Kunkel)*

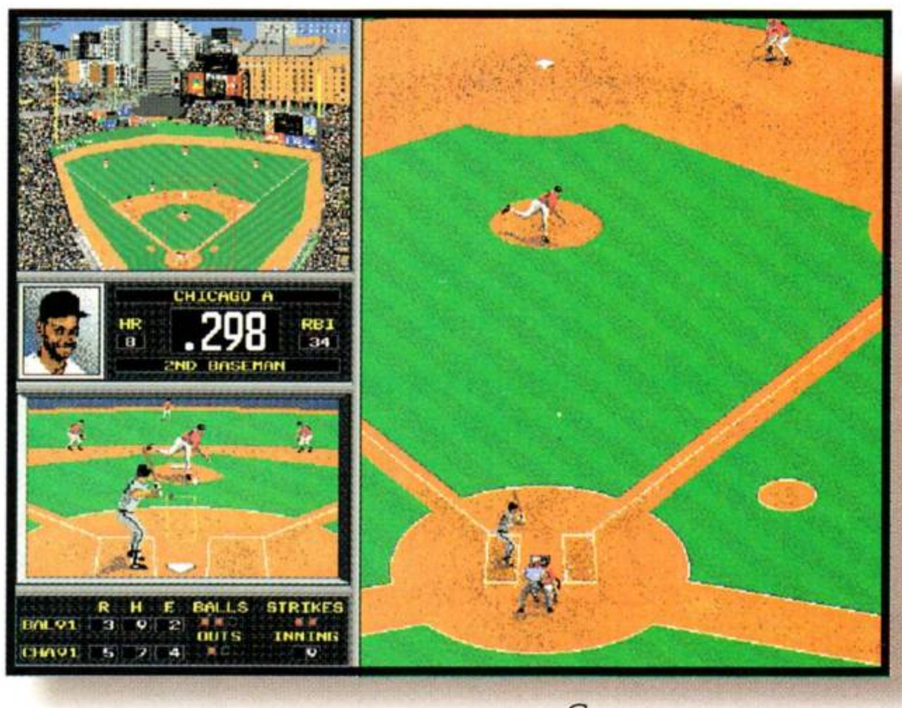
Crossword Wizard *(By **Cogix** for PC Windows)* Electronic puzzle lovers rejoice: Cogix has created a program that will drive you crazy for months on end—without wearing out a single pencil. The game's AI generates over a million puzzles based on the users' specifications. In addition to puzzles, **Crossword Wizard** has several other pleasing features. Accessing the Idea Wizard, for example, not only allows users to explore how words and ideas relate to each other; but also teaches how the program produces its clues.

Users can also create customized puzzles based on individual words and clues for family, newsletters, etc. If wanna-be puzzle makers have a computer that records sound, even audio clues (like sound effects or voices) can be added. **B+** *(Laurie Yates)*

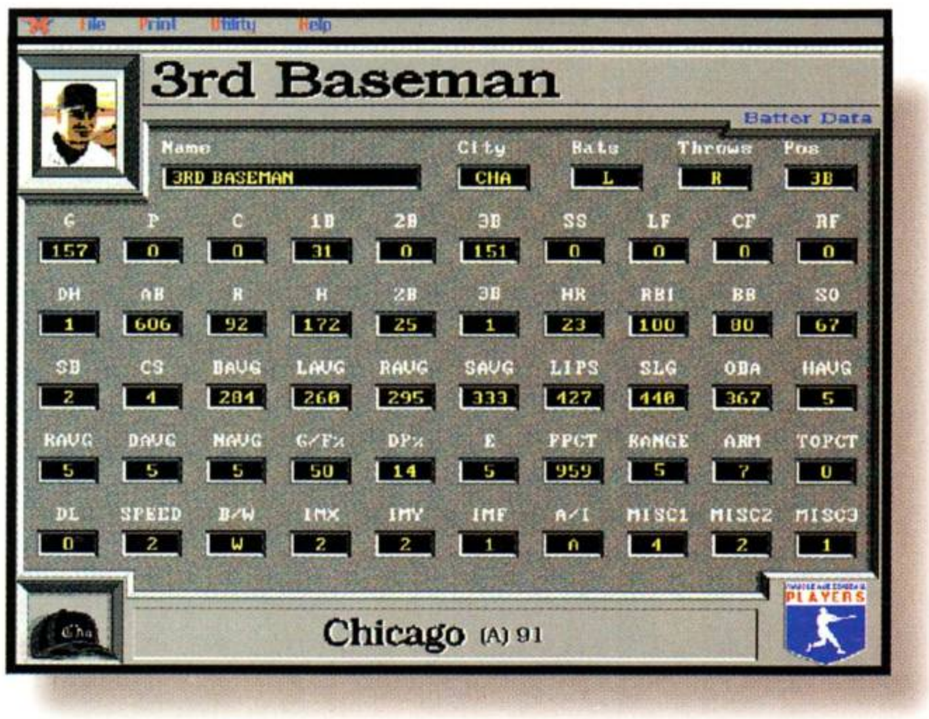
THE ONLY THING MISSING IS THE DRIVE TO THE STADIUM.



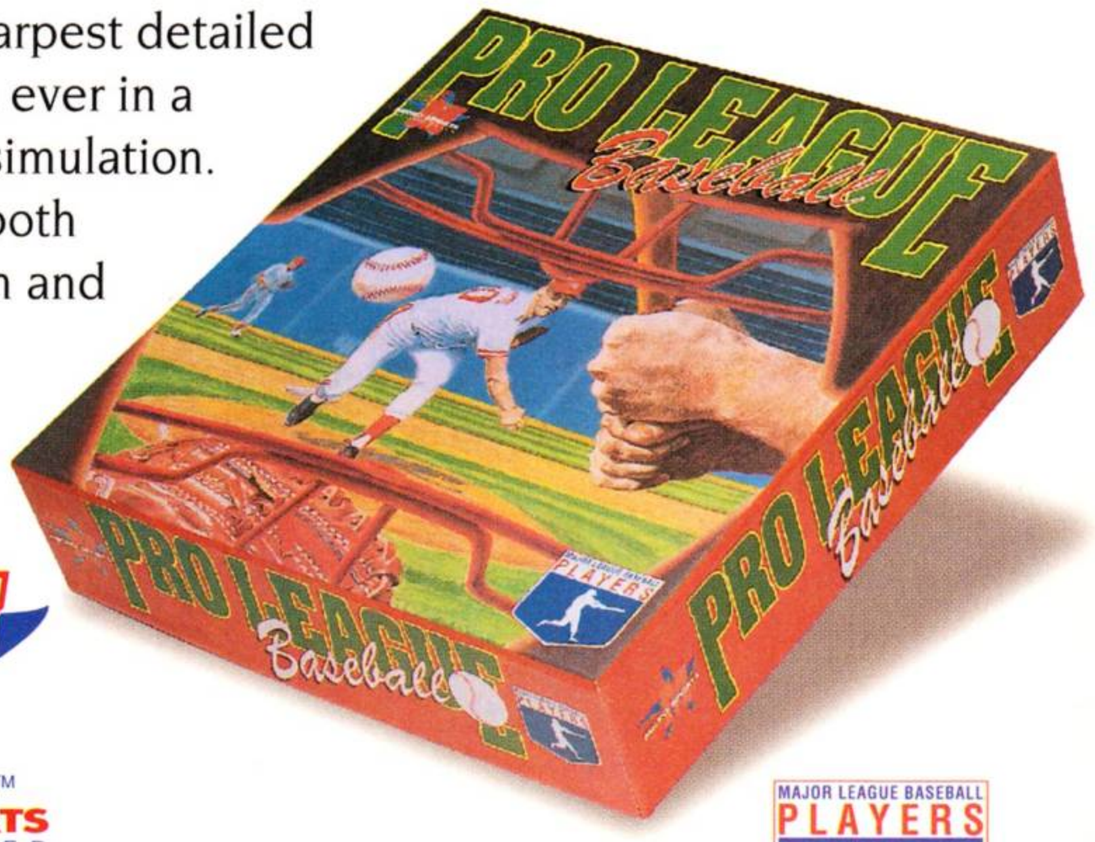




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RETURN TO ZORK

Is this fantasy adventure a return to greatness?

It took a long time for Infocom, now a subsidiary of Activision, to return to Zork, but most cyber adventurers will agree that it was worth the wait. Infocom's earlier efforts, sine the buy-out, have seemed half-hearted and a little out of touch. This enjoyable fantasy adventure is a different, happier story thanks to the team assembled by the game's producer Ed Dombrower. Brad Schenck's opening and the overall theme connect **Return to Zork** to the early-1980s trilogy of text adventures. Designer Doug Barnett and screenwriter Michael Em have done their work with reverence to the classics, but **Return to Zork** is a thoroughly modern game that reflects the latest thinking in sound, graphics, and interface.

The new story begins to unfold 700 years after the events of the original **Zork** programs. When the all-but-forgotten Underground Empire is rediscovered, a hustling promoter named E. Rufus Rooper turns it into a subterranean resort. The player is a recipient of one of Rooper's best promotional scams—a free four-day vacation in the Valley of the Sparrows.

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER:	**Infocom**
DESIGNER:	**Doug Barnett**
SYSTEM:	**Macintosh CD**
THEME:	**Adventure**
HD SPACE:	**N/A**
PLAYERS:	**1**
LEVELS:	**N/A**

When you walk up that long and winding road, past the sign that indicates a steeply declining local population, things are not what one would expect at a supposedly posh hotel like the West Shanbar Vacation Village Resort.

Return to Zork starts the quester with no information beyond what is needed to install the program and operate the interface. True to its roots, Infocom includes the come-on letter, still in its unopened envelope, announcing the vacation prize and the *Encyclopedia Frobbozzica*, a compendium of occasionally useful information about the Great Underground Empire. Without dissipating that necessary feeling of uncertainty, it's safe to reveal that the four-day trip leads into a labyrinth full of monsters, treasures, and mystery.

Return to Zork, like its predecessors, is a puzzle-oriented adventure in which one character travels more or less freely throughout the game-world and encounters set-piece problems. The combat-prone will need to look elsewhere for that brand of thrill, because **Return to Zork** is primarily a test of mental agility with little scope for martial arts prowess. The magic-filled realm contains diverse dangers, but it takes brainwork to deflect the threats.

Object-manipulation is the stock-in-trade here. An example: the player comes



to an impassible stream. On the shore is a pile of wood and a stand of vines. Only by using these items, plus another from the inventory with which the tourist begins his visit, can the watery barrier be successfully overcome.

Running the cursor over an item superimposes its name on the screen for certain identification. Clicking an object calls up icons which symbolize possible alternative actions. Clicking on one of those triggers the desired activity.

The icon groups are very flexible, and their composition depends entirely on the specific circumstance. Since the system presents wrong and irrelevant choices right along with the good ones, some situations invoke confusing beehives of pictographs. The pace of play slows alarmingly at such moments, but overall play proceeds so smoothly that such occasional delays are not a damning offense.



Conversation is a variant of the basic system. After clicking on a character with whom conversation is possible, clicking on the appropriate icon brings up a vertical icon strip that governs the hero's mood during the conversation. Choices vary depending on the basic nature of the relationship between the character and the protagonist.

Speech is extensive, but not synchronized. It is sometimes disconcerting to see the mouth keep moving after the character has obviously finished speaking. The effect is a little like watching a dubbed foreign film.

The voice characterizations are quite good. Professional actors bring personality and verve to the characters. Sitcom fans will like Jason Hervey's Troll, though Raoul Rizik as the sleazily friendly Mayor of Shanbar is a stellar performance, too.

The music, by Nathan Wang and Teri Mason, rises and falls in intensity, depending on the dramatic weight of the scene on the screen. It works well as a score, insistent, yet relatively unobtrusive. The music feeds the mood without overpowering it.

Joe Asperin, the art director, and his team deserve kudos. The subtle, misty outdoor scenes are perfect prelude to the horrors that lurk in the depths. Characters are well drawn, and the full-motion video movies are used with consummate skill, as seamlessly woven into the fabric of the adventure as they were in **The Myst**.



The initial screen shows only text, arranged as in **Zork 1**. As an unseen typist enters commands, 3-D renderings of the little house and then the mail box augment the written descriptions. This is both the last word in the feud between the prose partisans and graphics gurus and an appropriate bridge between the old **Zork** and the new one.

Return to Zork is a series of discreet locations, rather than a continuous 3-D animated world, as in **Ultima**. That was necessary when Zork was a chain of text blocs, but it's worth a rethink before Dombrower and friends return to Zork in the inevitable sequel.

Return to Zork is a lot of fun, and it points to better days ahead for this old-time publisher. Welcome back, Flatheads!

B+ *(Arnie Katz)*

MANY HAPPY RETURNS

Zork isn't the only returnee involved in this project. It's an attempt to return to greatness for both Activision and its Infocom brand.

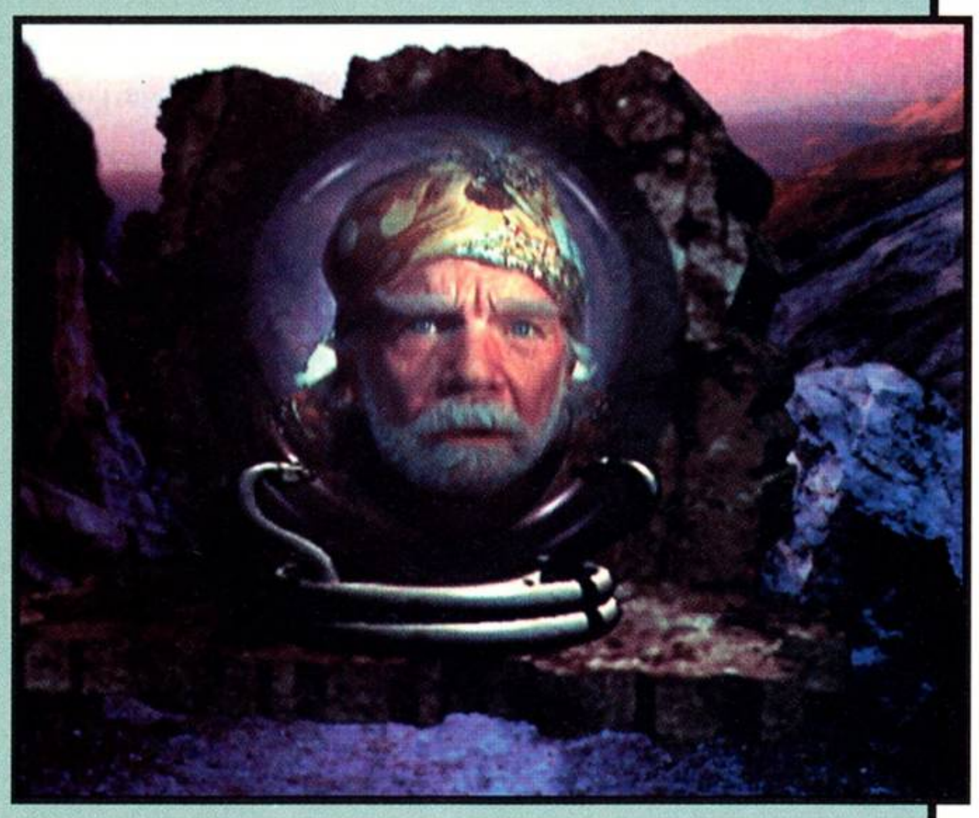
Founded by Jim Levy and four Atari veterans (Crane, Miller, Kaplan, and Whitehead), Activision was the first independent publisher of video game cartridges. Atari fought hard to squash the upstart at first, but soon conceded what everyone else knew: third party support is vital to building hardware system ownership.

Activision earned a reputation for highly playable, great-looking video games like **Kaboom**, **Pitfall!,** and **River Raid**. No cartridge company was more successful, or had more prestige, than Activision at the height of the Great Video Game Boom.

Success bred problems. Mostly, Activision got corporate, changed its name to Mediagenic, and tried to pretend it wasn't in the video game business!

Mediagenic tried computer games and edutainment with no success. They bought Infocom and reduced it to a minor computer software brand.

When income streams dried up, financial woes pushed the company to the brink of bankruptcy. Now Activision, chastened by its descent, is trying to rise again with **Return to Zork** and the **Pitfall** revival.



Infocom, despite a disastrous foray into productivity software with **Cornerstone**, slipped because it was *too* true to itself. It had trouble leaving behind the text adventures when technology progressed, and watched its audience slip away to competitors who understood the impact of audiovisuals.

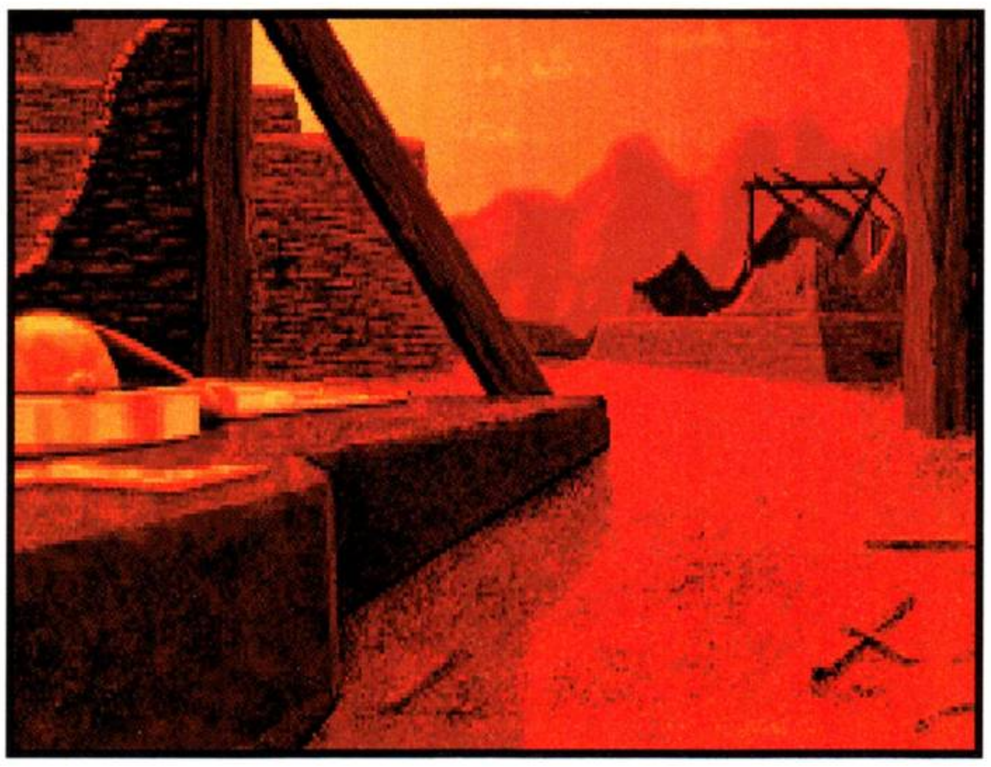
Return to Zork shows that both companies have learned their lessons and are ready to scale to the top of the heights again.

INCA II

Action and puzzles combine for an eclectic adventure

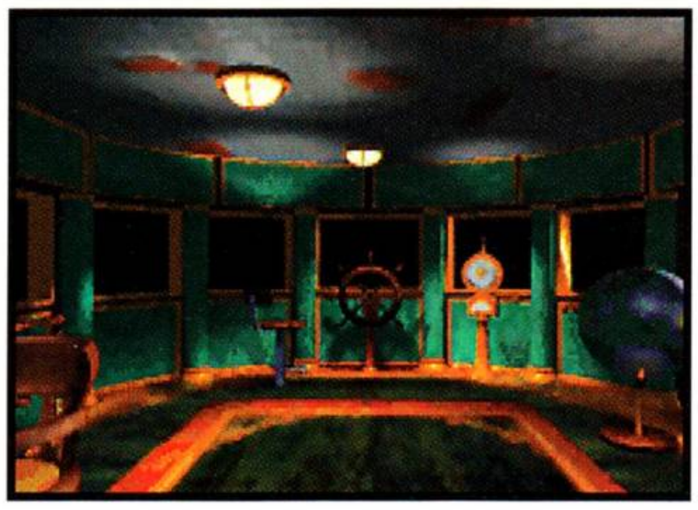
Inca was a big hit for Sierra On-Line last year. The company's French subsidiary, Coktel Vision, designed this masterpiece of game play and computer graphics effects. Sierra found it tough to label because of its mix of space combat, adventure, and action sequences. Critics had just as tough a time describing the game to their readers because it was unlike most games and the story had no discernable direction.

Inca II is every bit as unusual as the original, but with a much clearer plot and



goal. It is also a fine example of the creativity many European game designers impart to their products.

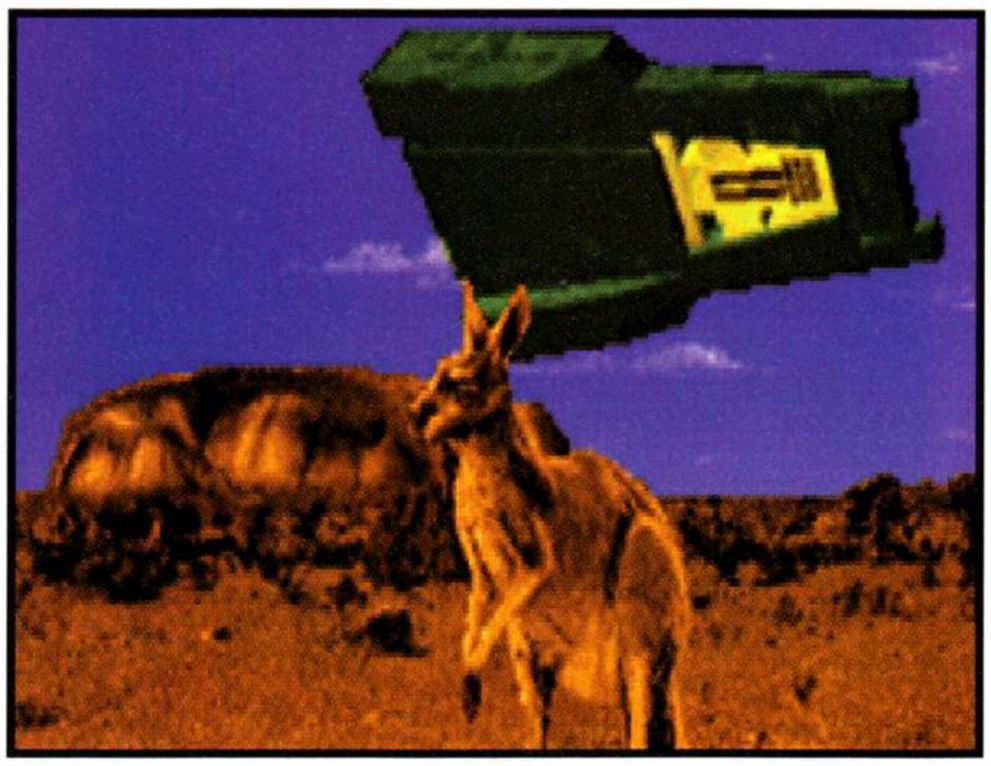
At the end of **Inca**, Eldorado became the Grand Inca of his civilization, whatever that means. In these games' collective history, the Incas did not die out as historians believe, but instead their culture was so advanced that they built a space ship and headed to outer space. **Inca II** begins with a problematical asteroid in orbit around the Earth. Eldorado and his hot-headed son Atahualpa disagree on a method to handle the crisis at hand.



No matter what the result, the player controls the action and story in **Inca II** through a variety of interfaces and scenarios. **Inca II** is notable because it mixes combat, adventure, and puzzles. The action sequences in the game are so varied that there's no room to describe all the types of fun. Instead, it's easier to describe the types of game play. These are three: space combat, ground combat, and puzzles.

The adventure/puzzle segments of **Inca II** are at times difficult. Because they involve a variety of strange objects and no clear goal, some players may find them confusing. However, they are all logic-based, so players should use some thought to activate objects and make maps to get around the locations if necessary.

The space combat phases of **Inca II** are exciting and every bit as entertaining as some of the more mainstream flight combat games like **Wing Commander** or **X-Wing**. There are two ships to control depending on the sequence—a Tumi or a Three-Master. Each ship has different controls and weapons, like missiles and normal fire, so it really doesn't matter which one gets to have fun with the game. Flight control is smooth and the action is intense.



The ground combat phase of the game takes place on a train. Players can shift between front, back, left, and right views as necessary to protect the train from attack and destroy enemies. Again, players should get their trigger fingers prepped for an exciting game segment.

Many of the game's action sequences involve space combat arcade games. A few pointers might help aspiring Incan warriors. Coktel Vision smartly placed the game's weapons and main controls on function keys, so players should practice switching weapons and accessing other screens without looking away from the game screen and breaking concentration.

The cockpits of the space vehicles have three important windows: the targeting computer, the flight computer, and the radar. Players should repeatedly check on their coordinates and those of the enemy with these windows until they are able to blow them away. **Inca II** is a game of small steps. Players may have to practice to survive one action segment, but the overall game has such variety that this effort will be put to good use in similar segments later in the game.

Inca II might not work as a game if it weren't for the beautifully rendered graphics, excellent audio work, and strong cinematic sequences. The story drives the game play and fits the action and puzzle sequences into the context of the Incas' predicament. Coktel Vision also did a great job of incorporating the actors and actresses into the detailed backgrounds.

Inca II's story becomes clearer as the cinematics unfold, but the animations will continue to impress players long after they know the game's conclusion. One look at the game box shows the high level of artistry. Similarly, the speech, sound effects, and music in **Inca II** fill up the CD and indicate why the original game's music was so good that Coktel Vision released it to radio stations.

Most players will especially like **Inca II** because of its action sequences. Those who are not comfortable with them can still enjoy the game because of the puzzles and adventure scenes. The action sequences aren't *that* difficult, after all.

Inca II is another in a string of successes from Coktel Vision that includes the **Goblins** games. **Inca II** is a nice blend of computer graphics, game variety, and action that will please a broad selection of gamers. **B+** *(Russ Ceccola)*

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER:	**Sierra On-Line**
DESIGNER:	**Coktel Vision**
SYSTEM:	**PC/MS-DOS CD-ROM**
THEME:	**Action-Adventure**
HD SPACE:	**1 Meg**
PLAYERS:	**1**
LEVELS:	**7**

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Rated by V.R.C.
NOT YET RATED

BRUTAL: PAWS OF FURY

Fantastic furry fighters of the animal world

As the video game market becomes saturated with fighting games, designers have to go farther afield to find a new angle, some twist that will set their product apart from the competition. Gametek has produced such a title. **Brutal: Paws of Fury** is a distinctly different game, loaded with loving detail, wry humour, and enough fur-flying fighting to make it the best original fighting game currently available on the Sega CD.

As readers might have guessed from the title, **Brutal** is an anthropomorphic animal fighting game. Eight fuzzy, animated combatants have been invited to a remote island to compete in a secretive martial arts tournament that occurs every four years. The plot might not turn much new ground but **Brutal**'s designer Rod Humble has labored successfully to give all of the fighters a personality and some character.

Each of the eight characters embodies one of the Buddhist paths of wisdom. In order of appearance the fighters are: Kung Fu Bunny–Right Understanding, Tai Cheetah–Right Mindfulness, Kendo Coyote–Right Resolve, Rhei Rat–Right Speech, Prince Leon (a lion, natch)–Right Effort, Foxy Roxy–Right Livelihood, Ivan the Bear–Right Action, and The Pantha–Right Meditation.



There are two characters that players can't immediately play. They are the organizer of the tournament, the Dali Llama, and an uninvited guest, Karate Croc. Despite being animals, these characters have a lot more personality than most fighting game drones.

The animals each have their own, real fighting style, augmented by appropriately cartoonish special moves. Character development is emphasized here, unusual for a fighting game, unheard of for a fuzzy animal fighting game.

Designed with input from a second degree black belt, **Brutal** uses the martial arts belt system for character advancement. Like all novice martial artists, new fighters start off with a White Belt. New players have to compete to win all of the special moves available to them.

After winning two matches in a row, the Dali Llama teaches the player to complete one special move, then gives the player three tries to get it right. Two successful matches later, the player is taught another special move, and so it goes until the player has learned all the special moves for that character.

Even if the player has seen the move before, it can't be done until the fighter has won the required number of rounds to be taught that move. A Password Option that saves wins, losses, belt level, and name allows a unique character to develop over many gaming sessions.

Pains are taken to show that the fighters have a life outside of the tourney. Each has different motivations for fighting, and they react to losing in different ways. Ivan smashes a tree in rage; Kendo mourns that he'll have to work in daytime TV for four years before he can return to the tournament; while Kung Fu Bunny smiles stoically, knowing there are more important things in life than winning or losing.

Interestingly, the female character, Foxy Roxy, is given the deepest background. She has a real name (Indhra Prashmet) and a career helping starving orphans.

There's not really very much information here that isn't presented in other fighting games, but it's presented in such a fresh format that, added to the rest of the detail, it feels quite rich. Stats are shown at the end of every battle showing number of hits taken by each fighter, number of each type of blow thrown, plus overall accuracy. A running line of text summarizes the battle in appropriately descriptive terms (if the match was short, the text says "...in a lightning fast fight...") while two boxes show the contestants executing the moves they used in the fight.

The graphics are not cutting edge; there are no battling polygons here, though shaded polygons are used in some cut sequences. The characters and backgrounds are quite detailed and handsomely rendered, and the head-to-head profiles before each fight are just excellent. The sound effects are good, if a little repetitious, but the techno-industrial soundtrack more than makes up for any deficiency in sound. Each screen has its own theme and there are more than a couple of radio-worthy tracks here. It's worth a listen.



Brutal is *the* configurable fighting game. Rounds can be set for single match, best of three, best of five, best of seven, first to two, first to three, first to four, first to five, first to six, or first to seven.

There are 14(!) levels of difficulty, equal to the progression of belts in the martial arts, from White Belt to sixth Dan Black Belt. There are three speeds; Normal, Turbo, and Turbo Nutter. Turbo Nutter is stupefyingly fast and the characters zip around the screen like, well, like cartoon characters.

Brutal has a few flaws. Most annoying: no pause feature. What's the player to do when the phone rings while he's kicking the stuffing out of some critter? The yips and the yelps during combat are kind of uninspired. The 10 second access time before each round can be a moment for meditation or an annoyance, depending on the player. Some stuff feels like padding. Do we really need 14 levels of difficulty?

Whatever. Additional spiffs like instant replay and a Fun Room wherein the player can view game outtakes and early character concepts, plus a group of real animals (Team Brutal), make **Brutal** a great value-added game.

Team Brutal had a lot of fun making this game and that seems to be infectious, because **Brutal** is a lot of fun to play.

A- *(John Wesley Hardin)*

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER:	**Gametek**
DESIGNER:	**Rod V. Humble**
SYSTEM:	**Sega CD**
THEME:	**Fighting**
HD SPACE:	**N/A**
PLAYERS:	**1 or 2**
LEVELS:	**N/A**

LIVE MOTION PICTURE ACTION

CD Shooting Game

CRIME PATROL™









This Multi-level live-action thriller challenges the player to progress through police ranks, battling a variety of criminal elements. As a Rookie the player takes on gang members, armed robbers and other street criminals. Promotion to Detective will mean working undercover against drug dealers and car thief rings. Be prepared to confront bank robbers and terrorists once you're selected for SWAT team assignment. Only the better player will be able to reach Delta Force and tangle with a criminal element threatening national security.

GAME SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS: PC CD-ROM • IBM PC 386 sx 25 MHz or compatible recommended • 640K Ram with VGA • Mouse (100% Microsoft Compatible) • CD-ROM Drive (150 KB per second or greater, continuous read,380 ms seek, double speed drive provides better graphic quality • Sound Blaster or 100% compatible card • DOS 3.3 or higher

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SHOCK WAVE

Invasion Earth 2019

Games for the 3DO seem to just get better and better. After a weak start, the system had some quality classics that debuted on other platforms (**Out of This World, Stellar 7, Super Wing Commander**), and a couple of original games that were not bad, but up to this point there hadn't been a real butt-kicker of a game. Now comes **Shock Wave**. Designed specifically for the platform, it takes great advantage of the 3DO's sound and graphics capability.

The story in this first-person flight game is as old as science fiction itself; an alien menace looms over the Earth and it is up to the player to save the human race. Gamers take the role of a rookie lieutenant, codenamed Wildcard, and embark



on a series of missions to save the world against overwhelming odds.

The ace hidden up the good guy's sleeve is the F-177 heavy fighter. Launched from a base in orbit, this atmospheric fighter carries lasers, smart missiles, thrusters, terrain following auto-pilot, and a back-talking computer co-pilot. Plus, it can turn on a dime.

In fact, given the picture of the F-177 and a limited knowledge of aerodynamics, this kind of maneuverability should be impossible, but if we can suspend disbelief long enough to accept alien invaders, we can forgive a minor violation of the laws of physics. Besides, the thing is super fun to fly.

Outside of flight sims, few electronic games have ever captured the tremendous thrill of really flying. With its simplified, mostly safe piloting, **Shock Wave** is by no means a flight sim, but the flying sequences are astonishing.

It's the graphics that do it. The texture-mapped landscapes, created from actual aerial photographs, roll by so convincingly, it's really like being in an aircraft looking down on the ground. In many places it's very tempting to just fly around and look at the scenery, but too much sightseeing amidst an enemy invasion can be detrimental to the pilot's health. Shoot all the bad guys, *then* take a tour of the city.

Each of the 10 missions is preceded by an FMV cut scene. The plot is moved forward, and the player learns why the next mission is particularly vital to the Earth cause. The cut scenes are used intelligently, and the player is shown a different one each time any mission must be redone.

Professional actors, scriptors, and film crew were used to get the best video quality possible.

Each mission takes place in a different international locale. In Egypt, the player flies over historic regions like the Valley of the Kings and Giza, battling aliens around the pyramids. Then it's on to Cairo, spread out over the desert like a multi-colored blanket. In Lima (Peru, to the geographically challenged), gamers will marvel at the lavish detail of the coastline as they race up the beach to evade a squadron of pursuing alien fighters. This is blood stirring, compulsively playable stuff.

The details make **Shock Wave** a truly interactive experience. Accidentally clip a church steeple and the next time, it's not there. Make a mistake and slam a missile into a high-rise; flames leap from the building. The destructively inclined shouldn't indulge themselves too freely; points are taken from the player's score for blowing up buildings and destroying ancient wonders of the world.

It's hard to say enough about the graphics. It's never obvious when the actors are projected onto the computer-generated backgrounds; in fact, it's hard to tell that the actors aren't on real sets. The newscast that begins the game is realistic enough to be used as a practical joke on anyone not knowing the source of the video, and nothing in video games can prepare gamers for the feel of screaming across the sky, 500 feet off the ground, that **Shock Wave** generates.

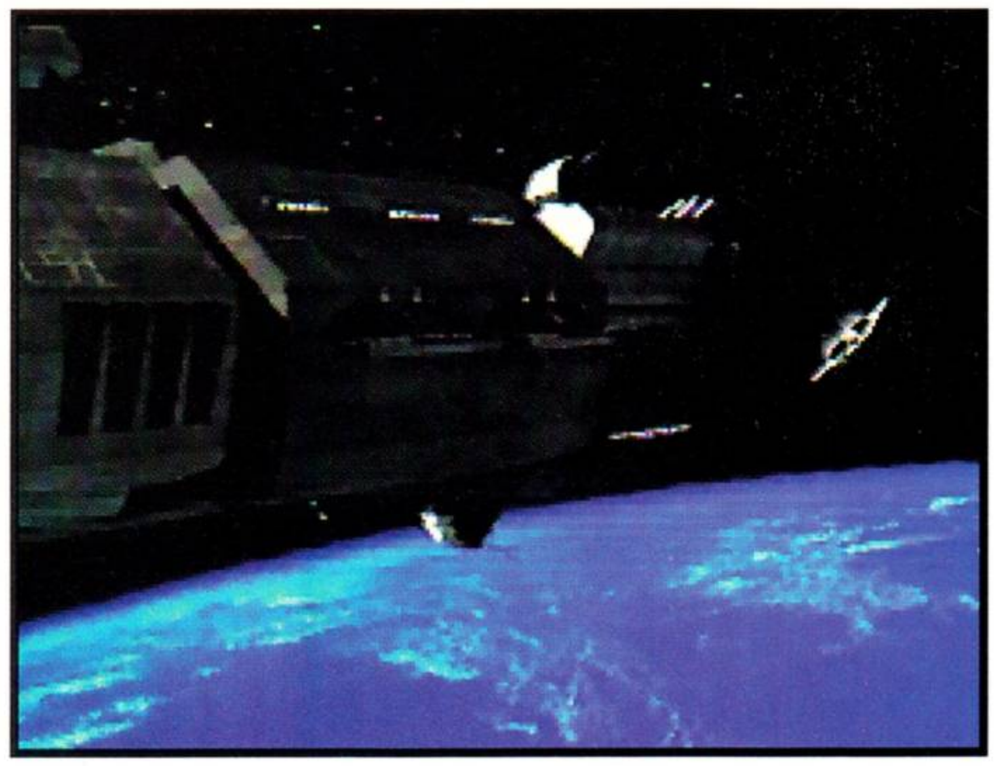
The small points are the telling ones. In **Shock Wave**, the closer one gets to an object, the more detailed and realistic it appears, unlike so many other games with objects that distort into shapeless blobs of pixels when approached closely.

Three levels of difficulty make the game accessible to players of all skill levels. A Training Option allows players to get practice without worrying about losing a life. Gamers begin with three attempts to get through a scenario, and each successful mission earns another attempt.

Is **Shock Wave** *the* perfect game? Well, no. A few flaws break the mood. Too often, the F-177 collides with on-screen objects it clearly should have missed. Some of the missions are very long, but there are no waypoints. Every time a mission must be reflown, the player has to start that mission from the beginning. The acting and the voice-overs are good, and some are very good, but the dialog is a little overheated in some places.

Shock Wave is much too good to let these little flaws ground it. There are many hours of quality play here, and this is the kind of game that compulsive players will lose precious sleep over. This is also the kind of game that sells hardware. If **Shock Wave** is the wave of the future, than the 3DO's future looks bright. **A**

(John Wesley Hardin)



TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER:	**Electronic Arts**
DESIGNER:	**Michael Becker**
SYSTEM:	**3DO**
THEME:	**Combat/Adventure**
HD SPACE:	**N/A**
PLAYERS:	**1**
LEVELS:	**10**

OUTPOST

Make a home for mankind among the stars

Outpost is a glimpse into the future. Not just one potential future for the human race but, more importantly, the future of what games can really be like when someone sets his/her mind to it.

Outpost is a realistic simulation of what it will take to build a self-contained colony on a hostile planetary surface. Most importantly, however, the tools for accomplishing this massive undertaking are not the products of a fertile fictional mind, but rather the outgrowth of current NASA research.

In fact, the designer is the former Systems Manager of the NASA-Ames Research Center. Concurrently, he also happens to be the designer of the classic title **Neuromancer** and Sierra's



The Dagger of Amon Ra. What do you get when you blend an award winning designer with a subject that he is already intimately familiar with? Great game play, and the gorgeous graphics can be considered a bonus!

Opening some 50 years in the future, **Outpost** assumes a logical extension of research currently in progress, thereby providing the player with some raw material to work with in resolving the impending crisis. What crisis? Well, the end of the Earth as we know it, of course!

If humanity is to survive at all, let alone repopulate to the status of a civilization, the player must overcome a daunting series of obstacles. First, the player must design a ship which will make the journey, based on the component parts and technologies available at the start of the game.



The expedition must also be provisioned and prepared for the departure from Earth's orbit.

Taking a hard left at Alpha Centauri (to borrow a phrase from the designer/author's excellent strategy guide, available from Prima Publishing), the next objective is to scout out suitable sites for the new colony. After locating an area ripe for construction and terraforming it to specifications, the player must begin developing the colony through agriculture, mining, power generation, and the building of many unique types of necessary structures for the new world.

If all this were not enough, remember that mankind can stagnate easily without room for growth, both physically and intellectually. As such, not only must players act in the capacity of a SimCity Commissioner for an alien environment, they must also guide and direct the research and development efforts of the fledgling colony.

These decisions are some of the most thought provoking in the entire game. R&D does not operate in a vacuum. Planetary Morale, which begins at 600 and fluctuates between 0 and 1000 dependent on player action or inaction, has a direct bearing on the progress of all research efforts. After all, unhappy scientists are unmotivated scientists.

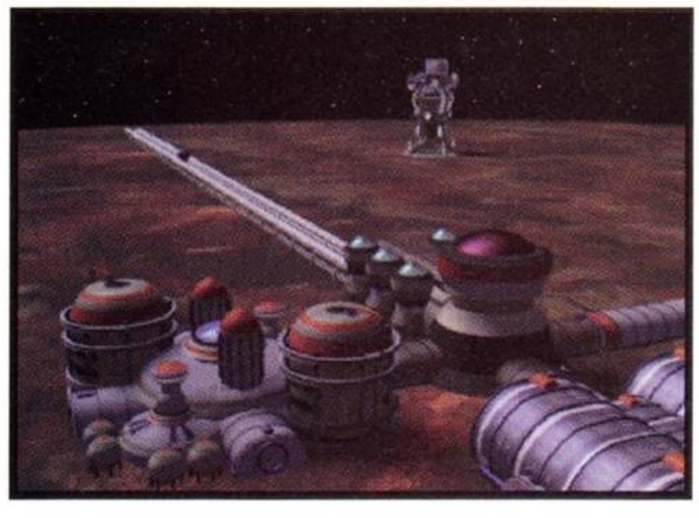
All possible developments are handled in a tree structure similar to that of the game **Civilization**.

When a particular branch or area of that structure has been fully researched, the end result can be a new structure which can be built for the colony, such as a terraforming facility; a system improvement to the capabilities of existing equipment; a beneficial modifier to things like agriculture, or something else of long-term value.

In addition to basic research, which has broad benefits, players can focus on a plethora of specific areas to solve a particular problem in anything ranging from Astronomy to Humanities.

If creating something from nothing on one planet isn't enough, you can eventually develop a colony to the point that it can build and field its own colonizing expedition, thereby allowing man to continue to spread across the stars.

The beauty of it all is this: no two expeditions will ever be the same. Further, the diversity of approach and strategic depth ensure that replay value never diminishes. That, in and of itself, is an excellent accomplishment that dwarfs those depicted in the game.



Outpost is destined to establish its own network of colonies on computers everywhere. Don't get left behind when the expedition leaves. **A** *(Ed Dille)*

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER:	Sierra On-line
DESIGNER:	Bruce Balfour
SYSTEM:	PC CD-ROM
THEME:	Simulation/Strategy
HD SPACE:	5 Meg
PLAYERS:	1
LEVELS:	N/A

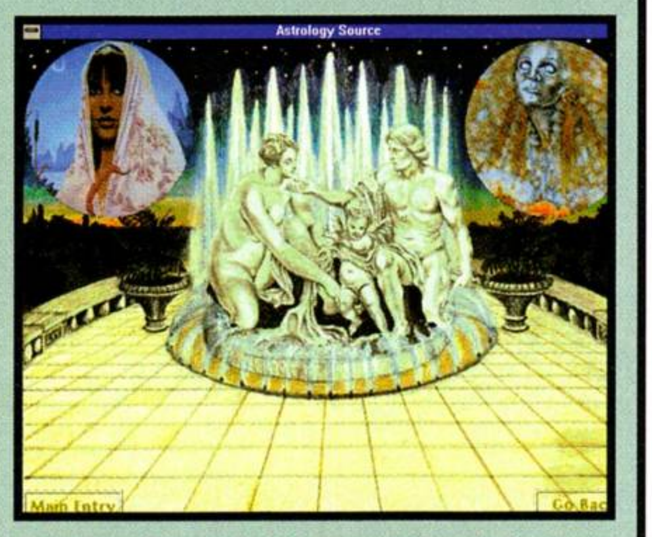
TEACH YOUR AI WELL

One of the fascinating aspects of **Outpost** is the manner in which it simulates Artificial Intelligence. When players are in Earth Orbit, designing and outfitting the expedition, they have the benefit of an AI advisor that is as advanced as one would expect for 50 years in the future. On the new colony, however, AI personalities must be developed, almost like training new employees. The player must continue to refine and tweak them over time to ensure they can handle the macro-management tasks involved in overseeing several colonies. Otherwise, the players will find themselves overwhelmed attempting to attend to the myriad of details that must be dealt with to be prosperous. Until that time, players can expect lower level AI administrators to exhibit some degree of ineptitude, like building something other than what they were told.

THE FINAL GRADE

The following chart details the thoughts and opinions of several different EG editors, and their opinions on some of the latest software. In the future we will feature guest reviewers from around the country.

	Arnie Katz Editor	Marc Camron Senior Editor	Bill Kunkel Executive Editor	Russ Ceccola Associate Editor
Aegis Guardian/Fleet	A	B+	A+	-
Bill Walsh College Football	A	A-	B	B-
Castles: Siege/Con.	A	A	A-	C+
Commanche CD	A-	A-	A	A
Crash 'N' Burn	D	F	B-	C+
Day of the Tenticle	A-	A	A+	A+
Dennis Miller (3DO)	D	F	D	D
Dracula Unleashed	A	A-	A	B+
Dune	B+	B+	A-	B+
Dungeon Master II	B-	B+	-	A-
Escape ... Monster M.	A-	B	C	B+
Heimdall	B	B	B+	-
The Horde 3DO	B-	C+	B	-
Incredible Machine (3DO)	A	A	A	B+
John Madden (3DO)	A	A	B+	B-
Jurassic Park (3DO)	B	B	B	B+
Kether	A-	A-	C+	-
Lethal Enforcers	A	A-	B+	B+
Lunar: Silver Star	B	B+	-	B
Mad Dog McCree (PC)	B	B-	B	B-
Man Enough	D	D	F	C+
Microcosm	B+	B	B-	A-
Myst	B+	B+	A+	A+
Out of This World	A	A-	A-	B
Prize Fighter	A	B	B	B-
Return to Zork	B+	A	A	A+
Revengers of Vengce	-	C	B+	-
Rise of the Dragon	-	B	B+	B+
7th Guest (PC)	A-	A-	A	B-
SimCity Enhanced	A-	B-	B-	A
Star Trek 25th An. Ed.	B+	A	B+	A+
Stellar 7: Draxon's Revenge	A-	B	A	A
Super Wing Cmdr. (3DO)	A-	B+	B+	B
Tomcat Alley	B	B	A	-
Tony LaRussa B. Ball	A	A	B+	A-
Total Eclipse	B+	B	B	-
Voyeur	B	B+	B	B+
Who Shot Johnny Rock	C	C-	F	B
World of Xeen	B-	A+	C-	A



Astrology Source by Multicom offers a fun way to look into the interesting world of astrology.

Leisure Suit Larry 6: Shape Up or Slip Out *(by **Sierra On-Line** for IBM PC CD-ROM [DOS and Windows])* Leisure Suit Larry's latest vacation trek takes him to the Club Med-style La Costa Lotta resort when he wins a trip on a television dating show. Larry can take part in lots of zany spa-like activities such as bungee jumping and



mud baths, but nothing will be as challenging as his attempts to woo nine beautiful gals he meets on the island. **LSL6** is full of the irreverent humor series fans expect from Al Lowe, as well as stunning hi-res graphics that highlight the resort's babes and other characters—and realistic babes are a big improvement in this game.

The plot is nothing new, but gives fans of the series pretty much what they came for: bawdy graphics and shamelessly sophomoric humor. This brand new "talkie" CD version is funnier and more entertaining because of the voices and expanded musical score, but Larry's voice will be hard pressed to match the expectations of veteran LSLers. **B** *(Russ Ceccola)*

Astrology Source *(by **Multicom** for IBM PC [Windows] and Macintosh CD-ROM)* Anyone with even a mild interest in this pop science will find **Astrology Source** well worth the price of admission. The program employs a series of nicely rendered visual interfaces, each offering a series of options. The main screen offers a staircase flanked by four doors leading to the Library, Gallery, Chartroom, and Archives. The Library includes an introduction to astrology, a bibliography, a glossary, and a tutorial.

The Gallery allows users to obtain astrological data on famous people in history, entertainment, politics, finance, and music based on their sun signs. There's even a bizarre game here, in which the player selects a pair of names from the Great Book, pulls a slot machine handle, and watches them match up—or not.

The Chart Room is where the program *really* gets serious, with slide shows on ascendants, planets, houses, sun and moon signs. There's also the Book of Horoscopes, where users can enter in their name, birthdate, birthplace, and time of birth in order to create a chart, which is presented in exhaustive detail and variety.

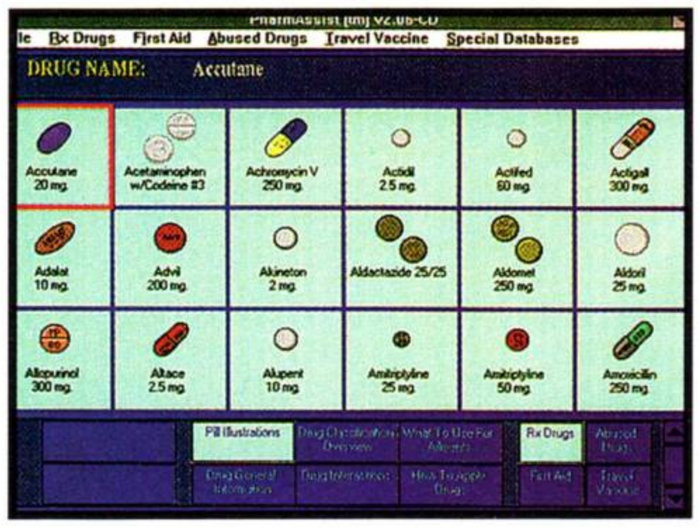
Finally, the Archive offers a cross-cultural account of the subject through the ages. Again, if the user has any interest in the subject of astrology, this program is highly recommended. **B** *(Bill Kunkel)*

Spaceship Warlock *(by **Reactor** for the IBM PC [Windows] and Macintosh CD-ROM)* Yes, folks, it is yet another science fiction interactive movie full of cool-looking cut scenes, an epic backstory in which the user is a legendary space pirate hassling the evil empire of Kroll, and limited interactivity.

But the sound and graphics are undeniably compelling, and even if the story jerks the user ahead through the standard bottleneck format, it's a not altogether unappealing trip. (Hey, any publisher willing to put 28 screen shots on the back of the box isn't hiding anything on the graphics side.)

Again, hardly the apex of interactivity, but the equivalent of one half of a good Ace Double—with spectacular production values. **B-** *(Bill Kunkel)*

PharmAssist *(by **Software Marketing Corp.** for PC CD-ROM)* It is every amateur pharmacologist's dream: a CD Physician's Desk Reference with value added options. This extremely thorough piece of work includes a "speech back" feature which allows the user to hear the correct pronunciation for each medication. This is a handy function to have when it comes to practicing correct pronunciation



of medication names that easily pass the five syllable mark. It also includes a smart search option which accepts phonetic spellings when the user is unsure of the actual spelling. There's a solid image database (though more pictures and fewer drawings would have earned extra points), first aid tips, and a special section on commonly "abused drugs."

It's not for everyone, but it could be a very useful addition to the home CD library the next time the cat swallows a pill and you don't remember what it was prescribed for. **A** *(Bill Kunkel)*

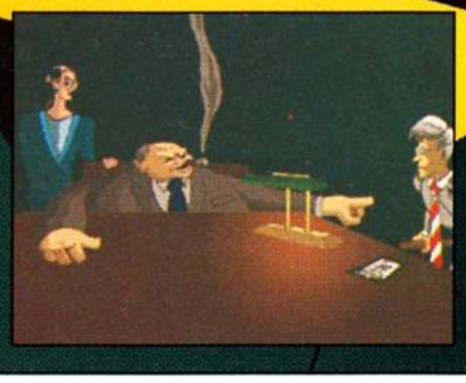
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A 3DO EXPERIENCE™









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Tetragon™

WORLD BEAT

See and hear music from around the globe

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: Medio Multimedia
DESIGNER: Warren Sirota
SYSTEM: PC CD-ROM
THEME: Music
HD SPACE: 4 Meg RAM
PLAYERS: 1

Education isn't just for kids, and there's no law that says it has to be unpleasant. In fact, any product that tries to appeal to ages 10 through adult users had better have a great deal of entertainment value cloaking the more serious content.

This is certainly the case with **World Beat**, a compendium of information about music from all over the world. Not only does it teach the history and personalities of music styles from around the globe, it also keeps ears happy while the researcher ferrets out the best riffs and beats.

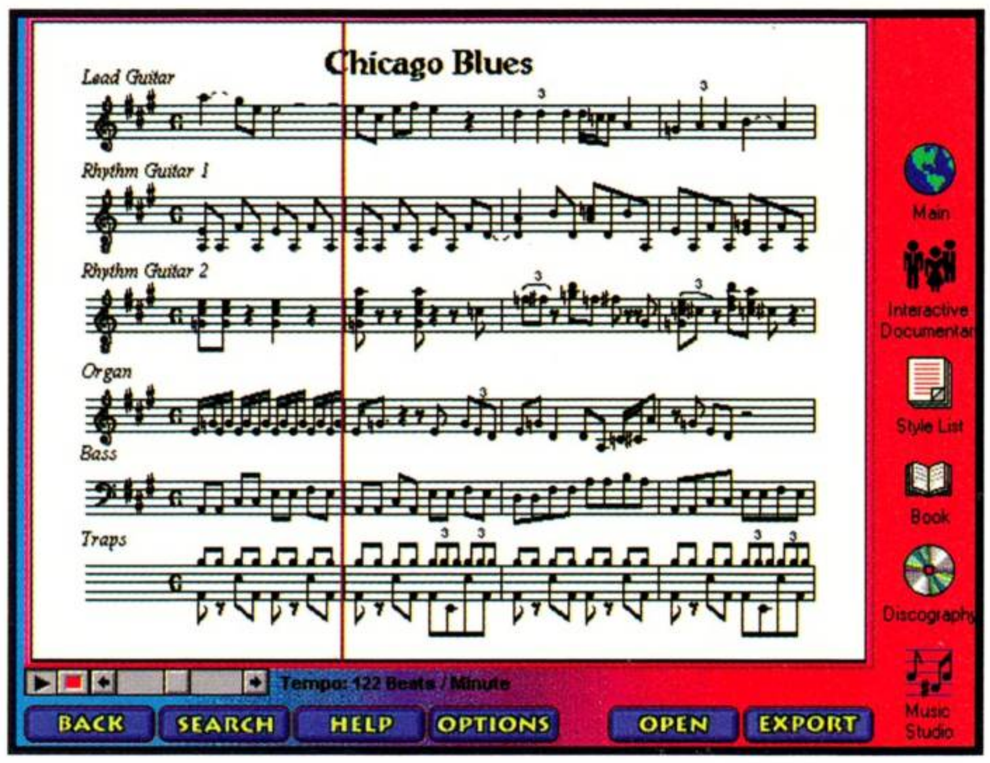
For the last couple of years, retailer shelves have been full of CD compilations on every subject from history to cooking. Search routines make the information easily accessible, and sounds and illustrations make research more fun. However, 1994 is the year of the clever encyclopedia. In place of the straightforward information, now we have entertaining interfaces to present the data more elaborately.

World Beat is a prime example. A spinning globe dominates the opening screen. To access information, the player points-and-clicks on a country.

A large map scatters icons around the country, representing the music types of that area. A click on any of these presents documentation explaining that music style and its history, along with well-performed sound samples. Many have performance footage, others have still photos.



That would provide enough to make this a highly educational and enjoyable program, but in fact there is much more. The music studio has a listing of about three dozen musical styles. Choose one, then see the score of a sample. Volume controls subdue various instruments, for study of how they change the sound of the piece. Similarly, a slide varies the tempo from one to 250 beats per minute.



A style list explains the roots of each of the major types, some with videos, some with only audio, and some in text. Pictorial icons indicate the level of information available.

The book presents 20 learned essays on various musical cultures. These are well-written and knowledgeable. Each piece is by a person with solid knowledge of the culture and style, and the reports are in some cases very intensive in length, running numerous pages in length.

The discography lists over 19,000 records by music style, name of artist, and album titles, then lets the music lover read information about the album. This includes the record label and ID number, date of release, ratings, and a biography. There's even a record company guide, with addresses, phone, and fax numbers of the still-existent companies.

And, over all, there is the music. Fine, well-performed, resonant themes that are fun to hear.

Unfortunately, despite the well-conceived design and the excellence of the material included, this program is not for everyone. Medio Multimedia has managed to wring more data and sound out of 486 computers than anyone to date, but not without certain sacrifices in convenience. Most computerists will have to reconfigure their setup in order to accommodate the sound and midi files. The program leads users through the installation and gives straightforward information on how to make the program run properly. And, the company has a technical service line that provides answers to the inevitable questions. For experienced computerists this won't represent a problem, but boot-and-play users who don't like to tinker with the equipment may be overwhelmed.

Once properly installed, the program provides a remarkable amount of information as well as delightful listening experiences. But, there are minor flaws. A few of the text files are flawed by poor editing. One actually ended in mid-sentence. Another provided a footnote: "For more information, see..." without any references for the reader to look up. The index of the essays in the book shows that some of the articles were illustrated by line drawings, but the art seems to be missing. In the record company information, the display area is too narrow to show both the phone and fax numbers, yet there was no way to scroll to pick up the extra digits. In some songs in the Music Studio, the volume slides did not work to subdue instruments.

The most frustrating flaw in the program is its lack of documentation. True, the on-screen prompts and icons help take the place of a manual. But, at no point is the computerist told all the options. A help button presents an overview, but doesn't get down to the nitty-gritty. The user must learn by experimentation and exploration.

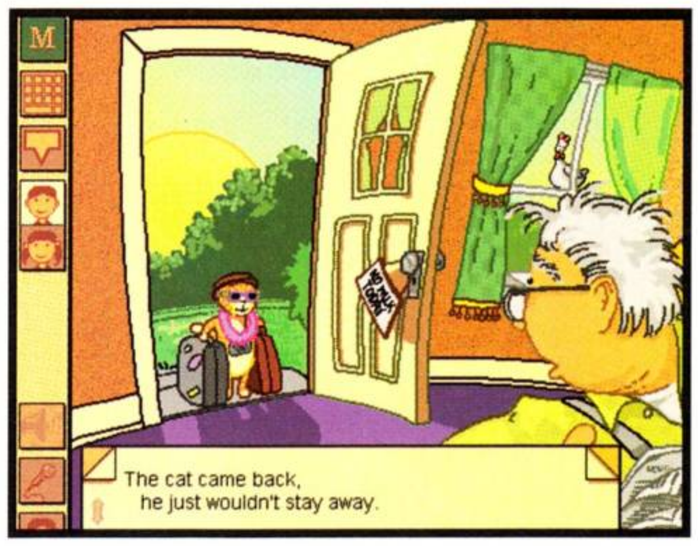
These flaws are a lot less significant than they sound. The fact is, the encyclopedia of music is extensive in length and well-prepared. It's also delightful to study and listen to the sound samples. The reports on each musical style are thoughtfully done and provide a lot of information about the music, people, and culture of each land.

This is a great program for students of any age who desire to learn about the musical stylings of the world. But it is necessary to approach the subject with a little experimentation and curiosity, and a certain willingness to tinker with the settings to achieve maximum satisfaction.

B *(by Joyce Worley)*

THE CAT CAME BACK

Follow that cat and learn about the world



The genre of edutainment is one of the fastest growing in the interactive software industry. Several companies, seeing this growth, have established special divisions just to focus on this new category of software that simultaneously teaches and entertains.

Sanctuary Woods' three divisions—I-Learn, I-Tales, and I-Ventures—are manned by parents and educators, with the products tested by children. Given Sanctuary Woods' growing reputation for quality family products, it is disappointing that **The Cat Came Back** does nothing to enhance that pedigree.

The Cat Came Back is based on the traditional song dealing with Old Mr. Johnson and a bothersome yellow cat that doesn't want to leave the old man's home. No matter how far away Johnson sends the cat, and regardless of the method of transportation, the cat comes back the very next day.

The program is divided into four segments: Listen-Along, Sing-Along, Write-Along, and Read-Along. The Listen-Along mode allows the child to listen to a story being read by an adult, while a series of pictures illustrate the story. The story can be paused by the child at any point.

Sing-Along permits the young user to listen to a song, then experiment with instruments to reproduce the melody while singing and recording (see below) the lyrics. The eight instruments include a nylon-string guitar, tubular bells, harp, marimba, harpsichord, church organ, steel drum, and a pan flute (Virtual Zanfir?). The user can play the entire song, or just a line at the time.

Accessing Write-Along produces a wealth of creative language arts options. Children solve one of six mysteries by selecting an original mode of transportation that the cat does not use in the song—a 747, parcel post, submarine, sailboat, tour bus, and blimp—to create new song verses. After picking the mode of mobility, the child is then shown a picture of the cat on yet another mode of transport with the appropriate country's scenery in the background. The user then clicks (if necessary) on the different clues, and types in the blanks, creating a rhyme for the additional verse.

Also in this selection, children can produce a diary of the cat's journey. Four different adventures are available, with the program providing the date and the event (example: April 10, Cruise on a Big Ship). There is then plenty of room to create mythical experiences for the feline traveler. In the story section of the Write-Along, children create their own text to accompany Bill Slavin's original pictures from **The Cat Came Back**.

The Read-Along section can either pair the young reader with a same-sex reading



partner, or through a SoundBlaster compatible microphone, adults can tape the child or any familiar voice reading the story. This mode also encourages exploration by scattering a few hot spots through the scenario; these not only present additional animations, but offer accompanying text balloons as well.

In addition to the English mode, **The Cat Came Back** can be run in French and Spanish, which is a boon for both youngsters learning English as a Second Language (ESL) and young American foreign language students.

The printed installation instructions are rather terse to read. While most game enthusiasts traditionally skip over the Readme.txt file, doing so with **The Cat Came Back** is not advisable.

This file contains all user info on how to use the SoundBlaster microphone to record different segments of the program, as well as running information concerning memory, drivers, and the all-important advice to disable screen savers. The Readme file is also where parents receive advice as to how to best use the program to help their young learner.

The graphics are charming, but the animated hot spots seem slight when compared to most contemporary products of this type. The musical tracks are excellent, making excellent use of instrument samples. The main difficulty of the program is its dubious entertainment value.

Educationally, this program embraces both a sight word and a holistic language approach. The incorporation of music, geography, and computer skills, with vocabulary and reading exercises, makes this an educational product.

But is it fun?

Ultimately, the answer is no. Children have become jaded to programs that fail to consistently stimulate them. The limited use of hot spots, and minimal animations are sure to disappoint youngsters, especially those who have had the opportunity to sample competitive programs.

Finally, the use of "The Cat Came Back" as the game's focal song is a questionable decision, since there's no sense of closure and the tale ends rather abruptly. While children accept that "camp" or "riding the bus" songs don't necessarily offer closure, this does not work in an interactive storytelling context. Additionally, given its ability to save, print, and record, this may not be a program that adults want very young children to use independently.

As more and more products pour into the market, adults are faced with numerous complex options for making their children's academic lives a little easier. Most adults look for products that are easy to use, offer familiar characters and are entertaining enough to keep the child interested as well as entertained at the computer over the long haul.

After all, what's the point of an edutainment product that is all "edu" and no "tainment"? **B-** *(by Joyce Worley)*

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: Sanctuary Woods
DESIGNER: Rosemarie Shannon
SYSTEM: Windows CD-ROM
THEME: Music
PLAYERS: 1

CYBER SCHOOL

Three-Year Study Proves High-Tech Teaching Helps Kids Do Better In School

Kids with access to computers and information services do better in their classes. That fact was established by a three-year project conducted by NYNEX, the New York City Board of Education, and The Graduate School's Stanton/Heiskell Center for Public Policy in Telecommunications and Information Systems. Project Tell took a group of sixth graders who had already been marked as potential dropouts, and, with the assistance of a $3.5 million grant from NYNEX, provided them with computers and network information systems in their homes, then provided similar equipment and training for their teachers.

The project provided a steady stream of contact between the teachers, parents, and children involved in the test. Teachers were able to leave messages about lessons, homework assignments, exams, etc., on the child's home computer. At the same time, parents could receive and leave messages for the teacher via computer communication.

Kids who stayed in the project got to keep the computers as well.

The results were so good that NYNEX is funding Computers in the Home for an additional four years, and considering scholarships for any of these students who enter college.

The findings show that girls did just as well as boys at mastering computer use, and that the computers became a learning resource for the whole family.

The positive results weren't only academic, there were many benefits:

1. Using technology raised self-esteem and learning capacity of the students.

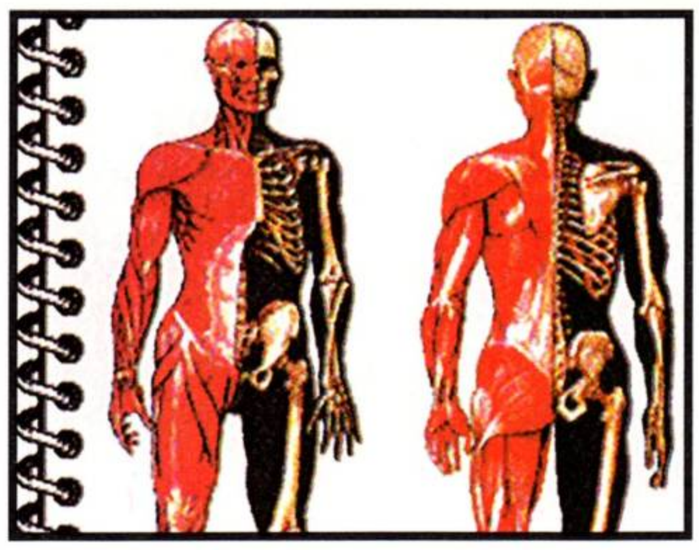
2. The in-home computers provided alternatives to outdoor play for kids in dangerous neighborhoods.

3. The time spent in telecommunications increased the students' reading, writing and technical skills.

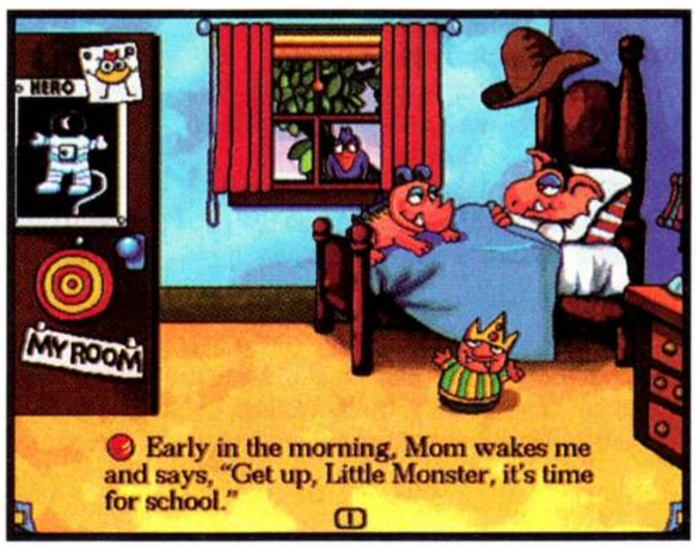
Robert Anderson, NYNEX V.P. for government affairs in New York, summed it up: "Project Tell is a clear indication that the telecommunications services and computer technologies available today can play a critical role in the education of our children."

Anderson sounded the brightest note saying, "The playoff will come in the future when New York has a more educated, highly skilled workforce."

3-D Body Adventure *(By **Knowledge Adventure** for PC CD-ROM - ages 6-adult)* This point-and-click anatomy lesson lets the user explore a visible body inside and out. Rotate, zoom, full-screen views, and 3-D segments make it easy and ultimately quite fun to learn terms, functions, and intricacies of the human body. There are even two teaching games onboard to help in this process. Body Recall is an identify-the-part game played concentration-style. The Emergency Game sends the viewpoint inside to save a patient by traveling through the body in first-person perspective. This is fairly intriguing, for any age. **B+** *(Joyce Worley)*



Little Monster At School *(By **Randomhouse/Broderbund** for PC CD-ROM and Mac CD-ROM - ages 3-8)* The latest in the Living Books series sends Mercer Mayer's characters into the classroom, with bright and humorous clickable pictures. Every scene has 10-12 hot spots that produce animations or sound bites.



The story takes the child through a school day, to learn alphabet, numbers, and simple science, while gaining word and reading skills in English or Spanish. **B** *(Joyce Worley)*

The Wanderoos Go Exploring *(By **Optical Data Interactive** for PC CD-ROM and Mac CD-ROM - ages 3-8)* A clever tribe of kangaroo kids lead the user in a wondrous adventure that combines QuickTime videos, photographs and animations. Alphabet, shapes, colors, and counting lessons are masked behind games and sing-alongs. No reading is required to start the lesson, but it does build word skills. It also lets the player build a slide show of favorite scenes, and permits simultaneous animations of all the hot spots on screen, something only a few other programs have managed to date. The CD also comes with a toy Wanderoo. **A** *(Joyce Worley)*

The Family Doctor, 3rd Edition *(By **Creative Multimedia** for PC CD-ROM and Mac CD-ROM - adult)* Parents hunting for a good medical reference might consider one on disk. This compilation, updated annually, has search routines to help find answers to medical questions. There's a drug guide, information about rare and common diseases of the world, anatomy guides, and, perhaps most important of all, an animated first-aid guide. Unfortunately, it is less detailed than you might find in a good home medical guide book. **B-** *(Joyce Worley)*

The Adventures of Nikko *(By **Software Toolworks** for PC CD-ROM - ages 4-8)* This interactive story builder stars Nikko, a young elephant, to help kids learn to make sentences and put together stories. Then the simple stories are dramatized. Sentences appear for the child to fill in the blank. The resulting animation depends on the choices made by the learner. A viewing screen can then be printed out in an outline form, as coloring book pages. The experience promotes reading skills, while providing a lot of entertainment value for a child. **A** *(Joyce Worley)*

Eagle Eye Mysteries: The Original *(By **EA*Kids** for PC CD-ROM and Mac CD-ROM - ages 8 and over)* Electronic Arts packed both Mac and IBM CDs in the box, along with a note that encourages the purchaser to give the surplus disks to their school! That's certainly one good way of spreading the word about edutainment! In this case, the word is great. Eagle Eye Mysteries sets children on their way to solving 50 mysteries scattered through the town, by collecting clues, interviewing witnesses, and finally arresting the culprit. Along the way the child gains important reading comprehension, problem solving and research skills, and practices at drawing conclusions. **A** *(Joyce Worley)*

Where In Space Is Carmen Sandiego? *(Broderbund, Mac CD-ROM - ages 12-adult)* The Mac version of Carmen's most far-out adventure to date is stunningly beautiful, with NASA photographs and 32 locations scattered around the planets, moon, comets, and other beautiful objects of our solar system. Finding the ever elusive Carmen Sandiego is as much fun as ever ... and the locations are out of this world! **A** *(Joyce Worley)*

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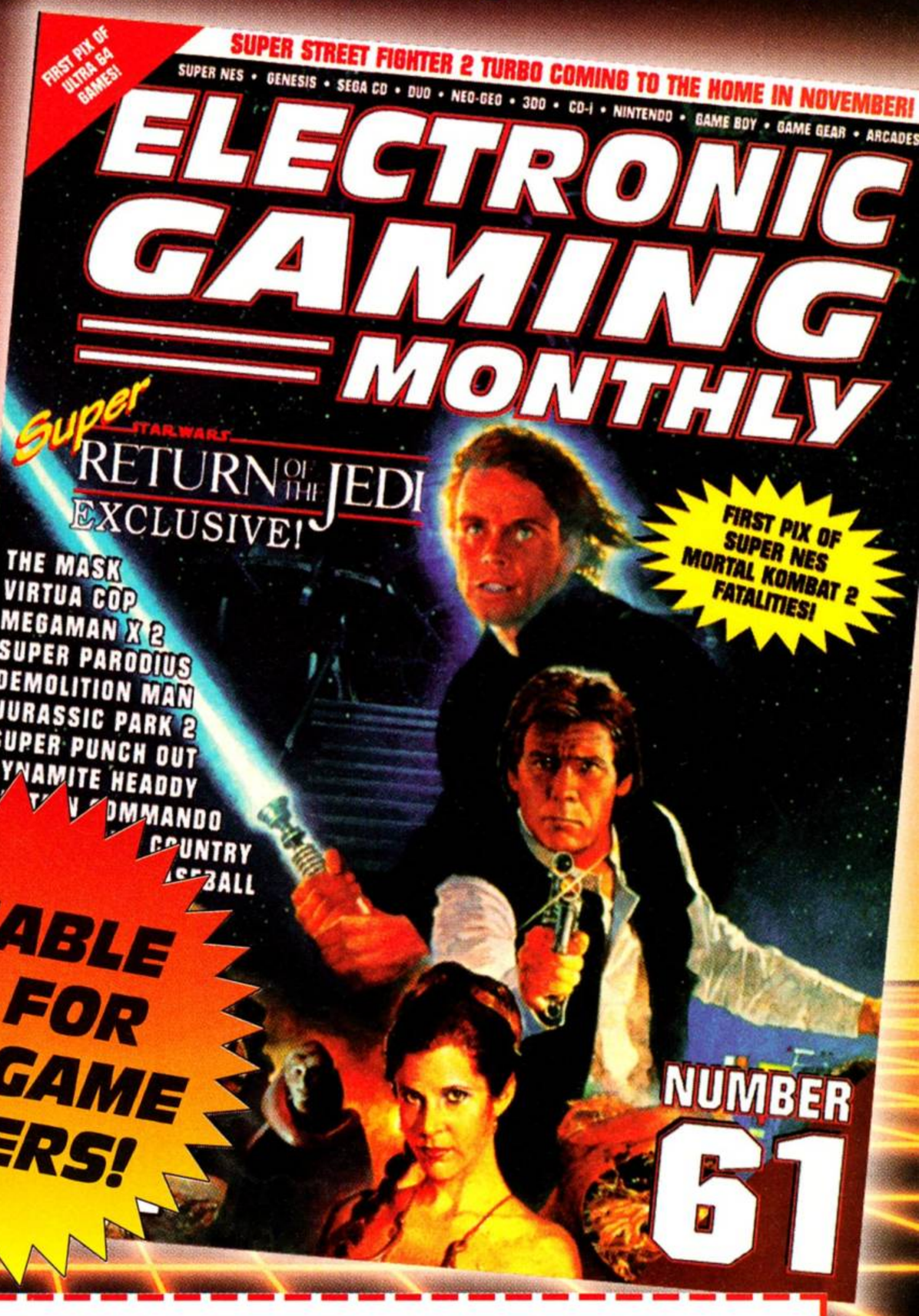
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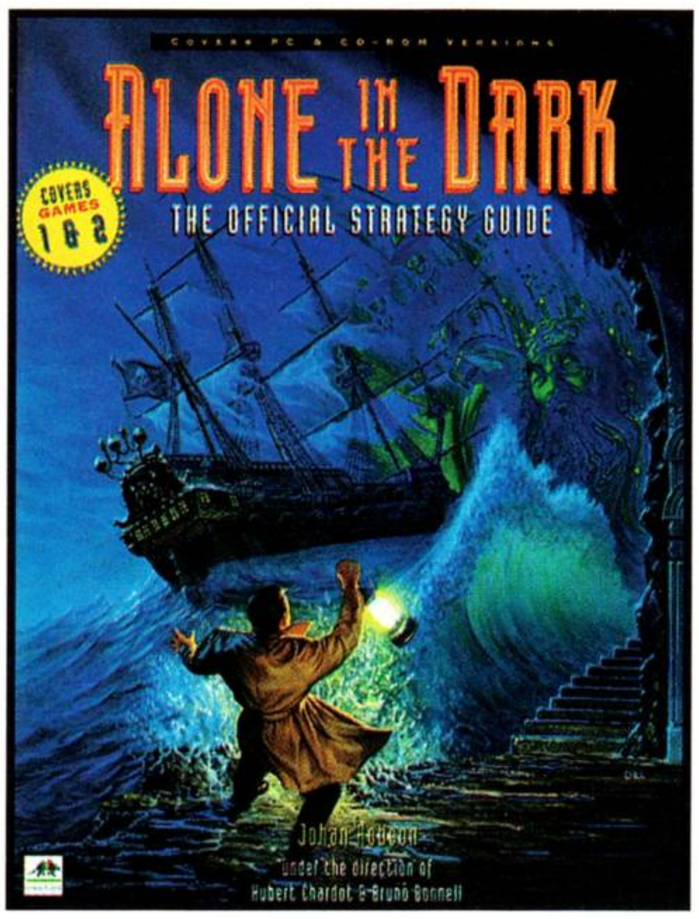
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HEGJ2

ALONE IN THE DARK
The Official Strategy Guide

Johan Robson under direction of Hubert Chardot & Bruno Bonnell, Prima Publishing, 174 pages (softbound, $19.95)



This book covers both the original **Alone in the Dark** and **Alone in the Dark 2**, plus **Jack in the Dark** (a brief game that was offered as a gift to buyers of **Alone 1**). There is also a glimpse of **Alone 3**, and background on Infogames, the French company behind these games, and the technology used in them.

Alone in the Dark created quite a stir when it was introduced in the U.S. by I•Motion, an Interplay associate. The concept of using polygon-based player-surrogates for natural-looking movement was not in itself new—Distinctive Software's **4-D Boxing** (EA) achieved that a couple of years earlier. But the combination of that with a cinematic technique of automatically variable "camera" viewpoints and some new ways of interacting with the environment were innovative.

Less obvious was a technique of tweening the animation that depends on the speed of the computer on which the game is running. Action takes place at the same rate regardless of CPU speed, but the faster the clock rate, the more intermediate frames of movement are generated, and thus the smoother the animation appears.

Robson's look at **Alone 1** starts with a surprising background. It seems that the location—Derceto, a mansion located in Louisiana bayou country—actually existed, and that there was really a detective by the name of Edward Carnby. Or so it would appear. The interface between the real and imagined tends to get a bit blurry in this work. For example, the author provides a precis of real world events of the 1920s, when the story takes place, and follows this with a detailed discussion of the supernatural mythos created by H.P. Lovecraft, very much part of the story. The research into the backgrounds of both stories shows.

The walkthrough of **Alone 1** acknowledges the player's option to select Emily Hartwood as the protagonist, but Robson takes it from the viewpoint of Carnby, written as though from the detective's case notes. This is carried through in **Alone 2**, in which only Carnby starts out on the adventure, though the young kidnapped girl he tries to rescue, Grace Saunders, takes over as p-c for portions of the game.

Alone 2 departs from the Lovecraftian pantheon of horrors to play in the world of prohibition era gangsters, voodoo, pirates, and the *Flying Dutchman*. It will take much longer to get through than the first tale, with three times the characters and four times the locations, though in the book its coverage occupies fewer pages.

Jack in the Dark introduced Grace Saunders, the young kidnapee and part-time heroine of **Alone 2**, who wanders into an accursed toy shop on Halloween. The run-through of this short game occupies about a page. **Alone 3** is slated to take place in a Wild West ghost town and involves alchemy and medieval dark magic. The discussion of it includes a brief, very preliminary outline of a scene originally intended for **Alone 2**.

Black-and-white screen shots on almost every page illustrate the levels of background detail throughout each game. Many show the dire consequences of not adhering to the path. Characters and creatures retain the rough appearance of the non-texture-mapped polygon technique (some mapping is used in **Alone 2**), but can't convey the smooth animation.

Convincingly and appealingly written, this book is a must for **Alone in the Dark** fans and recommended for would-be purchasers and fans of the series.
(Ross Chamberlain)

MEDIA WATCH

Computer Times, July '94, offers "Junkie," in which an anonymous contributor relates the scary story of a Super-Virus that could be the computer equivalent of the Bubonic Plague. It seems that a Reflex Inc. Customer Service rep discovered an encrypted, polymorphic super-virus capable of infecting both the boot sector and executable files on the disk. Further, this nightmare can use current generation anti-virus software as a *carrier*!

There have been no subsequent reported sightings of this cyber-bug, but if it does spread, this is likely to be far more serious than the largely bogus, but highly publicized, Michelangelo Virus scare.

Replay, June '94 has a pair of news notes regarding ongoing Congressional pressure toward stricter video game controls—this time in the coin-op arena.

One report has Illinois Rep. John Porter warning the AAMA (a coin-op trade group) that Congress is ready to impose such draconian restrictions as a ban on kids under 18 playing "overly violent" games in arcades.

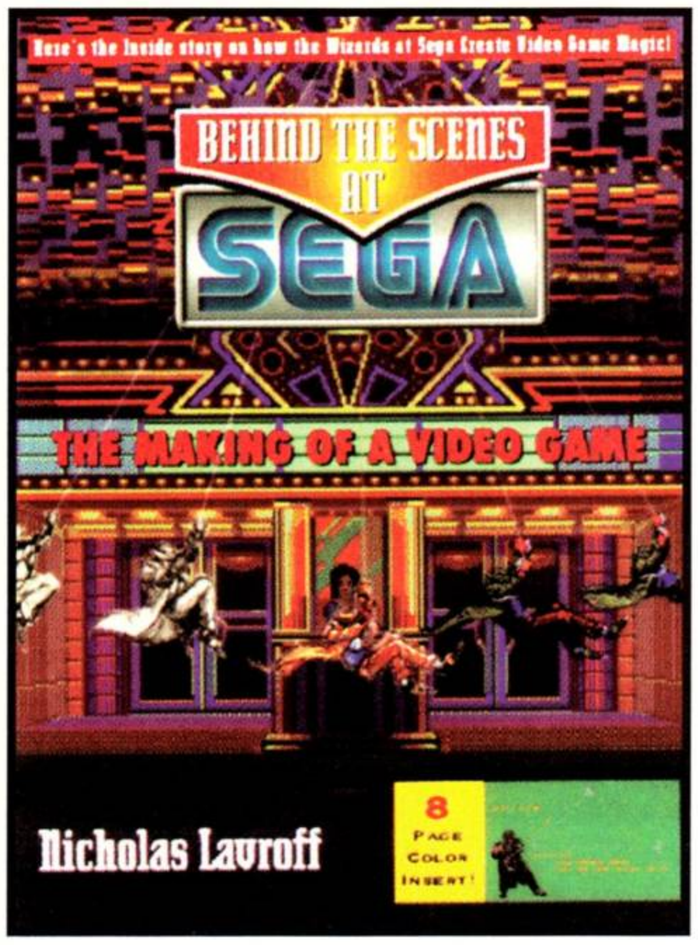
Meanwhile, California Congressman Tom Lantos was also talking like Big Brother on steroids, claiming to have the Clinton Administration in his Bully Pulpit. The San Francisco "Town Meeting" at which Lantos spoke included a PTA rep citing outrageous examples of kids "trying to pull each other's hearts out" while pretending to be a favorite character from a video game (or maybe they just saw *Indiana Jones & the Temple of Doom*).

Mondo 2000, July 94, contained an interesting look at "NanoCyborgs: The Six Million Dollar Amoeba," by interactive veteran Wes Thomas (who once headed up public relations for the old Bally Astrocade, and whose daughter, Kat, is a well-known avant-garde rock musician). An interview with Charles Ostman discusses the future of something called nano-technology.

Although real-world nano-technology-based systems are evidently at least 10 years away, the interim technology is already here. Nano-technology has the potential of rendering even economic models obsolete by making it possible to synthesize any physical object, cheaply and easily, or

BEHIND THE SCENES AT SEGA

Nicholas Lavroff, Prima Publishing, 128 pages (softbound, $14.95)



Although most players of **Sonic** or other similar titles are completely conversant on every nuance of the games they love, few could expand upon those discussions to describe how so much entertainment could be crammed on a tiny microchip. Further, judging from the number of letters on the subject that arrive each year, many players are extremely interested in just how their favorite games are developed. Mr. Lavroff's **Behind the Scenes at Sega** takes readers inside this process for the first time.

The book is divided into six sections, each of which delineates in detail one critical stage of development. The journey takes readers step by step through the creative process, showing how a game goes from a concept, through design and initial sketches, to the final finished version. Along the way, it demonstrates how the artists create the animation sequences and how the musicians compose the accompanying soundtrack. Moving from creativity to engineering, readers are shown how the programmers put all of these elements into code and eventually embed them on a chip or chipset.

Although the technical elements are all here, from concerns over screen flicker to techniques on the integration of digital footage, the real strength of *Behind the Scenes at Sega* involves the insight it affords into the amount of personality which is injected into designs.

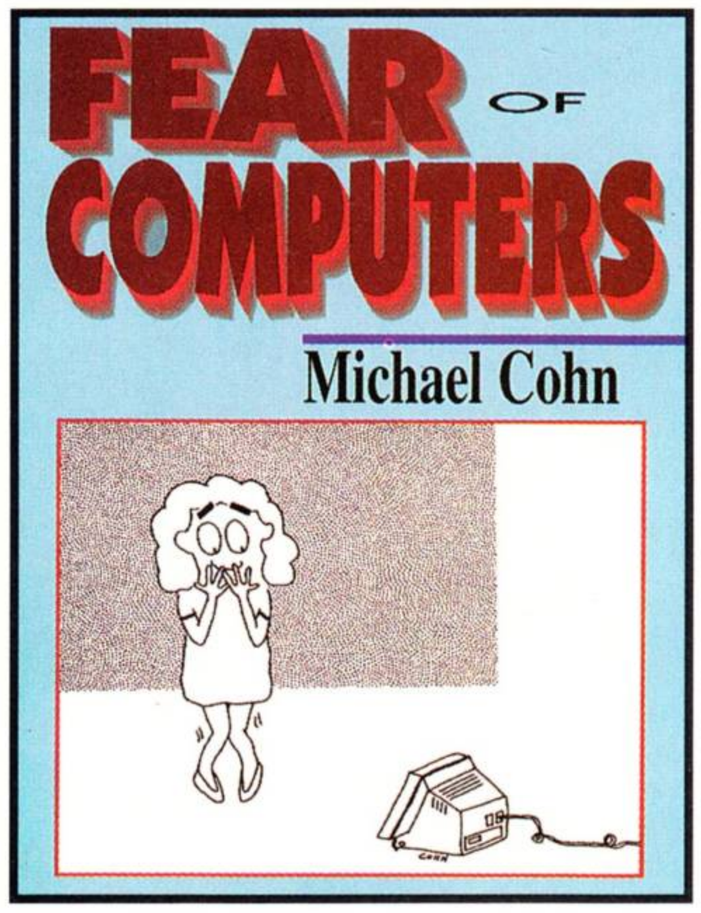
Readers may be surprised to discover that ofttimes, someone inside a giant corporation like Sega will have a game idea that merits development, but it is still necessary to go to an outside third party developer to make the game a reality. Such was the case with **Ecco the Dolphin**, conceived by Ed Annunziate.

Lavroff also includes a fascinating history of video game development that spans the entire spectrum from the first appearance of Nolan Bushnell's **Pong** until today. *Behind the Scenes at Sega* does not equip its readers with all the tools to design their own video games. Remember, such an undertaking is akin to making a motion picture, involving the talents of hundreds of highly motivated and creative people at many levels of the complex system. What *Behind the Scenes at Sega* does accomplish, and it does so very well, is to provide readers with a great appreciation for the tremendous collaboration that must occur before any title makes its appearance on the store shelf.

Mr. Lavroff and Prima Publishing are to be commended for sharing this insight with players and electronic game enthusiasts everywhere. Through knowledge comes strength, and electronic gaming is getting stronger by the minute. *(Ed Dille)*

FEAR OF COMPUTERS

Michael Cohn, Northwestern Publishing, 114 pages (softbound, $7.95)



It's not clear from the contents of this slim volume whether *Computerworld* columnist Cohn approaches computers with the same reluctance he ascribes to the putative audience for this book. It's written to resonate with the love/hate relationship that everyone who works with computers has. But whether it's for everyone who *plays* with computers—not just the gamers, but the hackers, the recreational programmers, and on-line raconteurs—is more difficult to say. Anyone who's used a computer can relate to this: "You can't see a bug, but it's easy to tell when someone's got one. If you're minding your own business when you hear the sound of a keyboard hitting a wall, odds are the guy in the next office ran into a bug."

But the question is, is Cohn coming from the second half of the love/hate coin? Internal evidence suggests he likes them: "I'm not going to frantically wave my arms and tell you computers are great and everyone has to have one. The last time I tried it was not very pleasant, especially since my wife smacked me several times with a dirty spatula while I tried to sneak in the house with $6,000 worth of equipment."

The question may remain, but it's fun trying to figure it out while reading this self-help volume for computer users who haven't quite figured out their own point of view yet. *(Ross Chamberlain)*

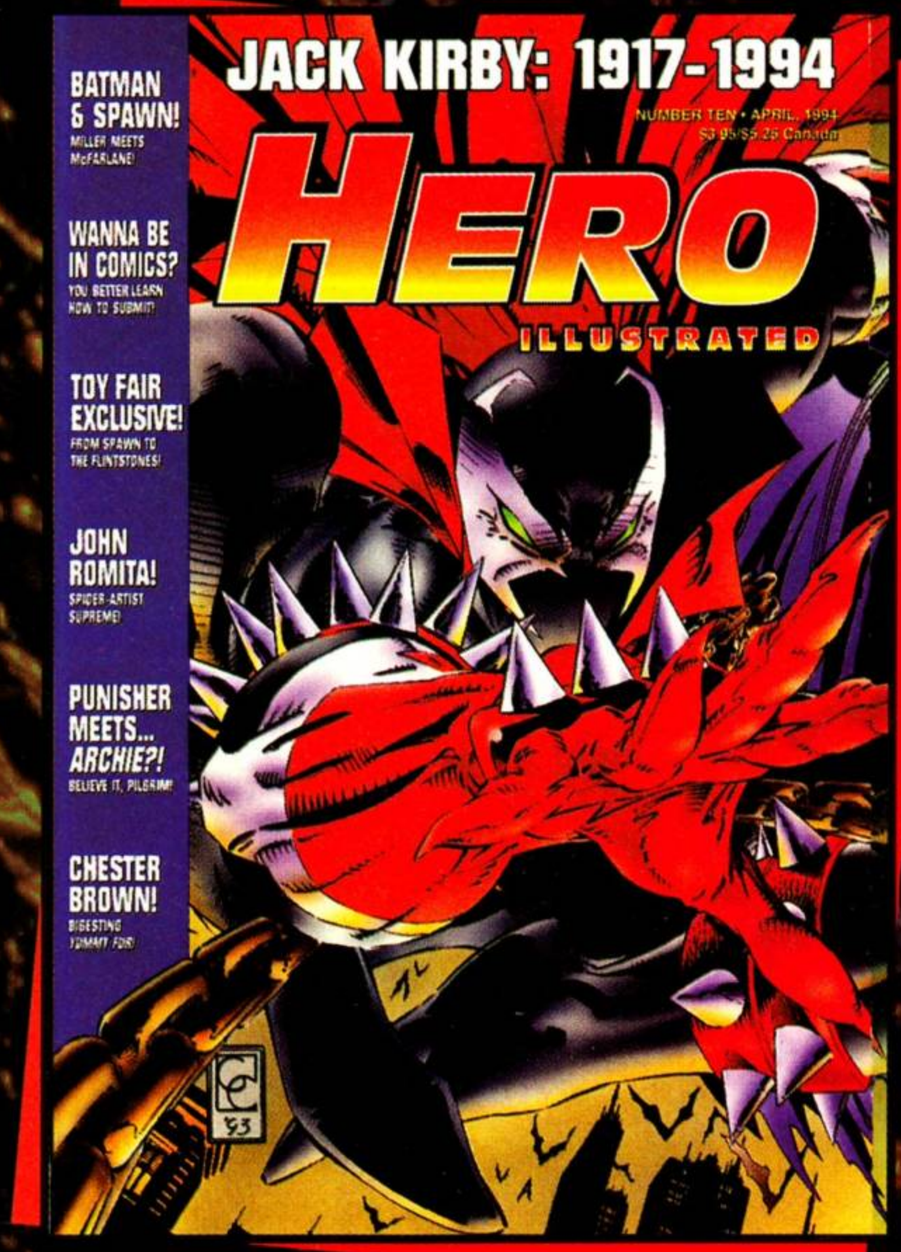
even alter the human body in an infinite variety of ways.

Of course, the *real* question is: how will it affect **Street Fighter XIV**?

The same ish of *Mondo 2K* presents a piece called "Mr. De Palma, Can We Sell You a Plot in Florida?" by Jas Morgan and Paul McEnery, in which futurists Syd Mead and Douglas Trumbull discuss virtual reality and their involvement in projects ranging from the motion simulator ride at the Luxor hotel in Las Vegas to the making of total immersion movies via IMAX or OMNIMAX technology.

Is Sega cool or what? On a mid-July installment of the popular *MTV Sports*, host Dan Cortese spent an entire segment of the show playing **Tomcat Alley** on the Sega CD.

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HEGJ



THE KUNKEL REPORT

THE QUEST FOR COOL

OK, we're all gamers here; how about a puzzle?

There's this major video game company about to launch a new ad campaign, dubbed "Play it Loud." The TV spots contain appearances by the Butthole Surfers and Sweaty Nipples, and the content of the frenzied, quick-cut, rock-video-on-crank ads can best be summed up by one of the raunchy tag lines: "Give the World a Wedgie!"

Now: name that company!

Nope, not Sega. Not 3D0's latest run of silly pseudo-Sega clone-mercials. The company ... is ... Nintendo!

That's right. The folks who just a few months ago were blitzing the world with self-righteous press releases vowing to hold firm its policy of denuding games of any content which could conceivably offend anyone. Apparently, that goodie-two-shoes stuff is all well and good, but when market share starts to drop, all bets are off. Suddenly, Nintendo has jazzed up both the content and marketing of its games, and may be ready to actually shed blood, and market violence, and other "adult" (re: 14-year-old male) frills. And they are, truly, playing it LOUD.



And what about Sega? The 32X is on hand, but for a piece of hardware that's supposed to be available before Xmas, there is precious little software to show; very early versions of the popular **Star Wars** coin-op and **Virtua Racer** and one or two graphic sequences, all of which were overshadowed by Nintendo's 900-lb. SGI gorilla, and even, to an extent, by hot 3D0 and CD-i product.

In any case, assuming the software arrives on time and looks as good as Sega promises, the 32X is a brilliant concept. It bridges the Genesis—which has got to stick around since it is the company's meal ticket, not to mention the basis of the Sega Channel—and allows consumers to buy in to the 32-Bit revolution at bargain prices ($150). In addition, it also reportedly enhances the performance of the Sega CD. But best of all? Right, it's COOL!

Suddenly, Nintendo, 3D0, and the folks who started it all, Sega, are in a mad dash to attain Ultimate Coolness. At Gamer's Day, Sega bragged extensively about being the only non-clothing item included in the top five of a national teenage survey of "Coolest Brand Names." The perception is that 16-Bit is no longer Cool. So Nintendo spends a kazillion dollars on Indigo work stations to produce **Donkey Kong Country**, a sufficiently Cool carrot on a sufficiently long stick to keep video gamers salivating through Xmas.

The truth of the matter is that 16-Bit is already perceived as dead, but the next generation hardware is not only not ready, it can't be produced cheaply enough—Sega itself has observed that electronic entertainment products never break through until their price drops below $300. Sega will release the Saturn next year, but it will be expensive. Sega hopes the 32X will keep Genesis players jacked in for two more Xmas seasons, by which point the Saturn will have dropped to mass market range. Problem: by that time, the system will be Old. It will be—gasp, choke—Uncool!

Nintendo, meanwhile, follows the Atari Idea and offers its Ultra-64 (née Project Reality) sans CD drive for $250. Of course, the type of games that will be required to be Cool on a 64-Bit system will require so much memory storage that ROM carts could end up costing more than the system itself. Which means Nintendo might be the only publisher able to afford to make these cartridge games.

Judging by Sega and Nintendo's behavior, the Coolest of All Things Cool over the next few years will be taking the elevator and giving third party publishers the shaft. One of the side issues of Sega's whole Gamer's Day deal was that the press got to see virtually no third party Genesis software. But, of course Sega will expect these guys to support its 32X and Saturn. Just as NoA will expect them to spend $100 for their Ultra-64 ROM boards.

Hey, why not? It's the Cool thing to do!

by Bill Kunkel

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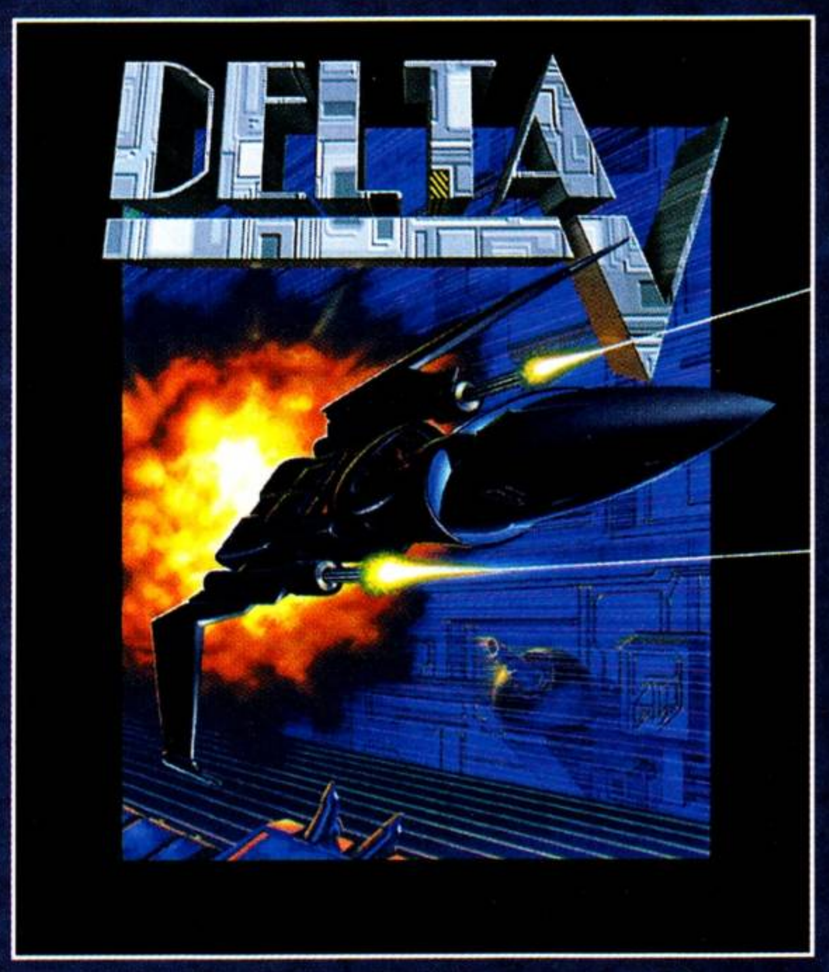
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